



21 DAYS OF PRAYER – DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER GUIDE

February 5-25, 2024

Hello to all our Eastgate family and friends!

We'd like to invite you to journey with us over these 21 days. Our Church Family have written daily devotionals to accompany us along the way. We are super grateful for all those who contributed. As a church we will continue to nurture our confidence in making disciples of everyday Aussies, One by One. Undergirding this is the essential of prayer and this next scripture is our launching point...

"We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace." **Colossians 1:3–6 NLT**

Our 21 Days goes from Monday February 5 to Sunday February 25. In summer we accompany our 21 Days with feasting and in winter (August) we fast and pray! Our main emphasis over these 21 Days is unified prayer and personal devotion. These 21 Days are also a great opportunity to gather with others over a meal or a drink and pray together. Pray in your LINC'S groups. Pray via an online zoom platform. Pray over the phone. Pray!

"The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every day you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for the rulers and governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live. He wants not only us, but everyone saved..." **1 Timothy 2:1-4 (MSG)**

We will be offering **daily prayer zooms 6-6:30 am and 6-6:30 pm** via our church website. If you would like to host prayer at any other specific times – live or via zoom – let us know so we can get the word out. Nev hosts a weekly **Prayer LINC'S** in the Kids Hall at our Byron **10am Tuesdays**. You can also join the pre-service prayer time in Nev's office on **Sunday mornings**, usually around **9:30am**.

We will also host an interactive **prayer and worship evening at our Byron Campus on Wednesday Feb 14th**. This will begin with finger food (of course!) at **6:30pm** in the courtyard. **Please bring a plate of food to share**. The evening will wind up by **8:30pm**.

We'll finish the 21 Days with a **celebration feast for lunch after church on Sunday Feb 25th**. **Please bring some sweet treats to share**.

The prayer guide is just that – a guide – please don't be overwhelmed by the choice of what to pray for - keep it simple – you might just choose one thing for the day - allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and stir your heart.

Enjoy!

DAY 1 Monday February 5

Silence And Circles – Nikki Dent

I want you for a moment to join me on the palm tree-studded terrain of the ancient city of Jericho. Jericho was positioned as the gateway city into the Promised Land, standing menacingly between Israel and their God-given inheritance. If you're imagination needs a refresh, flick your Bible open to **Joshua 5:1-6**, where you'll find God authorising Joshua to take this formidable fortress full of rebellious Canaanites.

As we spend 21 days in prayer, I have a strong sense that God has very specific Kingdom territory He has authorised Eastgate Church to possess. In fact, many of us must bring down a brand-new year full of proverbial Jerichos - gateways to promised lands of potential promotions, purposes possessed and powerful breakthroughs. Let me sum it up in one word: inheritance. In fact, "*inheritance*" will be the key word for the entire book of Joshua, mentioned 57 times.

Eastgate church has a God-given inheritance. The New Testament picks this up in **Hebrews 4:11**, exhorting us to "*diligently enter*" this inheritance. However, just like those cursed Canaanites, the demonic will often stand defiantly on the most strategic land of our spiritual inheritance. Strongholds of sickness, pride, unforgiveness or fear stubbornly oppose the purposes of God in our personal lives. Strongholds of witchcraft, unbelief, deception, and religion resist the residents of Byron Bay coming to salvation and freedom. And friends, if we are to conquer our enemies and claim what is ours in Christ, we're going to need a warfare strategy. We're going to need to lay hold of our inheritance in warfare PRAYER.

Joshua is given the most counterintuitive warfare strategy for conquering Jericho (in fact, there is no comparison in any other ancient literature.) No spears, no sieges. No battering rams or sabre-rattling. Just...going 'round and 'round that ancient city in mute circles. Please don't underestimate how foolish this looked to the Canaanites sneering over the edge of those impossibly thick walls. And make no mistake, our Enemy still uses accusation and mockery to undermine our confidence in the Word of God, especially when it feels like we're going around in circles, praying silently and sincerely as we gaze at those intimidating strongholds. Our weaknesses, our unsaved friends, our wobbly relationships, our unhealed bodies tower like an imposing fortress, without so much of a pebble rolling away.

