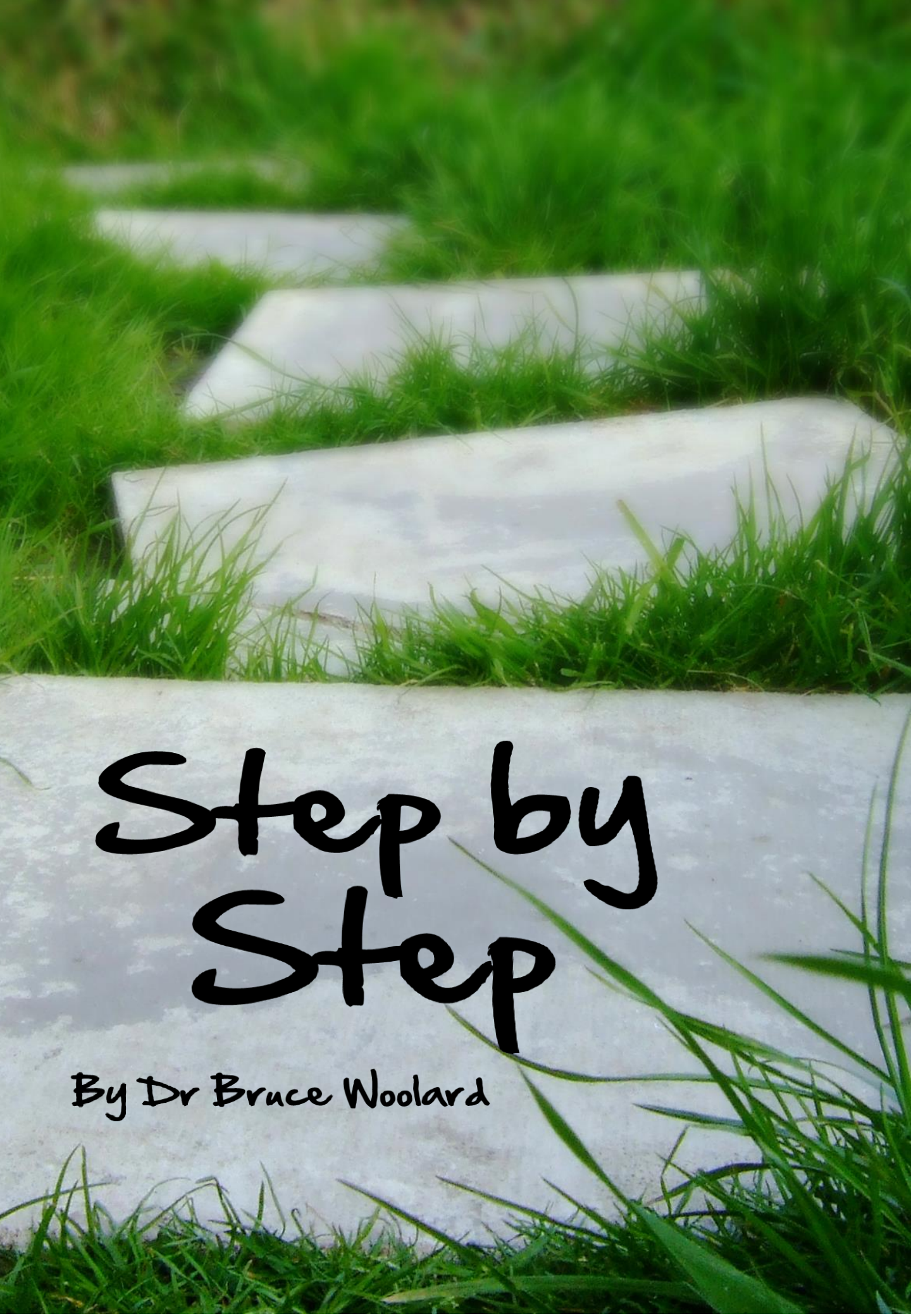




Step by Step

By Dr Bruce Woolard

Step by Step

The way to confident living

By Bruce Woolard

52 Weekly inspirational messages
written for the bulletin of
St Marks Congregational Church.



St Marks Congregational Church
041-3606060

www.stmarks.org.za

1. SOUND A CLEAR CALL



Conflict in the world, including talk about nuclear war, has given rise to global anxiety and has created suspicion and distrust among world leaders. People world wide are seeking for answers. The Christian Church ought to be providing the answers to questions about life and its meaning sadly the Church is silent and the voices being heard offer a false hope of security and spirituality. While the New Age Movement teaches heresies and doctrines of devils, the Church creates obstacles in the way of people.

The Scriptures in 1Cor 14:8 tells us that the Church needs to “sound a clear call”. Therefore, we at St Marks want to teach and preach God’s Word with authority and clarity. We want to be God’s agent for good in a desperate decadent world. The Church is a refuelling centre and the Gospel must not be watered down. We are called by God to be a visible witness of His saving Grace. We want to be a caring and loving Church in the midst of a fragmented and loveless society. We want to care and pray for each other in ways that are seen and felt. Please continue to think and pray for fellow Christians who face calamity and hardship. We must learn to encourage and support each other through the struggles, pain and sorrow inflicted on us by the circumstances of life.

It is encouraging to see how member at St Marks genuinely express love and concern for others. The time is ripe for our Church to take its place in society as a beacon of hope and inspiration to all people. St Marks is like an army on the march; we have the personnel, the members, the vision and the courage to speak out against injustices and immorality. We are excited about the changes we see taking place in the minds and lives of our people. Remember you are a partner with us in doing God’s Will. We thank you for your faithful support of St Marks ministry. There are 650 churches in our city but there is only one St Marks.

As God’s people we are not perfect, but forgiven.

Help us to continue to bless and inspire those who cross the threshold of our church.

2. LIFE IN THE LORD JESUS

Life for many people is a poor existence at best. Life is going to work at a job they hate, living in a marriage or family they do not get along with, and seeking material possessions they cannot afford and which do not make them happy. Life has no meaning, no purpose, no joy, no assurance, no satisfaction. People seek meaning in drugs, alcohol, sex, technology, corporate advancement – and still it does not satisfy. Jesus announces to every age and every generation that He offers the only life worth living. It is the only life that has meaning and satisfaction that lasts not just a lifetime, but forever.

Jesus said:” I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full measure” (John 10:10 NIV). He is promising a satisfactory answer to why you are here. Millions have given their lives to Christ and have found unlimited reasons to go on living.

A popular chorus of the past says something that is always true. The words go like this:

*If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy,
Let Jesus come into your heart!*

Jesus does not offer a life without hardship or struggle. But He does offer meaning to why you must struggle. There are many who want to make God a benevolent, loving deity who could not bear to ever see anyone go to hell. These people have seized on one attribute of God – His love – and have blocked out any other teaching about God’s nature. God does love you and He loves you dearly. In His love He has provided a means whereby all people everywhere can be saved. Jesus is the Way to God; He is the Truth about God; and He is the Life with God. No man can come to God except by Jesus. Do not go looking for some other way. There is none.

Such truth demands that we come to God by accepting Jesus. It also demands that we tell all people everywhere that we want them to come to eternal life by trusting in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Will you do that now? Will you trust in Him and then help us to tell others how to trust in Jesus as Lord?



3. ***BREAK BAD HABITS***

It has been said that human beings are creatures of habit. Many of our practices become automatic; we are sometimes unaware that we do certain things or that we do them in a specific way.

The designation “*Bad Habit*” covers a wide range of negative behaviour and could be defined as anything, which inhibits Christian growth or offends others. We may be speaking of the so-called sins of the spirit, such as envy, jealousy, malice, gossip, lying, criticism of others, selfishness, impatience, quarrelling, procrastination, etc. Or, we may be speaking of compulsive behaviour like, drinking, spending, reading and viewing pornography, excessive working, fantasising and evil thoughts, swearing, etc.



The subject of bad habits assumes special importance in light of the scriptural demand that Christians “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) As we surrender to the Lord, asking Him to search our hearts and reveal all that is displeasing to Him (Psalm 139:23,24), we will begin to see many ugly things that need to be dealt with. The most important thing to remember in regard to bad habits are that they displease God, and with His help they can be broken and replaced with alternatives.

None of us are immune to change. The Gospel specialises in change (2Cor 5:17) We know that God can work in our lives in order to bring our conduct into line with what pleases Him. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10)

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:7,8)

There is a spiritual alternative for each bad habit, which can be broken! Daily Bible reading, study, memorising of Scripture and prayer are of great value. As God’s thoughts invade our minds, things will begin to change positively.

4. DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD

God is calling us to be different from the world around us. Unique marriages, unique families, and unique lifestyles should mark us off from the world. In Ephesians Paul has said that we are not to walk (live) as the heathen walk (4:17). We are to walk in love, not in lust (5:2-3); in light, not in darkness (5:8); in wisdom, not in foolishness (5:15); and in the Spirit, not in the flesh (5:18). We are not to



be selfish (each person for himself) but unselfish, (each for the other). We are not to be possessed by our own ego, but be under the control of the Spirit of God. In short, we are to be unique!

Clearly, it has always been God's intention for His people to be distinct, set apart, not yielding to the pressure applied by the world, not conforming to the world. Yet separation is very difficult to achieve, and when we come to the family and to marriage it is patently obvious that we have not remained separate, but have become victimised by the system. Our attempts to be what our society *tells us* to be have contributed to the breakdown of marriage and the family. But God is still giving us the same message today as in Ephesians 6 and in Leviticus 18: *"Do it My way. Don't listen to what the world says. You're not of the world anymore, you have overcome it. This is My standard."*

And unless we meet that standard now in our own homes, we have nothing to pass on to the next generation so they can live to the glory to God.

The Lord has called us to live differently from the world. In terms of living out the Christian value system write down three ways in which you have become different.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

5. *DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE*

Almost everyone has heard of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

The story came out of a dream that Stevenson had, actually a nightmare. From his horrifying yet fascinating dream, Stevenson concocted the tale of a man who was able to mix a potion that could separate his evil nature from his good nature. When he drank the potion the "good" Dr Jekyll was replaced by the "bad" Mr Hyde. When he drank the antidote, Mr Hyde vanished and Dr Jekyll reappeared.



But something went wrong. The nature of the evil Mr Hyde grew stronger than the nature of the good Dr Jekyll. At times Dr Jekyll would change into Hyde without even drinking the potion. Stevenson's story of Jekyll and Hyde is a classic because it deals with a problem as old as man. But his idea really wasn't that original. The Bible is full of Jekyll-Hyde characters.

Paul knew something of the Jekyll-Hyde struggle. So did Peter and James and John... and all who have followed Christ for that matter. But perhaps the prize Scriptural example of the Dr Jekyll-Mr Hyde conflict is Jacob, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham and twin brother of Esau.