But as we all know, at that final blast of the priest's trumpet (and not a minute sooner) "*the walls came tumbling down!*" Jericho sunk faster than the [supposedly unsinkable] Titanic. Church, it's time to enter a season of warfare prayer. It's time to identify the strongholds of our lives, our community, and our ministries that are squatting on our inheritance - and start circling in prayer. Because honestly, I have to wonder: if God brought down the apparently impregnable, unconquerable Jericho after just 7 days...imagine what He can do after 21!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My growth and relationship with Jesus

Our Church: Our church family and friends near and far

Local Community: Hampers of Hope, provision, recipients and community connections

Our State, Our Nation: ACC National, State and Regional Leaders and Teams

Global: War Zones and areas of conflict, eg Ukraine, Middle East, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Africa

DAY 2 Tuesday February 6

Deserts and Date Palms – Benika Duncan

Psalms is like a present-day hymnbook - a collection of poetic songs written by a variety of authors. The arrangement of the Psalms in our Bible took place during the time of Ezra. The overall emphasis is on Yahweh and his relationship to Israel. Alongside every other Old Testament book, Psalms points to and finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. While reading through **Psalms 1**, the Holy Spirit illuminated a particular verse in connection to our current 'One by One' journey of making disciples as Jesus made disciples (resulting in fruitfulness and multiplication!!).

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers [channels] of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:3 NKJV

Reading this verse, the Holy Spirit dropped into my heart the fact that just as trees are designed to be fruitful and contain the DNA needed for multiplication, so too every person is designed by God to bear fruit spiritually. God wants us to be fruitful! It is in our very DNA (**Genesis 1:28**) and it images our Creator.

This simile, *"like a tree"* depicts a desert date palm firmly planted in an oasis (if you haven't heard Nev share his desert-oasis story, you've got to ask him!). Though we are in a 'desert' landscape with much of our culture moving further away from God, we have the very water of life, the Holy Spirit (**John 7:37-39**) sustaining us and calling us to be a blessing to others. The phrase *"whatever he does shall prosper"* is describing a person who is useful, valuable, and productive to the Lord in all seasons of life.



John 15:5-8 NKJV *"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire [his will], and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so, you will be my disciples."*

This passage in John shows us again that it is in fact God's will that we bear fruit and in so doing we reflect him. We have been learning this year about the ways and the works of Jesus - how he loved absolutely everyone but looked intentionally for those in his life whom God was already at work in, and he invested in those relationships very purposefully and prayerfully over a long period of time. The passage also reminds us that God is the source: *"I am the vine; you are the branches..."* God is the one who begins working in hearts and he invites us to participate in his work as we look to and rest in him. And God's word is key: *"[if] my words abide in you"* - cultivating daily disciplines of coming before God's word and inviting the Holy Spirit to help us understand his truth is a huge key to bearing fruit for the Kingdom.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 NKJV *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is in the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit."*



This passage further exhorts us to trust in God - our God who has shown himself to be eternally good and faithful to his promises - Who delivered Israel out of slavery to Egypt and who sent Jesus to deliver you and me from slavery to sin! To trust God involves believing what he says and relying upon his strength.

Here are some things he says about us: that we are deeply loved (**John 3:16**), he says that we are firmly his (**1 Peter 2:9**), that we are powerfully anointed to tell others about him (**Acts 1:8**) and that he has given us everything we need to live our lives for him (**2 Peter 1:3**) What else does he say about us? Let's ask God to help us believe what he says about us and grow in our dependency on him.