If you want a little insight on your own Jekyll-Hyde hang-ups, why not become Jacob for the next few pages. Because the one known as the sup-planter or to put it more candidly, the "schemer who took over" was wonderfully changed by God's power.

Jacob was converted to Israel (a prince with God and man).
Saul became Paul.
Simon became Peter.

2 Corinthians:17 declares that you can become a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17

6. A CITY CALLED PEACE



The irony of the conflict in the Middle East is that a city called "Peace", the city of Jerusalem, has known little or no peace for centuries. The Scriptures declare that when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then know that its desolation is near. In 70AD Titus the Roman General besieged Jerusalem with his armies left the city and temple desolate. Almost 2000 years have lapsed, and again we find Jerusalem and Israel at the centre of International attention.

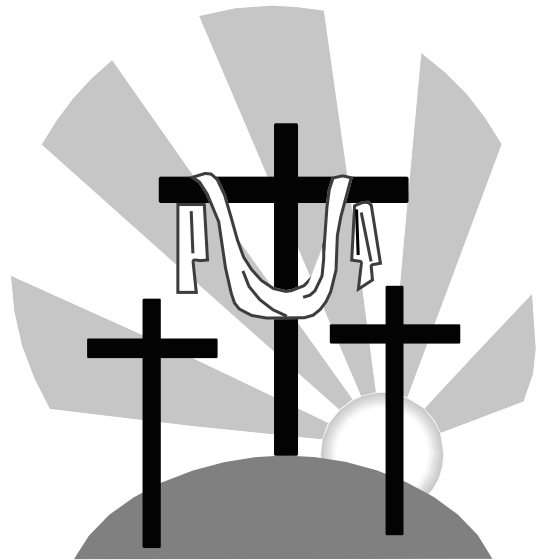
Propaganda against the State of Israel will lead to a perceived justification of hostility toward Jews. The holocaust will fade into insignificance in comparison to events that will follow. The astute Christian recognises the unfolding events in the Middle East as part of the Divine Plan to bring human effort for peace to an end. True peace will only come to Jerusalem when King David's Son is crowned as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:16). The Palestinian saga is only a tip of the iceberg. There is a more subtle and devious plan to isolate Israel and make her a pariah among the nations. Romans 11:25 & 26 reminds us that the time of the Gentile nations will be fulfilled, giving rise to the power and might of God's chosen people. The Christian Church needs to rise up in support of Israel's struggle for survival. Please bear in mind that in war innocent lives are lost and both sides are guilty of atrocities and hostilities that leave homes and families shattered.

The reason why Israel occupies Arab and Palestinian land is being hotly debated. If we can use the American saga as an illustration, maybe people will then understand Israel's occupation of these territories. The U.S.A. currently has troops in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. We all know the reason for their occupation of these regions, because terrorists plan attacks against the West from their headquarters in the Middle East. The American army, including Western Allies, have tried to uproot these terrorist strongholds. Israel is doing exactly the same thing. In order to stop suicide bombers and attacks against their citizens, they have moved their armies into Arab areas to put an end to these hostile attacks.

I urge Believers to pray for the peace of Jerusalem because peace will be an absent commodity in our world so long as there is conflict in the world's capital city. There is no easy solution but do not be surprised if a world leader makes his mark and presents a "solution" that will be seen by all parties and nations as a stroke of genius and, therefore, exalt this man to a god status for our time. In the meantime, let us work whilst it is day, for the night is coming when no man shall work!

7. THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST

Every New Testament preacher and all New Testament writings, make reference to *the blood of Christ*. The theme is a scarlet thread running through the entire length of evangelical theology. Early in the sacred writings, God revealed that the life was in the blood (Gen 9:4), and in the New Testament the blood of Christ is synonymous with the life of Christ. Consequently the shed blood of Christ refers to His sinless life outpoured at Calvary. Whatever liberal theology might maintain, one fact is indisputable: that the apostles and leaders of the New Testament Church believed that man's salvation was procured through the sacrifice of Christ.



“And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ...” (Col 1:20). Man was at war with God; a state of open rebellion existed in the human soul. When driven justice demanded retribution, the Lord Jesus voluntarily identified Himself with the guilty people and accepted full responsibility of their sins. He carried their guilt to Calvary, and thereby secured an armistice. Thus, the righteousness of God was vindicated, and a way was opened whereby the state of war might be terminated.

Have you made peace with God, yourself and others. If not, I urge you to make a positive decision to believe and behave differently.

extracted from Bible Treasures by Ivor Powell

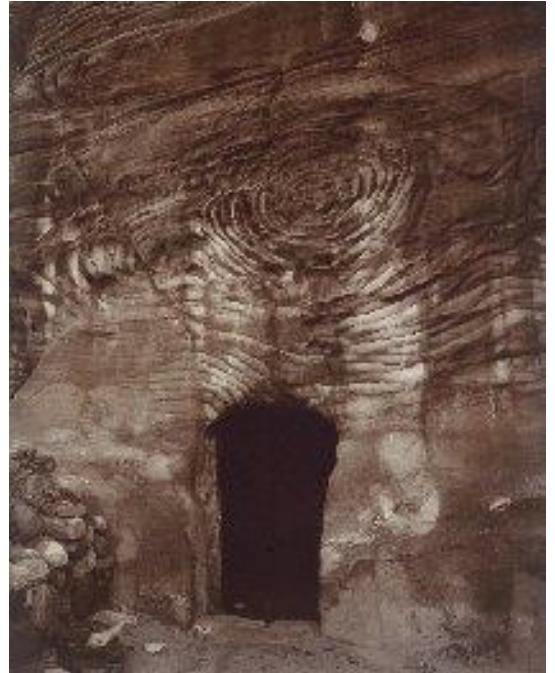
In what way has your life been transformed.

1. *I have been s.....d through the blood of*
2. *I have p.....e with God.*

8. WHAT IS FAITH?

In daily life, to have faith in a person is to have confidence in him, to believe that he is trustworthy, but in the Bible it has a deeper meaning. Here are some of the ways in which it has been described:

- * *“Faith rests on a person. Faith is that act by which one person, a sinner, commits himself to another Person, a Saviour.”*
- *“It is the attitude of complete trust in Christ, reliance on Him alone for all the salvation means.”*
- *“What is it to believe on Christ? It is to feel your need of Him, to believe that He is able and willing to save you now, and to cast yourself unreservedly upon His mercy, and trust in Him alone for salvation.”*



Even national icons and heroes stumble and fall. What makes a man great is his willingness to adjust his wrongs and accept God's righteousness.

Christian faith helps us to triumph over tragedy. “Whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46). John describes the children of God as those who “believe on His name” (John 1:12); and, Paul, the apostle's answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” was “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Conversion is both turning **from** and turning **to** the Saviour. Why not take this step today!

Faith in God brings about a transformation in one's life. Write down two ways in which this change has become noticeable in your life.

- 1.
- 2.

9. THE PRACTICE AND PROMISE

An old story about a frog that was boiled alive is worth retelling. A frog was put into a shallow pan of cool water, a pan from which the frog could have easily escaped. Very slowly the water was heated, almost imperceptibly the temperature began to rise until it reached boiling point. The frog continued to sit in that pan unaware of the rising temperature until it was boiled to death. At any point it could have jumped out but the temperature rise was so gradual it didn't realise its fate.

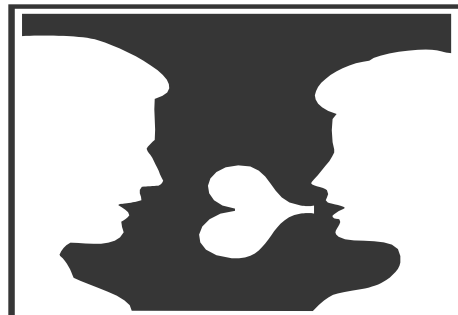
This is an apt illustration of what is happening to family life in our country. We have been sitting in what was first a rather cool environment. A country that promoted a Christian ethos was conducive to morality and virtues. While we were content and comfortable in the system, the water was gradually being heated. The family unit is disintegrating and is dying. Christian families should have jumped out of "the pan" long ago. The evil system that is boiling us alive and destroying our families is to be resisted and overcome. The revelation of God's word enables us to discern the times in which we live. No longer can we count on the luxury of living in a Christian country where life is protected and Christianity encouraged. The system we are exposed to is accelerating evil and sinfulness. Christians need to awaken to the Biblical priorities and escape from the systems of the world. Only when an individual gives his life to God and when the family centralise the character and personality of Jesus Christ will they escape the "fate" that the frog experienced.

According to Ephesians 6:1-4 children should obey and honour father and mother. We ought to hold our parents in awe and honour so that there is a right attitude behind the act of obedience. The practice of obeying parental instruction is fulfilled in the promise of longevity. Even when obedience ends, the honour will live on. God Bless you as you seek to live uprightly.



10. OUR MISTAKES AND THEIR SINS

Isn't it true – we all want the other person to apologise first before we magnanimously offer our apology. This is, of course, if we had planned to apologise at all. It may be that after we compare our “harmless mistakes” with their “grossly unfair sins”, we may smugly decide we don't have to apologise, anyway.



The first step on the road to recovery is to be forthright and honest admitting our mistakes – not our adversary's errors. The answer to a purposeful happy life can be found within rather than seeking to change what is without. The Spirit of God is imparted to every individual who personally confesses Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. This confession must be humble and sincere. The profound impact that the new life imparted by God has on your life is that it helps you to see the viewpoint of others. Can you remember a time when your parents badly wronged you but later asked for your forgiveness. It left an impact on your life, didn't it? It affirmed your parent's integrity. It restored and enhanced your respect for them. Admitting your mistakes is not easy, but when we do so we model godly traits as humility, integrity, sensitivity and love.

If we fail to rectify our lives over time the unresolved wrongs stack up into barriers blocking almost every level of communication with God and others. Mistakes will happen but how we respond to the mistakes will determine the benefit or harm these mistakes bring. If we learn a lesson through failure, we most likely will not repeat the same mistake again, therefore, benefiting from our past errors. King David was called a man after God's own heart. The reason why he was considered to be special in God's eyes was that David did not try to hide his failure when he fully realised the damage that his sins had caused. His repentance is recorded in the Psalms. 31 & 32 they give an overview of his acknowledgement of failure and the peace God imparted to him because of his humility and desire for restored communion with his Lord.

I want to encourage Mom's and Dad's to learn to apologise when making parental mistakes. Tell your children that you are sorry for causing such harm and damage and give them the assurance that you love them and with their help, together, as a family you can succeed with God as your guide. Furthermore, couples and friends need to realise that the quality of your relationship depends on your attitude and willingness to help each other to overcome the wrongs of the past. It sounds impossible, but with God all things are made possible and new.