"For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." **Psalm 1:6** NKJV

The word *"knows"* in this context is about God being personally and intimately involved with the way of the righteous. God knows and cares deeply about those dear to us. God created us uniquely and wants to use our personalities and abilities to image himself to those around us. God sees the details in our day - be open to the gentle nudges of the Holy Spirit, obey and watch as God invites us into his kingdom work.

Remember, God is the ultimate Gardener - he offers to take the mess of our lives today and turn it into compost that will grow healthy, strong, and fruitful trees for his glory.

Go forth today knowing God is absolutely and powerfully present with you through whatever challenge you may face. Put your roots down deep into his word, worship, and fellowship with him today and watch as he uses your life to bring his very presence to those around you.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My family

Our Church: Our volunteers & Billi Op Shop volunteers

Local Community: Christian Surfers

Our State, Our Nation: Freedom of speech and religion

Global: The global spike in poverty from the pandemic

DAY 3 Wednesday February 7

Mountains And Valleys – Lynda Wiles

One of my daughters gifted me a prophetic pendant. This lovely piece of jewellery was crafted after prayer from a woman I did not know. As she prayed over my name, she heard the words *"She soars above the valleys always"*. These words are engraved on the necklace. A handwritten card accompanying the gift, encouraged me to look back and down upon life's valleys, recognising the growth and endurance that the Lord had imparted in the journey.

It's a precious reflection. Yet, I must confess, my immediate thought was a sobering one. I wondered about the unknown valleys to come. How would I manage traversing them? Would I find the faith, endurance and Spirit-filled strength needed for the next valley? What about the following one? It's wise not to run too far ahead in our thinking. Afterall, Jesus reminds us - *".. don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."* **Matthew 6:34**

Most of us would not willingly choose the way of the valley, especially when the imagery evoked is one of darkness, dangers, insecurities, and hopelessness. We may feel enclosed by immovable mountains, with no clear horizon to beckon us into the future. We may feel incredibly vulnerable and weary. We may be discouraged and disheartened, trudging with a backpack laden with problems and pain. Betrayal and bereavement. Failure. Injury and illness. Trauma and trial. We take the next step because we must. We sigh with the weight of our burden. We weep. We wonder when it will end.

Sometimes we arrive in a deep valley by our own poor choices. Yet more commonly, we plunge over a precipice by an unforeseen, unwanted, and unexpected circumstance. In shock, we realise afresh, that we are not in control. Deep emotions are our companions in the valley.

Jesus is neither silent nor indifferent to our pain. Jesus, who *“was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.” (Isaiah 53:3)* He who understands the struggle of our human condition, invites us to lift our gaze to Him.

“I look up to the mountains — does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!”

Psalms 121:1-2

“For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.” Psalms 95:3-4

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.” Psalms 23:4

Troubles and pressures bring us to the end of ourselves. Then, we seek Him and find Him. There are treasures to be sought in the dark night of the soul; there is majesty and music of Christ’s kingdom and the immeasurable wealth of His imparted riches.

“I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness — secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.” Isaiah 45:3

We are invited to keep choosing to trust Him; to choose life; to choose to stand in Christ’s transforming power and in resurrection hope, even as we traverse the vale. Jesus said *“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.” John 16:33*

People everywhere experience mountains and ravines. When things go wrong in their world, they find themselves distressed and lonely in a valley of despair. Here is an opportunity to finally come to the end of themselves. In the valley, some people will rant at Christ, blaming him for their circumstances. Others are more open to seek the comfort of the true and living God. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** says: *“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”* Out of the comfort we receive, Jesus primes us to be ready to bring empathy and compassion for others in pain. One by One, we have opportunity to speak about the God of grace and forgiveness and to share the wonder of resurrection hope. What amazing, sure, and certain hope we proclaim!