11. AN OUTSTANDING TESTIMONY

To give testimony in a court of law simply implies that evidence is needed to either approve the guilt or the innocence of the person on trial. When we are called to give testimony to our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we affirm that He is innocent, pure, righteous and truly God. Many Christians fail to live their lives as a testimony to God's honour and glory.



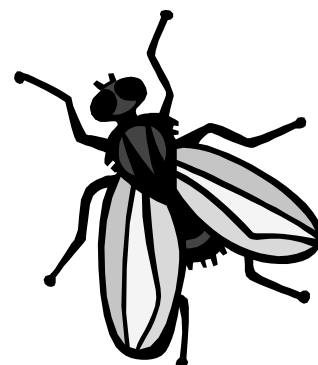
The conversion of John Wesley hundreds of years ago is a testimony that still influences the lives of people today. He was born into a very religious family, he went to Oxford University and later became a Church of England minister, preaching throughout Great Britain and the U.S.A. Yet, when he came back from America, in 1738, he wrote "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learnt myself, in the meantime? Why, what I least of all suspected, that I, went to America to convert others but was never myself converted to God." Wesley became insecure and unsure about the reality of Christianity. On the 24th May, 1738, he went to a small building in Aldersgate Street and during the service a man read comments made by Martin Luther on the Epistle to the Romans. Suddenly the truth gripped John Wesley's heart. This is how he described it: "About quarter to nine while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I trusted Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins and saved me from the law of sin and death."

My friend do you know with certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you and can truly say I know Him as my personal Saviour? Can you give testimony to His greatness in your life?

You are of great value to God. Do not waste time in being all that God wants you to be.

12. THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

When reading the Word of God observation is vital if you wish to understand the content of Scripture. King Solomon was a very observant man. This fact is supported by the great number of object lessons, mentioned in his writings. The proverbs were based upon the happenings of every day life and sometimes this wise man had the ability to see the sublime in the ridiculous. His statement concerning the “fly in the ointment” has become famously proverbial. When the king heard of the event in the shop of the royal perfumer he probably smiled but even he could not have guessed that his musings on the matter were to become famous for generations to come. The person who supplied the perfume to Solomon was convinced that the king would be satisfied with the gift and its aroma. The giver of the perfume, possibly, sat down convinced that the king would compliment him for the fragrance. In a land where flies were bred by the millions it was not long before these flies of death were attracted to the box of sweet aroma. Their spidery legs would venture on the spongy sea of colour and their twitching heads would revel in the irresistible fragrance. Their wings would drag in the clinging mass. This ruined the kings delight – the fly was in the ointment and was no longer fit for the king. What a shame that something of precious value can be destroyed by a pest.



Many sincere people have been confronted with the beauty and fragrance of Christianity only to be put off by poor and irresponsible believers who have damaged the cause of Christ. Each and every one of us who profess salvation through our Saviour is a conduit of blessing to others. When we fail to represent the fragrance and aroma of Christianity we become the “fly in the ointment”. May the Lord give you grace to live your Christian life in your homes and work place so that others may see you as a living testimony of God’s saving grace.

The world is looking at you, a Believer, for the way back to God.

13. FORGIVENESS IS NOT FORGETTING

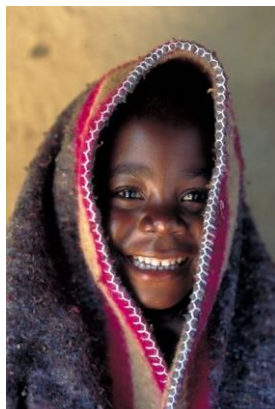
Divine forgiveness depends not on feeling forgiven, but on God's declaration of pardon. This principle, also, applies in our relationship with others. We may not always feel that we have been forgiven for our mistakes or offences, but the declaration from our partner "I have forgiven you" makes the difference. Forgiveness is not an eraser that wipes the memory of the act forever from our mind. That is impossible! It is still history, the scar may be permanent. To forgive and to forget the anger we feel, toward the person who injured us, may be a reality but the memory still remains. Even though we remember the deed we treat the person as though it never happened. To constantly bring up your partners mistake or sin may lead to a total breakdown of hope that wholeness and restoration can be achieved. Certainly, when trust has been broken, there may be questions for a period of time, or the occasional twinge of doubt or echoes of the past maybe heard but these will pass if there is a mutual effort to move forward into the future with optimism, courage and faith.

Forgiveness is a choice, we can either choose to live in the past or heal our emotions and move forward into the future. We must choose to forgive even when our feelings protest against forgiveness. When we set our heart in the right direction feelings of forgiveness will follow and help us to ultimately say, with sincerity "I forgive you". It may take awhile for all the hurt to leave, but your choice releases the hold that the past has on you and in time you will begin to experience the healing process. Jesus said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Some people have no clue as to how hurtful their remarks and actions are to us.

If we cling to our hurts, still wanting to get even, to get revenge, we damage our psyche and emotions. Our own self-hatred is often at the bottom of our unforgiveness. We can't accept our own humanness, therefore, we are not free to accept the mistakes of others. We are inclined to judge others the way we judge ourselves. Learn to forgive yourself and forgiving others will flow from your heart. God bless you all, as you discover the secret of forgiveness.



14. HE WHO GIVES IS HAPPIER THAN HE WHO RECEIVES



I recently chatted with a small group of people, the treacherous weather lately experienced being the topic of conversation. A lady began to tell of how, whilst on their way home, her children heard an appeal for clothing, food and blankets for those that lost house and home in the storm. On arriving home, the children asked if they could respond by seeking out what they had to give.

A sense of goodwill and excitement at helping the plight of others filled the home and soon the whole family were foraging in the draws, wardrobes and cupboards to find goods and food for those in need. She told me of how the children dived into the cupboards and pulled out everything from duvets to toys to food and anything in between. They blitzed their own rooms first, bringing out toys and clothing they cherished, then to the kitchen, where her daughters own specially protected “Cup-a-Soups” were added to the growing bundle of goods. She gave every last one of them as part of her contribution to those in need. The pile of goods mounted near the door for departure to the central collection point.

She told of the amazing joy and pleasure it brought to the family to give of what they had to make a small difference in the lives of others, and how it touched her to see her children’s concern for others. She relished the kindness seen in her children, her memory being etched with this picture for life.

We are often reminded in life that there is no greater purpose for which God has saved us and for which we remain in this world, than to seek, save and serve others. Paul the Apostle quotes the words of Christ when He said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive”. Let us remind the world that we are men and women after the heart of God. Give a word of encouragement, a telephone call of support, a hand on the shoulder of the distressed. In our world, opportunity abounds. The hand of compassion is the doorway of the Gospel. Teach our children the blessing of giving – there are few greater qualities that compare – and it is the central message of the cross of Christ, that God GAVE his only begotten son that we may be saved. Love cannot be bought – it can only be given away.

"I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

15. A LIFE OF DISCIPLINE



The word “discipline” conjures up memories of yesteryear. Most adults think that discipline is meant for children. The Bible refers to discipleship. The word disciple and discipline have the same root meaning which implies a curtailing of emotions and impulses that are either negative or positive. If a Christian loses his temper, tells a lie, gossips or commits a sin of any kind there are consequences that follow. Every action and thought has a consequence. It is for this reason that we need to inculcate in our children a discipline ethos that will equip them for adulthood.

Too many children today grow up without discipline. As they become adults and meet the challenges of an occupation or family demands, they have difficulty in coping because parents and teachers failed to instil within them a code of ethics and discipline. Children need discipline to be useful members of society.

The scriptures teach us that the Lord disciplines those He loves. Heb 12: 7-11 declares that we should endure hardship as discipline, God is treating us as His children. For what son is not disciplined by his father? No discipline seems pleasant, at the time, but painful. Later on it produces a harvest of good conduct and peace for those who have been trained by it.

A Christian has tremendous responsibilities to his own family. Husbands and wives are taught to love each other and to submit to one another. Christian parents are called upon to train their children in the way in which they should go. If we neglect the responsibilities within our families, we will suffer the consequences. Perhaps not immediately, but later. Love should always be the motivating factor when “dishing out” discipline. Too often discipline is inconsistent and is the result of uncontrolled anger and frustration. A child associates discipline with wrath and anger and therefore despises a parent or guardian when he grows older, but when love motivates discipline, a child grows up appreciating discipline as a value and guiding principle for life.

The conditions in the world are symptomatic of a deeper problem in society that lacks discipline.

16. THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven as recorded in Acts 1:6-11 was an event that changed the office of the Lord Jesus Christ from Prophet to High Priest. The Scriptures declare that the Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest in heaven interceding for us (Hebrews 4:14-16). On earth Jesus demonstrated His prophetic ministry as He called the nation of Israel to repentance in anticipation of the coming Kingdom. Retrospectively we all know that the Kingdom anticipated by the nation of Israel did not become a reality because the nation rejected the Messiah and the subsequent coming of the Holy Spirit.



The Lord's prayer "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" anticipates the arrival of a Kingdom on earth that will effect change for all mankind. This currently has not happened. The Kingdom of God on earth was postponed and over the period of 2000 years the Christian church has ministered the Kingdom of God from a spiritual viewpoint. This message is correct and important. However, the Ascension of Christ reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth in the same way that He left earth. The truth of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of Christianity and the future hinges on this event. The Lord Jesus Christ has a three-fold ministry. Firstly He came as prophet to demonstrate and proclaim the coming Kingdom of God to earth. As a prophet He asserted God's will and power, calling evil and darkness into subjection to God's purpose. He drove devils out of men and women, He healed the sick, He opened blind eyes, He brought the message of hope to the poor. His ministry was that of a prophet. When Jesus died on the cross, He acted as the priest who was willing to die on behalf of the people. He ascended into heaven to become our High Priest and makes intercession for us in the realms of heaven.

He will return as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to rule with justice and equity. Therefore it is important for us at this time of the year to remember that 40 days after Easter Jesus ascended into heaven as our Mediator. The three-fold office of Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. Do you know Him as your Saviour, Lord and Redeemer? If your answer is in the affirmative then begin to spread this message of hope to others that the King is coming and that there is hope for all mankind.

17. RESTORATION

As churches in our city seek restoration unwittingly they take hands with activists. Why was St Marks not represented at Restoration Unity Rallies? While we sympathise with the general goodwill expressed by the crowds, we question the motive of such rallies being held, calling for a united Christian effort to promote restoration to our divided continent. No doubt many organisers are sincere in their efforts, but because of gross ignorance of the teaching of Scripture, religious leaders have involved themselves in an exercise that will be ultimately used by the New Age Movement, who hopes to usher in a utopian age for all mankind. It is subtle and unbiblical for the modern Christian Church to believe that the world is going to become better.