Revelation 21:3-4 *“I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Prayer - Lord Jesus, we pray for the treasures of darkness in the valleys of life, that you might use us to advance your kingdom work. One by One, may you help us reach out with kindness and compassion to people struggling in darkness, that they might lift their gaze to you and find in you, the life you offer.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My household

Our Church: Our LINCOS groups and hosts

Local Community: Billi Op Shop serving our local community

Our State, Our Nation: Our National Government Leaders

Global: ACCI and other Christian organisations freeing trafficked and enslaved people

DAY 4 Thursday February 8

Patient Endurance – Claire Alexander-Johnston

“We also pray that you will be strengthened with all His glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father.” Colossians 1:11

At the end of last year, I was plunged into six weeks of forced silence following surgery to remove polyps on my vocal cords. Hanging up my boots on the worship team temporarily, I decided to spend the time meditating on *“patience”* and

“endurance” ... two-character traits very prominent in scripture and not so much in my own life. [As it turns out “Loud” and “Immediate”, aren’t listed as Fruit Of The Spirit ;)]

In an effort to gain perspective on my silent prison sentence I ploughed through the book of Job. But not entirely comforted by his misery, I dove further into [Foxes Book Of Martyrs](#) and found solace in the fact that as a Christian in this season, I was simply being asked to control my tongue, not get mauled by a pack of hungry lions.

And [unsurprisingly] these wild testimonies of faith against all odds, did finally give me some perspective. What faith these men and woman of God had... what sacrifice... what endurance... what a witness... what an offering. And to lay it all down with “joy” and “thanksgiving”!?

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2 NKJV

“That you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” ...what a confronting promise - I always feel like I lack something! Yet He promises that I, fully yielded and surrendered in the slipstream of His grace...lack nothing.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” Psalm 23:1 NIV

So, as we start this new year, with many things up in the air, held in the balance or plainly unanswered. I will be asking the Lord for patient endurance as I walk through the valleys holding onto the promise of green pastures - and David’s song will be on my lips as I joyfully (gently!) give praise to my Good Shepherd. Because I believe that this kind of praise [that we give the Lord in the midst of the mystery] is costly; it requires great faith, great patience, great endurance....and for everything in us [one day at a time, one 'everything' at a time] to be laid down.

But I refuse to miss my chance to give Him an offering that costs me. So, may ‘patient endurance’ my portion be.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My colleagues (school, work, voluntary etc)

Our Church: Running future courses - Alpha Film Series, Alpha Marriage, CAP etc

Local Community: Generate, Scripture in schools, Chaplaincy

Our State, Our Nation: Housing crisis and inflation

Global: ACCI – our denomination’s field workers, projects, and community development

DAY 5 Friday February 9

Love God Love People – Maree Hart

1 John 3: 18–24 – Message [Passion Translation]

“My dear children, let’s not talk about love; let’s practice real love [our love can’t be an abstract theory we only talk about, but a way of life demonstrated through our loving deeds ~ PT]. This is the only way we’ll know we’re living truly, living in God’s reality. It’s also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves. [Whenever our hearts make us feel guilty or remind us of our failures, we know that God is much greater and more merciful than our conscience, and he knows everything there is to know about us ~ PT] And friends, once that’s taken care of and we’re no longer accusing or condemning ourselves, we’re bold and free before God! We’re able to stretch our hands out and receive what we asked for because we’re doing what he said, doing what pleases him. Again, this is God’s command: to believe in his personally named Son, Jesus Christ. He told us to love each other, in line with the original command. As we keep his commands, we live deeply and surely in him, and he lives in us. And this is how we experience his deep abiding presence in us: by the Spirit he gave us. [So, these are his commands: that we continually place our trust in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we keep loving one another, just as he commanded us. For all who obey his commands find their lives joined in union with him, and he lives and flourishes in them. We know and have proof that he constantly lives and flourishes in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. ~ PT]”

Hi Family. It's great to be sharing in another season of Prayer (& feasting) with you, in addition to continuing our 'One by One' journey.

The above scripture spoke to my heart prior to the end of last year and when the email came regarding our Devotional, I 'swung back around' to revisit it. It both encourages and challenges me. I love how God does that... well most of the time... Love God. Love people. That's how I try to live out this life of faith. The reality of what this looks like? Well, there's no end to the descriptive words that I could use...