The thinking Christian who knows and understands the Bible should acknowledge the fact that the Scriptures warn of a departure from Christianity to a new order of religious and political unity. This on the surface may appear to be “kosher” and noble, but Jesus warned that the peace that He gives is not the peace that the world offers. Jesus warned that at the end of time many will depart from the faith. His Word predicts an age of apostasy when people will promote a pseudo Gospel and a New Age Christ. Through signs and wonders a false Messiah will arrive on the scene calling for restoration and unity among all people. What has become a Human Rights tradition of Church people meeting in stadiums singing the praises of Jesus will ultimately develop into a unitary faith with all religious groups holding hands in demonstration of a united effort to bring peace to Africa and the World.

To the undiscerning Christian this may appear to be wonderful and testimonies of blessing will be forthcoming by those who do not see the bigger picture of spiritual deception. This may appear to be a negative viewpoint of the TRANSFORMATION rallies, but if we who stand for Bible authority and then compromise our position for the sake of unity, we become sucked into the mainstream of religion per se. Let's not become side tracked by unity for the wrong reasons. In Christ Jesus, alone, do we have unity. Restoration and reconciliation is between God and man and then expressed between others and us. So be warned, RESTORATION is not all that it appears to be. We are moving into a new phase of deception and the Lord expects us to be alert and vigilant as we see the day of the Lord's coming drawing near. God bless and keep you.



18. THE MAGNETIC PULL



The believer who has acknowledged the Lord Jesus

Christ as Saviour will find that there are two natures at work in his life. As the compass needle is affected by magnetic attraction, so the Christian feels the pull of sin. This is illustrated by Israel's desire to return to Egypt because they preferred slavery, eating leeks and garlic (Numbers 11:5).

Many believers who stop growing and moving forward slip backward to their old life and like Israel long for the "leeks and garlic" of the world. Paul the Apostle writes in 2Tim 4:10 and says "...for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." God never promises to remove temptation from us for even Christ was subject to being tested. There is a sense of achievement and assurance that results from victory over temptation. This cannot come to us unless we face this test. Temptation shows the true character of people. Overcoming failure makes the Christian stronger and causes him to discover resources of power. The Lord becomes more real to you when you grapple with issues such as doubt, despondency and despair. Temptation is common to all Christians. Temptation is not a sin, but your response to it may lead to sin.

The influence of sin will diminish in your life as you learn to draw closer to the Lord in your service for Him. As Christians we should encourage one another as we see the day of the Lord approaching. (Heb 10:24-25)

We overcome Satan (the accuser of believers) through the word of our testimony and by the Blood of the Lamb. Please read Rev 12:10-11.

There are three distinct ways in which you can prevent the process of backsliding.

- 1. Speak to God daily in prayer and praise.***
- 2. Read the Word of God on a regular basis.***
- 3. Do not neglect Christian fellowship.***

19. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.



The following statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men, prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible, divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, its divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

I want to encourage you to attend one of our weekly studies and derive the blessing from understanding God's word, rightly understood.

20. *WAR IN THE SOUL*

Most people think of the mind as the seat from which emanates our thoughts, but God's first reference to the thoughts of man points out the fact that thoughts are imagined, invented or conceived in the heart or emotions – Gen 6:5 says "every imagination of the thought of his heart was evil". The Great Physician, when He foresaw the fear and anxiety of the circle of men about him, on the eve of the betrayal, warned them



against permitting their minds to be disturbed over the events, which soon came to pass. He said to them "let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". Three days later the hearts of these same men were filled with fear, fear of man and an uncertain future. They locked the doors and hid themselves out of fear of the authorities. When Jesus re-appeared to them, they were terrified. He calmed them by saying "Why are you troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" The Lord understood why they were afraid. He knows from whence come anxiety, worry and fear of man. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made – John 1:3. Jesus repeatedly referred to the meditations and imaginations in the hearts of men. God is always concerned about the heart of man (for out of it are the issues of life – Prov. 4:23). Our emotions and desires, including fear, love, anxiety and a sense of contentment are the result of the imaginations and the condition of our mind. When the Bible refers to the heart it does so in terms of the emotions within the human mind.

A lifestyle is produced from habits and habits are formed through actions. These actions are the result of desires and emotions, which come from our imaginations, in turn our imaginations are the result of our thoughts. Our five senses, including the environment, influences our thought processes. Many people try to break bad habits and repeatedly fail to do so. The secret is to start at the root cause of these habits. The influences of life and the gateway to our desires come through the five senses of the body. As Christians we need to bring every thought and imagination into subjection and submission to God's will and purpose. Therein lies the secret to a new and relevant lifestyle. You may lose the battle, but I am confident you can still win the war raging in your soul.

God bless you.

21. PRAYER – THE CHRISTIAN VITAL BREATH.

All through our lives we are exhorted to pray – for healing, for blessing, for rain, for peace and also to pray and with thanksgiving. But there are few people who find prayer an easy discipline. If they were to be honest, many church-goers would admit that they have had long periods when they just stopped praying. Life went on just the same for awhile and they may even have asked themselves what point there was in beginning again. Whether we pray or not there seems to be good days and bad days, joys and heartaches. Why then are we told so often that prayer is ‘The Christian’s vital breath?’ Breathing comes so naturally we don’t even notice it unless there are some problems. But prayer seems to be such an uphill struggle for some.



If we love someone we want to talk to them, write to them, telephone them and keep close contact with them. Separation leads to hardship. The years together mellow and mature the relationship so that two become as one, and without asking sometimes we know what our partner would think or say or do in any given situation.

It would be wonderful if prayer could become like this. When we love the Lord we know that being with Him can only improve our knowledge of him. We want to please Him and grow like the example that Jesus set us. And this can only happen as we consciously acknowledge His presence each moment of our lives, as well as setting aside specific times when all other distractions are put aside and we concentrate on Him.

Learn to breathe as a Christian.

Exhaling – represents sins confessed.
Inhaling - represents forgiveness received.

22. *GROWING IN GRACE*

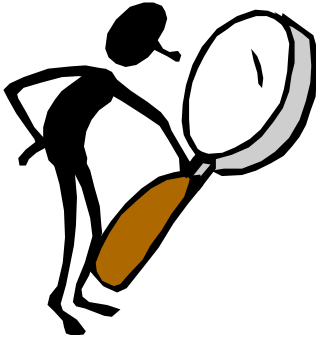
Friendship with God is built by sharing your life experiences with Him. Attending church is commendable and good but attending church one hour in the week on Sundays will not lead to significant growth. Experience spiritual growth through daily keeping in close contact with God. Learn to converse with the Lord every day of your life and you'll witness incredible growth and maturity.



Do not neglect church attendance and public worship but learn to compliment your life with a moment-by-moment walk with God. The Bible tells us to “pray all the time”. How is this possible? One way is the “spiritual breathing” technique. Choose a brief sentence or simple phrase like, “I belong to you Lord,” or “You are my God,” or “Together Lord, we’ll win this battle”. This practice will create an awareness of God’s presence in your life. Mental attitude is a determining factor in life. Your mind needs to be filled with good, wholesome and pure thoughts. Your thoughts produce emotions and feelings. When you dwell on your problems you begin to worry and stress. Think about God's power and awesome love for you and a fountain of living water will spring from your spirit.

Develop your friendship with God and awaken to His presence within you. Give the baggage of the past to God and He'll dump it in His sea of forgetfulness. Some believers go back and fish up their past. Leave your mistakes and disappointments at the Cross and walk free from guilt and sin and live life triumphantly. Accept God's gift of grace and mercy. Embrace it and expect new life from Him every day. Make this coming week, the most successful week of your life and grow in the Lord Jesus Christ. Respect for God produces self-respect. We are reminded to fear God. The word “fear” refers to “respect”. Respect for God is the beginning of wisdom and life. You are very, very special to God, so don't forget to tell Him you love Him.

23. THERE'S MORE TO LIFE



Who are we humans? What are we supposed to do? Surely life is far more than just surviving on mastering nature and other human beings? Why are we here?

The inability to answer such questions is one of the most striking and troublesome quandaries of being a human. For the past couple of years we have celebrated our Democracy. The President has been hailed as a genius and an intellectual giant.

As Christians we are compelled to pray for the government and the people elected to the office of leadership, but surely there is more to life than striving to uplift the social and economic standards of the nation? Yes, we understand the fact that survival is the primary goal of the poor and marginalised. The Church must play its part in addressing inequalities in our community, however, what shall it profit us if we gain the materialistic riches of the world and lose our souls.

The Gospel we preach,

- FIRSTLY** - converts the Spirit of a person,
- SECONDLY -** transforms the mind of the individual,
- THIRDLY** - offers a better quality of life, physically, materially and spiritually.

Seek first God's purpose (spiritual) and all these other things shall be added.

Who and what are you living for?

Change your priorities and your life will become different.

- 1. Recognise God as your Creator.***
- 2. Accept Jesus Christ as the only way back to God.***
- 3. Live for others and share your new found faith with them.***

24. A GOOD HABIT FOR LIVING

What are some habits of holiness that entrench the walk of holiness? Holiness means separation. Firstly, we need times of self-examination, where we look into the mirror of the Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to show us our sin. How can you clean a house, if you do not know where and what to wash? You need to identify the self-pleasing thoughts, attitudes, ways, actions and behaviour that offend God and do not imitate Christ. The standard is not what you think is right or wrong, the standard is the holiness of God as revealed in the Word. Many Christians never grow because they hate the pain of self-examination. It is the heart that must want to change. David exemplified this in Psalm 139: 23-24: *“Search me O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*



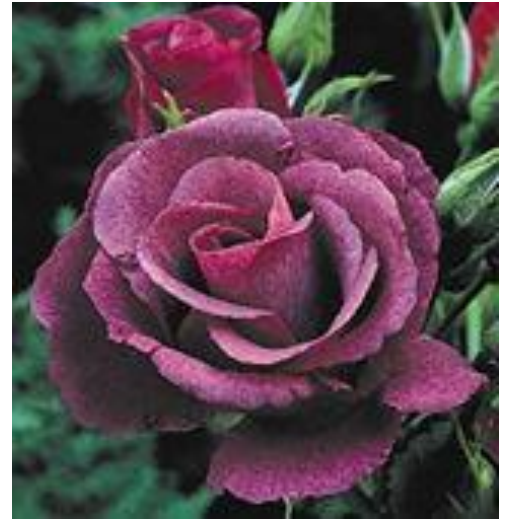
The heart that truly is willing to wait before God to allow Him to show us our failures will be rewarded. Jesus said *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* The one who truly wants God’s righteousness begins by humbly seeking to know where he falls short of God’s righteousness. This requires the habit of being still before God, and allowing Him to show us these things. The conviction of God is sometimes loud and piercing, other times it is a soft but audible prodding. Either way, we must never be so hardened as to end up with a seared conscience, where we cannot see our own sin, and therefore we no longer grow.