The above Scripture certainly speaks to the concept of Love God, Love people. Indeed, the book of **1 John** speaks to that end. One of the things that I have struggled with over the years is 'debilitating self-criticism'. Self-criticism is crippling. It's soul, and faith, and relationship destroying. But this isn't God's first Rodeo, as it were. In fact, He knows everything. He knows our worried hearts and is merciful. His mercy has dealt with everything done and undone.

I love the following promise: *'once that's taken care of, and we're no longer accusing or condemning ourselves, we're bold and free before God!'* Free to do to what...? Live deeply and surely in Him, and He is us. We abide in His presence (joined in union with Him) – as evidenced by the Holy Spirit He has given us. To: Love God and love people. May we know in deeper measure the depths of God's love, as we live to love others, and bring God glory, all through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Father, I pray for all those who are suffering from debilitating self-criticism. I ask that through the revelation of your Word and the power of the Holy Spirit you would break that bondage in the name of Jesus. I ask that your mercy would fill hearts and lives, and that we would be set free to abide in union with You! Amen.

P.S. If you have time – read **Psalm 25**

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My friendships

Our Church: Pastors Team and Leaders

Local Community: Hinterland, Richmond, Summerland, Emmanuel Colleges etc, Staff, Students, Families

Our State, Our Nation: Repentance and access to Godly wisdom and truth

Global: ACCR - our denomination's crisis and relief work – in war zones and disaster zones

DAY 6 Saturday February 10

Life! – Denise Prentice

John 3:1-21

What an amazing thing we enter into when we accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life! We find ourselves living with new perspectives, seeing every interaction of life in a new way – truly old things become new for us! Old opinions change, old attitudes re-direct and old habits change under the Holy Spirit's influence.

Life in Jesus in many ways mirrors the life stages we have as humans – not surprising as we are made in the image of God. Remember Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus (**John 3**) where he speaks about the need to be born again, and what that is about. Verses 5 & 6 (NLT) *"Jesus replied, 'I assure you; no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and The Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.'"*

It is good for us to reflect sometimes on those early days of our faith (be that last week or last century) when we first really knew our Heavenly Father loved us so much He sent Jesus to die for us and in that realisation everything changed. Jesus said to his disciples *"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."* (**Matthew 19:14**) Childhood and teenage years – these are years of dependence, growth, and discovery – dependence of those around us and growth due to interaction with these same people. In natural human lives, this is mostly family, and community. In Christ – it's our close church family members and the wider church community. This is a season where we grow – we drink it all in, discovering this is so real, and as we get confident, we pray "bigger" prayers, test our faith and our understanding of who God really is, and grow, and grow. We look outward with enthusiasm and see a world of

opportunity, where the Holy Spirit is already at work, we gain stronger levels of faith, a deeper understanding of & hunger for the Word, experience a greater measure of the Holy Spirit's presence and recognise we are becoming children of God.

The next season of our lives is adult maturity. In human terms it is the season to settle down and raise a family. In Christ, it is a time of taking the growth, discovery, and enthusiasm we now have and applying it to our lives in every area. It is a time of fruit bearing, and those around us recognise we have been with Christ. Our relationships with others change and strengthen as we work together. We see needs and realise that we can meet them, we become acutely aware that God wants to move! There is a mighty harvest and as He directs our steps, we move into the harvest to gather it. We move at His direction, led by His Holy Spirit to those ready to gather in the field appointed to us to work in. We move with purpose and care, gathering that which is ripe, while not crushing that which is still growing and not yet ripe for harvest.