Develop a good habit and say

NO to evil and YES to goodness!

25. THE SECRET OF OUR BEAUTY

It has been said that “*beauty is in the eye of the beholder*”. The secret of the beauty of the lily of the valley is that it exists simply to glorify its Creator. This is the secret to beauty. If each of us would take time to consider God’s purpose in bringing us into the world, we will discover a secret that will beautify our lives. Just stop and think for a moment how unique God has made you. There never has and there never will be another human being exactly like you. The Lord has not made us as duplicates, but He has made us as originals. It is only when we compare ourselves with others that we feel inferior. Many fine Christians have allowed the concept of beauty to be determined by Hollywood and what we see on our screens. Magazines glamorise young women who are artificial products of an artificial industry. People who are reared in the rural areas of a country and who have no access to modern technology have a completely different set of values in regard to determining beauty. It is quite a revelation to contemplate the false values espoused by the world. We, as believers, should look beyond the features that the world wishes to propagate as the essentials for beauty. In our own rights we are magnificent, unique and special creatures. Many Christians are full of gloom, misery, sadness, bitterness, grudges and unforgiveness. They live in this state constantly. Their minds are occupied with fearful and dark things. They have no peace in their hearts. The Scriptures declare “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose MIND is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee*” (Isaiah 26:3). We need to see ourselves through the eyes of our Lord and Saviour. When God looks at us He sees us in Christ Jesus. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder then those of us who are in Christ may be assured that God recognises our beauty in His Son, Jesus Christ. If anyone be in Christ they become new creations. The old passes away and the new comes (2 Cor. 5:17). Do not allow your mind and heart to be filled and preoccupied with false worldly standards. Rather keep your mind focused on the beauty God has created within you and learn to trust God to use you as an instrument in His Divine hand. You were born for a purpose. Celebrate your individuality and stop comparing yourself with others. You are special.



26. THREE HABITS OF A CHRISTIAN

If you will do these three things daily, you will never grow weary or become discouraged. You will always be a happy and successful Christian. When you were not serving the Lord you cooperated with the enemy until he succeeded in helping you form certain evil or negative habits. You learnt to do things he wanted you to do by practicing his suggestions, day after day.

Now you must learn things that Christ wants you to do by obeying His Word and practicing His ways each day.

Let's call them "*Jesus Way*" habits. Yet you must be willing to continue doing them until they come naturally like brushing your teeth and combing your hair.

Be resolute and determine to practice them – like a good athlete who disciplines his body in physical exercise so that he can achieve his goals. Remember nobody smoked a full packet of cigarettes the first day he began the habit. He took a few puffs, coughed and spluttered, and finally managed to inhale the smoke without rejection. Habits, like alcohol, drugs and cursing work on the same principles.



The three habits are very simple,

- 1. *Talk to God every day***
- 2. *Let God talk to you through His Word***
- 3. *Talk to someone else about God***

In doing these three things bad habits will disappear and a new lifestyle will emerge.

27. SATAN'S DISGUISES

We need to know God's truth to expose Satan's lies.

It's often difficult to understand why people give in to certain temptations. From our vantage point, their problem should be easy to handle. We may even wonder how Adam and Eve could have been so foolish as to have thrown aside all that God had given them in the morning of their existence. *We* would not have fallen so easily – or would we have?

Part of the problem is that the tempter wears a disguise when he slithers into our lives. The Bible tells us that the serpent was “more cunning than any beast of the field” (Genesis 3:1). No ominous hissing or rattling warned of danger. He didn't ask, “Pardon me, may I have 20 minutes to destroy your life?”



Public Enemy No. 1 uses the same tactics today as he did back then. God's Word warns us that Satan dresses as an angel of light, and his cohorts appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor.11:14-15). We must be vigilant to prevent such a crafty deceiver from sneaking into our lives. Do you love the things of the world? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to live in close fellowship with Christ (1 John 2:28). Don't be fooled by Satan's disguises.

*When sin entices and allures
Its lies must be ignored;
The strength to gain the victory
Comes when we trust the Lord.*

**“I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness,
so your minds may be corrupted.”**

(2 Corinthians 11:3)

28. *UNITY IN HARMONY*

An orchestra changes music into symphony. Unity is created by a sense of common purpose and competent leadership. The Bible extols unity as the highest form of Christian relationship. Through the Holy Spirit great diversity becomes dynamic unity. It is said that whenever leaders of the early church gathered, they were in unity and harmony with one another and with God. Their conformity was



not only theological, but also spiritual and practical, for they shared their lives and possessions with one another, while relying totally on God. Given the diversity of our various cultures, one may ask how unity is possible in any but the very smallest of groups.

Since we are all one body, we have the same Spirit. God is the Creator of true unity. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church will bring unity and peace. However, God has created us differently, but with the common goal – to serve Him. Although Scripture discourages divisions in the Church, diversity can be positive if all strive toward the collective goal to serve and glorify God. The Lord said that our actions reflect our value system. Do your actions clearly show you are living by the values taught in the Bible? Ephesians 4 presents the 7-fold unity of the Spirit. It is this unity to which we strive.

Ephesians 4:4-6 *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

29. A LIVING SERMON

A preacher closed his sermon with an earnest and eloquent Gospel appeal. Among the score or more who responded was a woman of some wealth and social standing. She asked permission to speak a few words to the audience.

“I want you to know,” she said, “just why I came forward tonight. It was not because of any word spoken by the preacher. I stand here because of the influence of a little woman who sits before me. Her fingers are rough with toil; the hard work of many years has stooped her low; she is just a poor, unknown charwoman who has helped in my home for many years. I have never known her to become impatient, speak an unkind word, or do a dishonourable deed. I know of countless little acts of unselfish love that adorns her life. Shamefacedly, let me say that I have secretly scoffed at her simple faith. Yet, when my little girl was taken away, it was this woman who caused me to look beyond the grave and shed my first tear of hope. The sweet magnetism of her life has led me to Christ.”



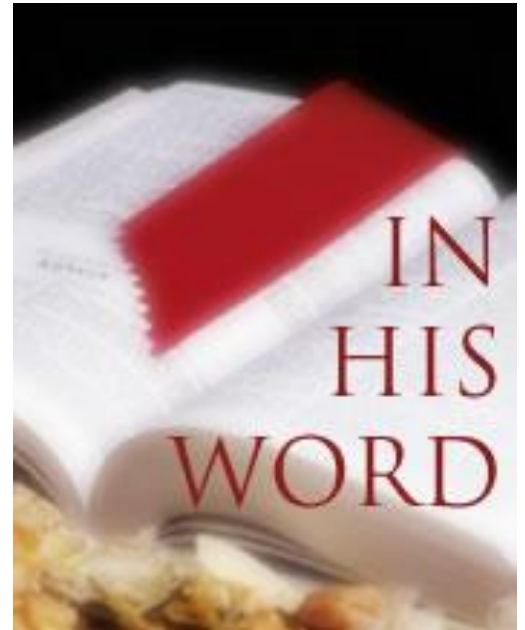
At the request of the minister, the little woman was led forward, her eyes streaming with tears, and such a shining face as one seldom sees on this earth. “Let me introduce you,” he said, “to the real preacher of the evening,” and the great audience sat in silent but obvious respect.

We may not be able to preach, still less to write; but we may be, as St Paul said, “Living letters, known and read of all men.”

**People will remember you by your actions and attitude.
Start now to leave a legacy for Christ's sake.**

30. DOERS OF THE WORD

We must seek to be doers of the Word. This requires a heart that relishes application. It listens with a view to obeying. It does not cherish knowledge as an end in itself. A teachable person is not one who simply likes knowledge. A teachable person is one who likes change. If I am humble, then I already have the attitude of submitting to God – I want to serve Him. As I take the step of walking in the Spirit it means saturating myself with His Word and seeking to follow Him exactly as He tugs on the leash of my renewed identity. One walking in the Spirit has the sensitive relationship of a believer listening to God, leading Him through the implanted Word in his mind.

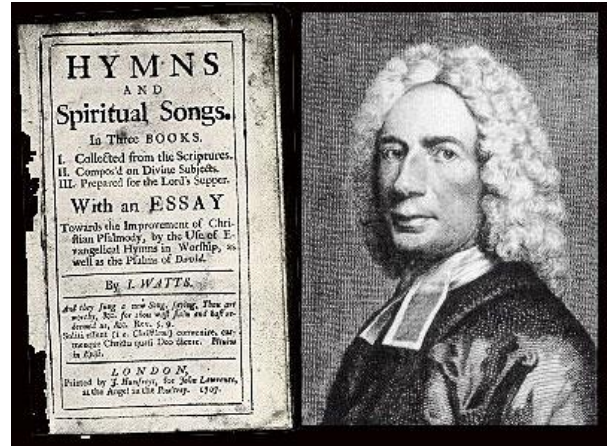


Indeed, in Galatians 5, Paul writes these words: *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* Here, Paul uses a different Greek word for walk, from what he used a few verses earlier. The word means to keep in step with Spirit. Simply put – consistently obey the leadership of the Holy Spirit. When He tells you to stop, stop. When He says go, go. Keep in step. You get out of step by living life selfishly, seeking your own desires above that of pleasing God. This is true obedience – following the will of another. These prompts are not mystical words or revelations that are extra-biblical. They are not supposed feelings or emotions. They are from the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God that we have digested through reading and meditating, prompting us to be doers of what we have heard.

Live God's Word and thereby do His will.

31. LEARN TO USE YOUR GIFT

A true story is told of a young boy who complained to his father that most of the church songs were boring and old fashioned. He said the tiresome tunes and words meant little to his generation of young people. His father challenged him with these words “If you think you can write better songs or hymns why don’t you do so?” The boy accepted the challenge and went to his room and wrote his first hymn. The year was 1690. The young



man was Isaac Watts. Among his 350 hymns are many of the hymns and songs we sing today. You may be familiar with “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and “Joy to the World, The Lord Has Come”. When you see a problem, accept the challenge; use your gift to God’s glory. You’ll be surprised what a difference it will make in your personal life and the lives of those around you.

The Bible promises mansions in heaven for those who believe in Christ. Another story tells of a man who dreamt that he was welcomed into heaven by an angel. He was taken to one of the great mansions and the angel unlocked the doors but the door would not open. The angel turned to the man and said, “So you are one of those”. He heaved and pushed and eventually it opened. Tumbling out of the mansion came many beautifully wrapped presents and gifts of all descriptions. The angel said “Open them and discover what you could have had down on earth.” This story illustrates how you and I rob ourselves and all the people around us of God’s blessing because we refuse to unwrap the gifts God has given to us, for our short journey on earth.