And then we come to a time when we know we are near to seeing Him face to face. Just as in human terms we retire, we find ourselves being again re-directed by the Holy Spirit – still in the harvest field, but we may find ourselves doing different things, or even the same things in different ways. **Romans 11:29** says *“For God’s Gifts and His Call can never be withdrawn”* (some versions use the word irrevocable). My grandfather always used to say, *“There is no retirement in God.”* We will go Home, but we don’t give up. We may find ourselves encouraging those carrying the heavier loads of active ministry, we may find ourselves checking through the field for those missed or overlooked, those ripening later than others, caring for the young ones, so other workers can be released into the fields.

While the harvest is still not fully gathered, there is still work to be done – in every season of our life in Christ. One thing that is our lifeline, keeping our connection to our Saviour strong, is our time spent with him, in prayer and in worship. This is where our relationship with Him takes place – where we have our one on one with Him, and from this we can share His Life in us one by one with others. Jesus is our start and finish point, and everything in between. Truly the Alpha & Omega.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My neighbours

Our Church: Building extensions and provision

Local Community: Businesses, jobs, economic recovery

Our State, Our Nation: Our Health Workers

Global: YWAM - Youth With A Mission

DAY 7 Sunday February 11

The Power Of “How” – Karlene Grinham

Some people talk passionately about the wave they caught this morning, some the perfect coffee, some their award-winning orchids. As an educator and leader of a ‘culture of questions’, to say I am a passionate advocate for people asking questions would be an understatement. With this as a keen personal interest, God has taken me on a journey of exploring the importance and power of asking questions that cause us to go deeper, seeking more understanding.

My favourite question starter of all time? How.

And it’s not just me. Musicians have used the question power punch, how, to pen some amazing worship songs that literally millions of people raise their voices to; How Great is Our God by Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash and Jesse Reeves, and How Great Thou Art by Carl Boberg, to name two. It is such a powerful question starter, that I reckon you may have already started humming at least one of those two songs.

Using the question power punch, how, invites others into relationship through conversation and has this wonderful way of disarming and calming people. It also carries with it the ability to speak hope into a situation i.e., how can we move forward in this matter?

There have been many times in the past few years where I have been chatting with a ‘yet to be saved’ person and have found myself in some really groovy situations where ‘how’ has been the missing link to that ‘next level’ convo. When applying this

simple, but powerful question starter in an inquiring manner (soft tone of course) has actually supported the person to continue in conversation with me and encouraged me to draw near.

Even as I write this now I can hear...

'Hmmm, can you help me out here? How did me talking about Jesus offend you?'

'Yeah, yeah. I do think differently on that. How does me having a differing opinion frustrate you?' 'How can I help you in a way that'll show you you are loved?'

'How do you see such beauty in nature and not see how it sings all praise to the Creator?'

'How does your view of a god 's attractive characteristics actually align with the God?'

Even in response to people asking how do I keep smiling and laughing through all of life's turmoils, I have found myself answering with the question *'How can I not? How could I go through this without praising the God who made me, loves me, and promises to go through everything with me?'* Oh, the opportunities this has brought about.

How can you experience the power punch of the how? Perhaps some of the questions we could ask today...

How do you want to use me on this day Lord?

How can I represent you strongly to my spouse/family/neighbour/workmate/stranger?

How can I see how much you love me?

After all, ... *"How great is our God, sing with me..."*

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My physical health

Our Church: Disciples who grow disciples who grow disciples, Discovery Bible Method equipping

Local Community: Red Frogs, High school programs, serving at Schoolies and Festivals

Our State, Our Nation: Aged Care

Global: Our partners, projects and field workers for West Africa & Days For Girls

DAY 8 Monday February 12

Let Heaven And Nature Sing – Bruce Heid

"And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:9-10 NLT

During the winter months of 2023 Cora and I spent time caravanning in Queensland. We travelled over 12,000 km in 16 weeks. Our trip included the flat open country of western Queensland where communities are hundreds of kilometres apart, and far northern, tropical Queensland where the annual rainfall is expressed in metres, not millimetres. The diversity of the flora and fauna is huge from the dry landscape to the tropical rainforests. And this is one small area of the earth!