Each and every one of you has a gift. Maybe the warmth of your personality, or the courtesy you show others, or your gift may lie in administration, the ability to care for others, singing, playing a musical instrument, organising events, visiting the sick, encouraging the lonely, comforting the bereaved. The list is endless. If you will only exercise the gift God has given you, a new world of opportunity to serve God will open to you. *Remember you can make more friends in two months by being interested in others, than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you.* May God bless you as you learn to use your special gift to His glory.

32. A LETTER TO GOD:

Dear God,

I'm sorry you made Sunday when you did. You see, we could attend Church more often if your day came at some other time. You've chosen a day that comes at the end of a hard week. Saturday, you know, is the one time we feel we should enjoy ourselves. We go shopping, or to the movies, or visit places and people and sometimes we have to go to a cricket match. We never get to bed early on a Saturday – it's often past midnight before we switch off. So you can see it's almost impossible to get up on Sunday morning – you've chosen the very day we want to sleep late! I mean no disrespect, God, but you must realise that you have picked the day on which we have the biggest dinner.

Then you must think of Jack who works hard all week. On Sunday morning he goes fishing; sometimes he plays golf, sometimes he likes to catch up on odd jobs. It's really his only chance to work on the car and mow the lawn. Then he's in his old clothes and his hands are greasy – you couldn't expect him to get off to Church like that. By evening, of course, he is exhausted and you don't want a tired mind, do you? I'm telling you these things, God because I want you to get our view point. We would like to go to Church. The real reason we can't manage it is that you have chosen the wrong day. If you'll select another day, we shall be glad to be more faithful.

Yours sincerely,

I.M. BUSY

HEBREWS 10:25

**“not forsaking the assembling of
ourselves together, as is the manner of
some...”**

HEBREWS 10:30

**“.....and the Lord will judge His
people.”**



33. FAITHFUL ATTENDANCE

A pastor was once asked to define “Faithful Attendance at Worship,” and this was his reply:

“All that I ask is that we apply the same standards of faithfulness to our church activities that we would in other areas of our life.” That doesn’t seem too much to ask. The church is concerned about faithfulness. Consider these examples:

If your car started one out of three times, would you consider it faithful? If the paperboy skipped Mondays and Thursdays, would they be missed? If you didn’t show up at work two or three times a month, would your boss call you faithful? If your refrigerator quit a day now and then, would you excuse it and say, “Oh well, it works most of the time.”

If your water geyser greets you with cold water one or two mornings a week while you were in the shower, would it be faithful? If you miss a couple of bond payments in a year’s time, would your bank say, “Oh well, ten out of twelve isn’t bad?”

If you worship and attend meetings only often enough to show you’re interested but not often enough to get involved – are you faithful?

God has called us to be faithful not successful. When we are faithful to God’s cause, He reaps the success and His Kingdom on earth is extended.

Live churches evangelise, dead churches fossilise. St Marks is determined to be an active, vibrant, relevant community church. Do not become a fossil. Rather become an evangelist and help us to fulfil our mission in our city. We are a church in the heart of our town. May we demonstrate that we have our people at heart. The tiniest effort to God’s glory will reap a harvest of souls for eternity. Our Lord wants us to be doers of His Word, not only hearers of His Word. Regular support in attendance, prayers, and tithes is a vote of confidence in the ministry at St Marks. We have a godly pride for what the Lord is doing in our midst. We are happy Christians who believe in praise and worship that is orderly and honourable to His holy name. The church services express our deep emotions and spiritual appreciation for what the Lord has done. Praise the Lord with us this Sunday!



34. INVESTING IN HEAVEN

A little girl, blind from birth, knew the beauties of the earth only from her mother's lips. A noted surgeon performed a successful operation. When the last bandage was removed from her eyes, she ran from the doctor into the arms of her mother. Then she ran to the window and looked out at the world for the first time. For the first time, the glories of the earth rolled into her vision. She ran to her mother and screamed with joy, "Oh Mama, why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" As the mother wiped the tears from her eyes, she said, "Precious child, I tried to tell you."



We read much about heaven in the book of Revelation, but when we get to heaven, we too will be overwhelmed with joy, "John, why didn't you tell us it was so beautiful?" Perhaps John will say, "I tried to tell you in the last book of the Bible."

What is heaven like? In the last two chapters of Revelation, John says that heaven is like a tabernacle, a city, and a garden. The entrance to heaven is pictured as pearly gates! We could not walk through the gates of heaven on our own merit. Our entrance to heaven is gained through the suffering of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "In my father's house are many mansions I am the way" (John 14:2, 6)

We *shall* inherit heaven. But what treasures are we laying up there now? A Texas oilman said, "The best way I know to lay up treasures in heaven is to invest my money in people who are going there." Won't heaven be great? Invest your money, time, and talents in your church. It is in the heaven-going business!

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:20-21

35. THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

Nicodemus was a conscientious Pharisee. He expected his salvation to come through ceremonial obedience. He was no doubt strict in observing all traditional requirements of his day and was ready for any task Christ might impose: to fast more often, to offer longer prayers, to bring his body in severe subjection. He was a type of those in every age who would make themselves better before God, and to this end are full of resolutions, daily penances, and pious works. Christ does not condemn any of these things. He simply declares them to be insufficient and says, *"You must be born again"* (John 3:7). The old nature does not furnish a foundation on which to rest hopes of recovery and life. A new life must begin. The old heart is depraved and must be made new. Our own righteousness is like a robe of rags – it cannot be patched or made over. We must have an entirely new robe, the robe of Christ's righteousness.



The doctrine of the new birth is for Christians a sure anchor. The Spirit who has begun a good work will carry it on until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6), and all who trust Christ for salvation can know that their salvation is safe in Him.

You may be asking, "How may I secure the new birth? If this assurance is born of God, what can I do about it? Must I simply wait until the Spirit moves upon my soul and begets in me the image of Christ?" No, not at all. The Saviour did not leave Nicodemus and does not leave us helpless in the darkness about such an important issue. In His own discourse, Christ passes naturally from the work of the Spirit to His own work and that of the Father, and to the duty of people. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:14).

Your part is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. If you have never done so, do it now.

36. DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

The unknown future is dark and obscure to us. The journey ahead is fraught with danger. Our planet is not as secure as we once thought it to be. Some of us take life one day at a time because we are afraid of tomorrow. The characteristic of our age is uncertainty.

God does not send viruses that shorten our lives. God does not punish his creatures by wiping out whole populations with war or plague or terrorist bombs. He is not responsible for the nuclear-arms build up that threatens the total destruction of our planet. Apart from the natural disasters which randomly cause much suffering and loss of life at times, much of this earth's tragedies are caused by the greed and lust for power and the carelessness and sickness of the human race.

We know that our troubles are not sent by God, but are the consequence and price of living in this world and of being members of the human race. It is necessary that we recognise that the troubles that trip us up are not of God's choosing and may not be eliminated by our praying.

God has declared – as did the psalmist – and we can believe it, that our loving God is “an ever present help in trouble.” It is, however, *in* trouble that he is “our refuge and strength” and, miracle of miracles, *through* trouble that he often works out His will and purposes in and through us.

Yet the proclamations of the psalmist are absolutely true: “The Lord *is* our light and salvation... the stronghold of our lives,” (Psalm 27) and this certainly ought to shore up our heart with courage. We must be careful lest we bring on our own troubles, but we need not be fearful in the face of calamities and troubles that befall us in our world. We can take heart and wait for the Lord, for He is our light and salvation.



God has not promised to immunise us from problems but to be with us when problems come our way.

37. CHRISTIAN ACTION

The normal result of the Christian life is that it reproduces itself. It ought to be a norm in our lives to bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ our Saviour. In order to be an effective witness for Christ we must be familiar with His Word. The words we say will not be effective unless supported by the authority of the Bible. Someone has said that personal evangelism is “70% praying, 20% listening and 10% talking”. We often get these percentages out of balance in our attempt to share our Christian convictions with our friends and relatives.



Prayer has much to do with the preparation of the person you want to introduce to Christ. Remember most people are blinded to the light of the Gospel. They understand the concept of God sending His Son to atone for our sins but this is only an intellectual knowledge of the facts. What people need is a Spiritual awakening. They need their human spirits to be ignited with the flame of God’s presence.

How will they hear unless you speak to them. The Holy Spirit will use your testimony to save them from a lost eternity.

Act now!!

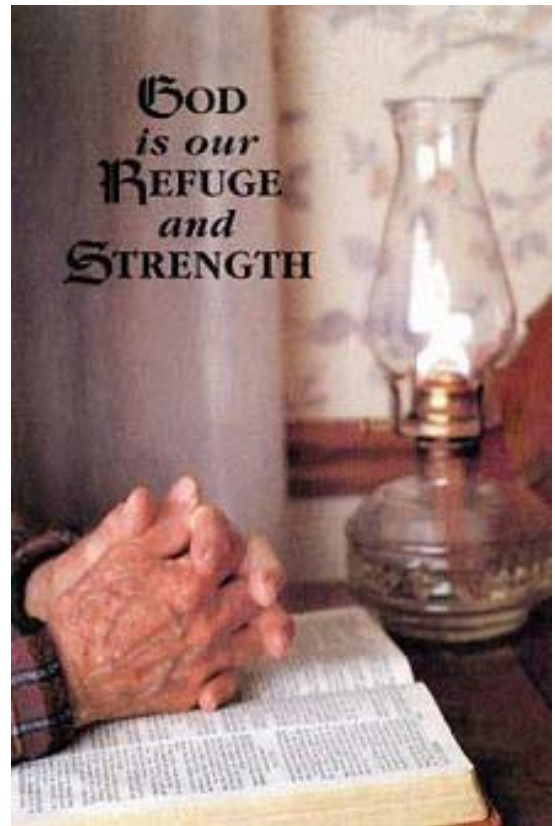
Peter, the apostle, came to know Christ after his brother Andrew invited him to hear Jesus the Messiah. This encounter transformed Peter’s life and generations of people have found hope and blessing through this mans life. Remember that God is looking for an Andrew to invite a Peter to meet the Saviour. You can be God’s link with a man or woman that the Lord will use to His honour and glory.

Share your faith with someone today.

38. OUR DARK WORLD NEEDS LIGHT

The most solemn distinction among men came when Jesus called on His followers to be the children of light. The presence of light makes day. The absence of light makes night. All who receive Jesus Christ belong to the first class and are called the Sons of Light (John 12:36).