The lasting impression I have from the trip is the wonder of GOD's creation. At the end of each day of creation narrative recorded in Genesis 1, GOD stands back and says, *"it is good"*. The diversity and complexity of GOD's creation is no accident of nature but is the fruit of a creator GOD.

During the trip we visited many natural history museums, such as the Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton, and many national parks. The unwritten assumption behind all the oral, written and video presentations we saw was evolution. Surely, even a basic understanding of nature would cause people to think about the creation of the world - it is far too amazing and complex to be an accident!

The Bible makes many references to GOD's creation praising him. A few examples are ...

"The mountains skip like rams. The hills, like lambs." Psalm 114:4

"Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." Psalm 114:7

"Let everything that breathes sing praises to the LORD. Praise the LORD." **Psalm 150:6**

The whole of **Psalm 33 and 148** encourages all of creation to praise the LORD, not just Christians!

On the day that Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem (**Luke 19**) the crowds were cheering, and the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke his followers for singing his praises. Jesus said in response *"If they keep quiet, the stones along the road will burst into cheers."* (**Luke 19:40**). The meaning of *'the very stones will cry out'* conveys that creation will *'speak'* to what is true - whether we, as humans, acknowledge it or not. God's creation is testimony to His power and might, even if people do not see it.

"Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD; it is fitting for the pure to praise Him. Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre; make music for him on the ten-stringed harp. Sing a new song of praise to him; play skilfully on the harp and sing with joy. For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything He does. He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth. The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him. For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at His command."

Psalm 33:1-9 NLT

Take a few minutes to reflect on the natural world around us - the hills and mountains, the streams and rivers, the open plains and forests, the oceans & sea life, all the creatures great and small. Because GOD created it all.

Give thanks for the wonder and complexity of his creation, do not take it for granted!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My emotional health

Our Church: CREW Youth and Young Adults

Local Community: Flood Recovery - housing crisis affordability, availability, and homelessness,

Our State, Our Nation: The Gift of Repentance in people's hearts

Global: Our partners, projects and field workers for Turkish peoples

DAY 9 Tuesday February 13

Don't Lose Heart! – Phil Thompson

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope (to anticipate, usually with pleasure, expectation, confidence) which is laid up (reserved) for you in heaven," **Colossians 1:4-5 NKJV**

I can remember on a number of occasions, extreme suffering, from the highly debilitating Man Flu. Those of us who have experienced the Man Flu know exactly what I am talking about. During this time, I longed and prayed for God to come and take me quickly, to end my suffering; to leave my mortal body once and for all. I was anticipating being taken from my "death" bed and taken home. Anticipating, with pleasure, what has been reserved in heaven for me.

I am reminded of a song we would sing in Kids Church and the lyrics are: *"Heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and grace, I want to see my Saviour's face, 'cause, heaven is a wonderful place."* I want to go there! Suffering from Man Flu, I wanted to go there, RIGHT NOW! God had other plans and brought me through to the other side. I know my hope is assured, will not dis-appoint, is reserved for me and in God's perfect timing I will be taken home. How wonderful and exciting.

There have been other (not health related) difficult, stressful, and possibly soul crushing times in my life. One key scripture (of a number of scriptures that helped me) stands out for me: -

Psalm 27:13-14 NKJV *"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness (the best) of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait (bind together) on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!"*

I was losing heart; my continence had fallen, my desire to continue was waning. However, because of this scripture and others, I chose to trust God, bind myself to Him and I began to know that I would see God's goodness, his best, this side of eternity.

I have SEEN the Goodness of God in the land of the living. I will continue to see the Goodness of God in the land of the living. Don't Lose Heart! Chose to Trust God! Bind yourself to Him!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My finances and provision

Our Church: businesses, jobs, study, ventures,

Local Community: Community and Government Services

Our State, Our Nation: Our State Government Leaders

Global: Our partners, projects, and field workers for Iraq

DAY 10 Wednesday February 14

Entering His Rest – Ben Pridmore

Rest. A word many parents couldn't say without thinking "what's that?!"