When we receive the light of God's love we will have a desire to walk in the light of fellowship with Him. How can we let the light shine in and through our lives? We have become so pre-occupied with worldly and material ambitions that our light is hidden to those in darkness. If we believe that Christ has made a difference in our lives then we should be different from the world. To be like the world means to behave and act in darkness. The god of this world, Lucifer, has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4).



If each and every Christian lived out his or her belief, what a great difference it would make in our homes, in our society and in our country. We must stop bemoaning the state of society unless we are prepared to be what God has called us to be, light in darkness.

How do you drive away the darkness? You cannot drive away the darkness by shouting at it or complaining about it. The solution is to find a candle and light it. Darkness and despair will be dispelled.

Your new life in Christ is the light that may help others to come in from the darkness.

39. SUNSCREEN

*The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day.
(Psalm 121:5-6)*

Some people are harmed by the sun's powerful rays. They may be allergic to the sun, or they may have a disease, like lupus. If these people are exposed to direct sunlight for an extended period of time, they have a visible and painful reaction. To protect themselves, they wear large-brimmed hats and clothing to cover their arms, legs, and necks. They use the strongest sunscreen



possible to protect exposed skin areas. And they spend the midday hours in the shade. In a similar way, Christians need spiritual protection from the evil world system. Its ruler, Satan, bombards us continuously with temptations and pressures that will weaken our testimony and turn us away from the Lord if we yield to them. God Himself provides us with all the protection we need. He stands between us and the enemy. He is our shield and our fortress (Psalm 144:1-2) But we must apply this protection through prayer, reading and meditating on the Bible, faith, right thinking, fellowship with other Christians, and depending on the power of the Holy Spirit. These disciplines will keep the world from getting through to us. God truly is our shield and protector.

*The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Protection He affords to all
Who make His name their trust.*

Trust God for His protection against evil.

40. LIVING IN SPIRITUAL POVERTY

The average Christian does not understand how to draw upon the resurrection power and resources of Jesus Christ. As a result he lives in spiritual poverty, not knowing or experiencing his great riches and resources in Christ.

In west Texas there is a famous oil field known as the Yates Pool. During the depression this field was a sheep ranch, owned by a man named Yates. Unable to make enough money on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on his mortgage, Yates was in danger of losing his ranch. Like other families at the time, his too had to survive on a government subsidy.

Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over the rolling west Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would be able to pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told Yates that there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well and he signed a lease. They struck a huge oil reserve, giving 80 barrels a day. In fact 30 years after the discovery, a test of one of the well showed that it still could flow 125,000 of oil a day. And Yates owned it all! The day he purchased the land he received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he was living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty! What was the problem? He did not know the oil was there. He owned it, but he did not possess it or realise it.



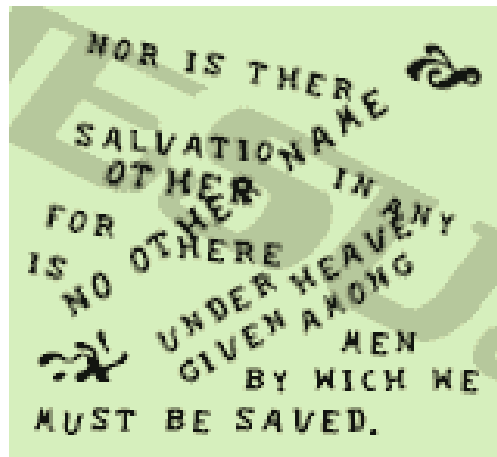
I do not know of a better illustration of the Christian life than this. The moment we became Christians, we became heirs of God, and all God's resources are made available to us. Everything we need, to be the people of God, to be fruitful Christians and to lead others to God we already have. But most Christians continue to live in self-imposed poverty, because they do not know how to appropriate from God those spiritual resources which are already theirs. Like Yates before the oil discovery, they live in ignorance of their vast riches. From faith, start drawing strength from Christ our Lord today.

41. A DECLARATION THAT IS EXCLUSIVE

"No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

The acid test of Christian theology is what a person does with Jesus Christ. There is no more dangerous indulgence than to reduce Christ to the equality of others and make him simply *a* way rather than *the* way.

We are not hesitant to accept absolutes in the natural world. We accept the absolutes of physics, chemistry, and all forms of scientific calculations, yet many are afraid of the divine dogma that Christ is the absolute in spiritual salvation.



To proclaim Christ as an optional way of salvation is to reduce his divinity to mere humanity. And a human Christ cannot lift us from human despair.

The Duke of Wellington was right when he said, "Education without God will fill our world with clever devils." And a salvation without a divine Saviour will fill our world with demons, clever or dull.

It was this excellent exclusiveness that Peter preached. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Conclusion: Let us come from life's deepest desperations to the Lord Jesus who is the Way.

Let us receive Him as the clear, simple designation of heaven for earth's problems.

Let us be consistent in giving Christ absolute authority and mastery over our lives.

Have you lost your way, dear friend? Hear Him Say, "I am the Way."

Take the first turn to the right and go straight ahead. If you have not already done so, will you not do it now?

42. A LIFE OF VALUE AND WORTH

There is no magical formula for longevity. The lifespan of some are abruptly cut short because of illness, disease, accidents and tragedy. Others live to a ripe age and go through life without having to visit a doctor. Experts tell us that our physical body is the product of our genes. There are some books in my library that consist of only twenty pages. Then there are others consisting of a full volume of seven hundred pages. As an avid reader I have discovered that the quality of a book is not determined by the quantity of pages - and so it is with life. Quality of life no matter how brief is so much better than the quantity of life that lacks quality. We need to explore the truth revealed in God's sacred book, the Bible, in terms of value and worth. What is it that gives value to life? Made in the image of God, humankind is unique and different from the animal and plant species. We are three dimensional, body, mind and spirit. Evolutionists propagate the false theory that we are the accident of some cosmic event and that over billions of years we have evolved from slime to intelligent moral beings. We as Christians embrace the creation of life by the God of the Bible. He has made us in His image and likeness and the only way in which we can find true value and worth is when we receive life from the One who is the Source of all things. Accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour we affirm our belief in the fact that He is the way back to God, that He is the truth that sets us free from the lie and false values in the world and that He is life and therefore enables us to conquer death and destruction. Life takes on a whole new meaning when we discover our identity in Christ Jesus. Do not delay but make your choice today and the value and worth of your existence will rise to greater heights. Today we give thanks to God for the remarkable life of one of our most senior church members, Lettie Kilian, who turned 101. Along with her family we give glory to God for His blessing in and through her life. Her tenacity, faith and determination are a great inspiration to each and every one of us. We salute her as an icon and we thank God for her humour and humility. The Psalmist says it so well in Psalm 71: *"In Thee o Lord do I put my trust. Let me never be put to confusion. I am a wonder to many but You are my strong refuge. I honour You today and I request Lord that You do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength fails me. You have showed me great and sore troubles but You will bring me up again. You will be my comfort until I have showed Your strength to this generation and Your power to everyone that comes. Now that I am old and grey headed reveal Your greatness in me."*



43. THE CHALLENGE OF SALVATION

There are those who believe that all they have to do on this planet is live a life of good morals and deeds. Others believe that life ends in death and that's it! Some even believe in fatalism. They say you can't know what will happen after death, so live as you please as you most likely have no one to answer to! Yet, as Jesus started His ministry, He spoke loudly and clearly that people have a need. He stated that with His coming to this earth, the Kingdom of God was near and that people needed to repent and believe the good news. This response is not through giving money, service or fulfilling healthy morality, however good these are. Rather, the response of repentance and faith are wanted and required, because as Romans 3:23 tells us, "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Because we are born with a sinful nature and heart, John 3:3-7 tells us we need to be born again. This refers to a spiritual action that comes when God's Spirit responds to our genuine repentance (turning away from self, sin, the world), and trusting that which Jesus did on the cross He did for me personally. It's the Spirit who quickens my soul and brings me to spiritual life and a relationship with the Lord.



Friend, have you experienced the new birth through the sacrifice Christ made for you?

PRAYER:

O God, I realise that I am a sinner. Have mercy upon me. Forgive me of all my sins and receive me as your child forever.

44. THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

Ephesians 4:25-29

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another. Be you angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.”



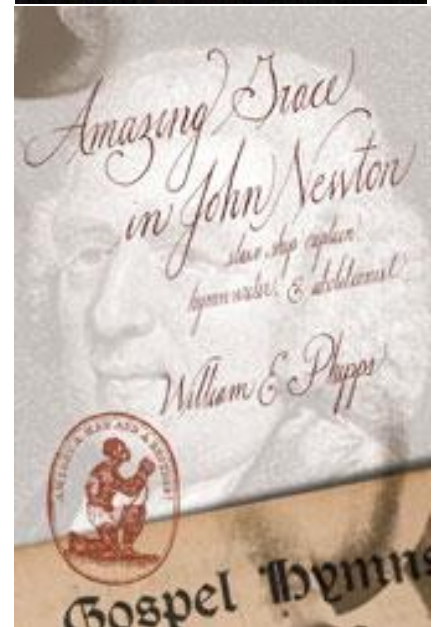
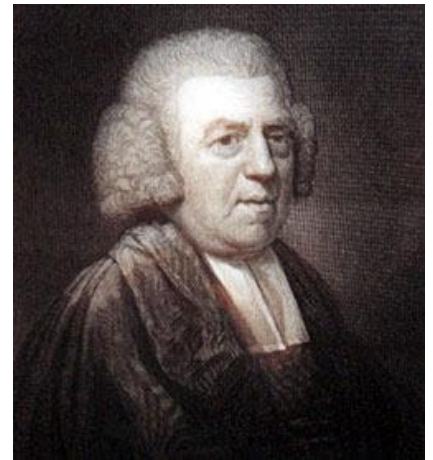
How do you know when someone has become a Christian? A preacher was once asked how he knew people had been converted under his ministry. His answer was simple and to the point: “I can see it,” he said. The visible evidence of the new birth is seen in a variety of ways. It is seen in the way you speak the truth with others. It is seen in resistance to temptation and giving no opportunity to the devil. It is seen in industrious work being done every day (verse 28). It is there when there is willingness to share with anyone in need (verse 28). It is also heard when speech is helpful instead of hurtful. It has been said that “a fruitless person is not a failed Christian, but a false one – in other words, not a Christian at all.” Fruit is evidence of the root. Andrew Murray once said, “Have you ever noticed the difference in a Christian life between work and fruit? A machine can do work; only life can bear fruit.” The sign of the life of God in the soul of man is in a life rich with excellent speech and godly behaviour. That is what the Christian life is about.

**Live the life of a believer.
It's one area that the devil cannot counterfeit.**

45. A STAR TO STEER BY

John Newton, slave trader turned Christian, wrote, “I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.” To know the Lord is to be somewhere on this journey. All journeys need a star to steer by. John 8:32 reads, “You shall know the truth and truth shall set you free.” Truth is clearly our “Star.” John 14:6 points out that truth is a person; Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” He, conveniently for us, reveals Himself in a

book as well. This is a great way for us to get the big picture but in the specific challenges of our day-to-day lives, dialogue with Him provides us with just the right application of it that we need for now. Hence we need both the book and the pilot to steer the boat right. But it is never plain sailing: 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10: “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan,... with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved.” Remember Satan never deceived Jesus. Let truth be the star that guides your life.



John Newton wrote:

***“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.”***

46. THE CROSS ROAD TO COMPROMISE

The temptation of our Lord recorded in *Matthew 4:8-10* by Lucifer is a reminder to all of us of the danger of compromise.

At the crossroad of compromise Satan parades everything he has with the flair of a circus ringmaster before Jesus. At this stage the Lord does not have one follower for His earthly ministry yet, and He knows the task ahead will be difficult. So the devil offers Him the very things that He has come for on a silver platter; the kingdoms of the world. No suffering, no struggling, no sacrifice, just one little compromise and all of it can belong to you! What was the compromise? “Fall down and worship me.”

My dear friend, this is at the heart of temptation: one little compromise! Watch out for it as you stand at the crossroads: Satan will promise power and glory in exchange for compromising the Word of God. At first glance it does not look so severe, but you will end up paying homage to the devil instead of to God. Satan tried to bypass the Cross, which was why Jesus came to earth in the first place. Thank God, Jesus did not accept this compromise, but did it God’s way! The Cross would be the fulfilment of His mission. It had to be the crown of thorns firstly, before the crown of power. In our lives we often want to compromise at this point: we don’t want to accept the sacrifice, but we want the glory. However, there are no shortcuts with God: we must do things His way. Adam did it the wrong way: it was God’s will for him to grow in Godliness and obedience, but Adam failed the test and compromised with the devil. Let us not fall into the same trap.



PRAYER:

Thank You, Lord, for strengthening me so I can stand against the wiles of the devil.

Amen

47. SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

“In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”

The word, “sealed” used in this passage of the Holy Spirit, was a word which was used with reference to guaranteed ownership. It was used with reference to the branding of an animal which would have an indelible mark on its skin as an indication of its belonging to its owner. It is a word which was also used with reference to any pledge given by a man to a woman he intended to marry. It was then a way of saying that there was every intention of making the bond permanent. It was also used to refer to a deposit made by somebody who made a down-payment on any article he wanted to have, assuring that the balance outstanding would follow. When Christians are said to be “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”, they are said to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit by God’s gift which is His assurance that all that He has planned for His child will be given.



The Lord does not owe us anything, and yet He is so pleased to use such human terms to assure us that all that yet awaits us in terms of God’s blessings for His people will most certainly become ours in time. If we are the bride and Jesus Christ is the bridegroom, then everything He intends to do in us, and for us, He will faithfully do. He will never break a promise.

In keeping with His Word, and the sealing with the promised Holy Spirit, praise God for the great things He has done. He empowers us to live for Him.

***To be filled with the Spirit simply means to be influenced
by the Lord.***

48. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO YOU

Romans 3:3&4

"For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true but every man a liar; as it is written, that you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged."

Dogs are often called man's best friend because they will serve their master faithfully even when things are not going well. Our personal friends often leave us high and dry when things are tough or when we are most in need of someone to be able to turn to. Even the prodigal son's friends left him when he fell on bad times. A faithful friend will be there with you through the good and the bad times in life.



In the reading we find that God is totally faithful and he will remain faithful to what He has promised even if we may fail sometimes and if other people turn away from us. His ways are not our ways and we may think that God has unjustly brought His wrath on us. This is not true as Paul points out. It is ridiculous to think that we can sin in order for God's righteousness to become more apparent. God is faithful to his promises but He will punish sin and He will reward us for trusting Him.

It is illogical to think that a righteous God will not punish sin for whatever reason it is committed. Two wrongs do not and will never make a right. Our human minds will try and find reasons for our unbelief, but God looks at our hearts and looks at whether we have obeyed Him or not. Nothing else counts in our favour except our obedience to His Word. Let us thank God for being utterly faithful to us even when we sometimes deny that we know Him or love Him. God can restore us to Himself again when we fail Him, but we can be sure that He is faithful and just and will never forsake us when we fail.

49. LET'S TREASURE GOD

Talking about God as our treasure might lead some people in the wrong direction. They might think we are teaching the false health, wealth and prosperity Gospel. By talking about “treasuring God”, some may think we are talking about physical health and financial wealth.



Firstly, the Bible clearly describes this teaching as false. Anyone who says “gain is godliness” is a false teacher. But if we see “God is gain” – this is Biblical (Phil 3:7-11). Secondly, when we speak about treasuring God, one word keeps it above the consumerist, covetous meaning of the prosperity Gospel: grace. Grace always keeps before us that fact that God was out of our reach, out of our control, out of our “price-range”. A consumerist sits in the “control seat”; he or she is at the centre, choosing what he wants and how he wants it. Grace reminds us salvation was not my doing. I didn’t cause it, I didn’t originally seek this. I did not merit it. I did not earn it. I cannot compensate God for it. Instead, God came near. When grace is the atmosphere, when we keep God’s grace in mind, the treasuring of God is always humble, grateful, submissive awe, never selfish consumerist materialism. For “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5).

OUR PRAYER

**Lord, deliver me from false teaching and help me to treasure You, so that I
can glorify your character.**

**Help me to remember that You are my master and
I your servant.**

50. CALLED TO SERVE

One of the greatest things Jesus did when He ascended into heaven was to raise up and to send into the world those who are called “pastors or teachers.”

When those who are called to preach and teach the Word of God are God’s means to build us up in the faith, we are to see them as gifts from God for our benefit. We are to pray for them fervently. We are to understand the nature of their work which is to build up the body of Christ. Those who bring to us the Word of God must never be idolised. That would be a terrible sin. They are seen as gifts of grace which Christ is to His church, and as they Wait upon the Lord for the ability to expound His word to His people, the people of God are enriched in the truth of His Word.

When Jesus saw the crowds as sheep without a shepherd and had compassion on them, He urged His disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would thrust out labourers into His harvest field.

The way in which He spoke teaches us that the true servants of God do not “enter the ministry” but that they are sent out by Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you thankful for this? Do you earnestly pray for those who are God’s instruments to teach you? Do you see them as God’s voice in the wilderness?

We the ministers of St Marks stand united in our calling to inspire and bless you, our valued members. Please pray for us as we seek to heal the broken hearted and bring hope and comfort to all we serve. God bless you for your prayers and faithful support.

51. GOD IN CHRIST THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS

The Christmas message is retold every year. To some it is merely a tradition or custom. Once it is over, mankind redirects their thoughts to the old habits and lifestyles. The miracle of Christmas is that God was in Christ.



A very rich and powerful king lived in an empty palace, a lonely man. He needed a queen and a family. One day, while riding through a small village, he saw a pretty peasant girl. He wanted to make her his queen and wondered how he could win her love. He could have drawn up a royal decree and by force he could have made her his queen, but would she love him, or maybe because of his power and wealth she would find it easy to accept an invitation. He would never know if she chose him or was forced to accept him, so he decided to go to the village dressed as a peasant. He decided to work and suffer with the peasants of the village. This he did and won the young lady's hand in friendship and love. When the king took on the life of a peasant, he did not cease to be king. He was both king and peasant. That is precisely what God did for us 2000 years ago. He took on human flesh to become one with us. His life and His death is a revelation of His love for all mankind. When we respond to the Christmas message we accept God's invitation to become His bride.

May we thank God for coming to earth to live as a person with all the limitations of humanity and may we celebrate such great love today.

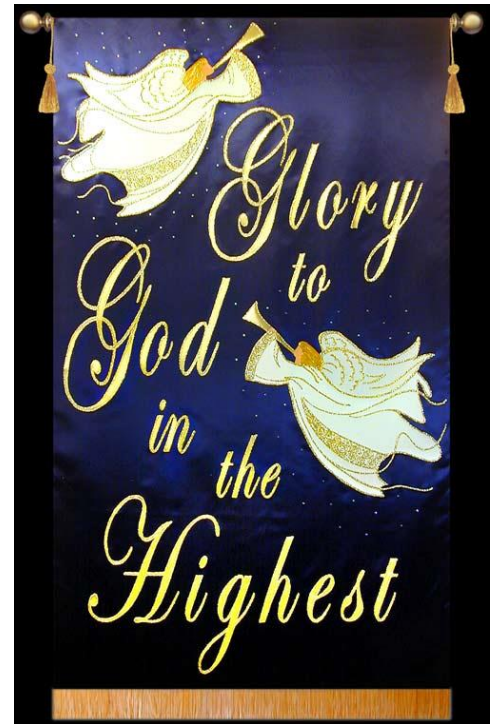
*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son
that if you believe you will have eternal life".*

John 3:16

Have a blessed Christmas.

52. **GOODWILL TO ALL MANKIND**

Its Christmas and we celebrated the most eventful day in human history. The Birth of Jesus Christ more than 2000 years ago changed the course of history. The wise men who visited Christ Jesus came from the East (modern day Iraq). These wise men most likely were influenced by the writings found in Babylon. Remember that Nebuchadnezzar took Jewish men into exile after he attacked Jerusalem. One of these students was Daniel. He rose to a position of prominence in the Babylonian empire. His writings about the coming Messiah were stored in the archives of the empire. These wise men studied these ancient writings and therefore became aware that in an appointed time a King would be born. They came with three gifts.



Gold was a gift for a **King**. It represents the deity of our Saviour.

Frankincense was a gift for a **priest** and was used in worship representing God's Holiness.

Myrrh was a gift for a **prophet**. It was anointing oil used in embalming.

This represents the sacrificial death of Christ. He was born King of Kings, He also came to be our High Priest and He was the Prophet like Moses.

May this day be remembered for years to come as a red letter day in your life as you recall the truth about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Have a blessed New Year.

MY NOTES:

Step by Step is extracted from the St Marks Church weekly bulletin with a special message from the Senior Minister, Dr Bruce Woolard.

The inspirational messages will challenge you to live for Christ Jesus our Lord.

With 52 weeks in a year this book is designed as a weekly reading to assist you as you endeavor to live out God's purpose for your life.

The following three step approach to knowing Christ as Saviour will help you to begin a journey into the future:

Step 1 - Acknowledge that by nature you are a sinner.

Step 2 - Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

Step 3 - Find a Bible believing church and grow in God's Grace



ST MARKS
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CORNER OF BOSCHOFF AND CAPE ROAD
FRAMESBY NORTH
6025
TEL: (041) 360 6060
FAX: (041) 360 9217