The fullness of life often has many of us (including me) in a juggling act with getting proper rest. That fullness takes different forms for each of us. But the results, for the most part, the same. Shortly followed by a cry for help whilst turning to **Psalm 23:2**, dreaming of those green pastures and still waters.

Rest is vital to our well-being. God intentionally built rest into life. He wove it into the very fabric of creation (**Genesis 1:14-19**). Then in **Genesis 2**, God "*rested from all His work...*". Blessing that day of rest and sanctifying it.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." – **Mark 2:27** God wasn't spent from His first week on the tools. He was modelling the importance of that rest for our benefit. But Rest in scripture has a few forms. Not just physical rest, but spiritual as well.

"Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will never be shaken." (**Psalm 62:1-2**) David reinforces the steadfast nature of God. A declaration of the certainty of God. A place of refuge. However, the setting of this Psalm seems to be anything but peaceful. (See verses 3 & 4.) This theme is common throughout scripture revealing the pitfalls of doubt, worry and anxiety. Yet the declaration is made for a second time! *"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge."*

Life can be full of un-rest and un-certainty, with weary souls and anxious hearts of those doing life in their own strength. But Jesus has become our rest. (**Hebrews 4**).

Lord, we choose to enter your rest. We declare we will not be moved. May your hope and joy rise within us today!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: A heart of generosity

Our Church: Sunday and Online Services

Local Community: Christian Churches and Ministries

Our State, Our Nation: Domestic Violence and Aggression

Global: Our partners, projects and field workers for Central Africa

DAY 11 Thursday February 15

I Will Give You Rest – Pam Bailey

One day when we were in PNG, the youth leader, Lawrence, took his group to the markets to do evangelism and I went with them. Lawrence raised his voice and asked, *“Who wants to hear about Jesus?”* Heaps of people indicated that they did, and Lawrence quickly allocated small groups to each “evangelist”. I had three ladies who hung off every word I spoke and asked for more. It was so easy because their hearts were ready to hear – God had gone before us!

In Australia I found it much harder, especially living in the heart of the New Age movement, where everything is accepted except the supremacy of Jesus. But the principle is the same. We need to wait on the Lord to go before us.

The verses God has been impressing on me is **Hebrews 4:10-11** – *“For anyone who enters God’s rest, also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us make every effort to enter that rest...”* It is not about me trying to make things happen. It is about me making myself available and waiting on Him, praying for His direction and wisdom and then RESTING!

I think maybe I can do that – trust Him to point out my “person of peace” and to provide the right opportunity and the right words to go forward. I will rely on His promise in **1 Thessalonians 5:24** - *“The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”*

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: A heart of forgiveness

Our Church: Billi Campus, Mobile Campus, future church planting

Local Community: Flood Recovery – mental health

Our State, Our Nation: Child protection

Global: Our partners, projects and field workers for Indonesia

DAY 12 Friday February 16

Finding Rest In God – Andrew Wiles

What is worth cherishing? That which is worth keeping.

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow.” **Matthew 6:33** (MSG)

But I know someone who is very sick, and I can't get them out of my mind. I don't feel holy. I feel uptight.

Joy in compassion. This can be uncomfortable but real.

When did Jesus weep? Just before he raised Lazarus from the dead (**John 11**). Was that a successful outcome if Lazarus eventually returned to the grave? Reactions in the aftermath of that event are not recorded. John only notes *“... many ... put their faith in Him.”* Jesus was doing the will of His Father. Was that satisfying and a memory worth keeping? Yes.

What is worth cherishing? Walking alongside those who are doing it tough. Expressing joy when realising a moment of beatitude has come to pass. Acknowledging delight when a frame of nature takes your breath away.

Psalms 4 shows it's fine to be in turmoil, and natural on such occasions to call on God for help. It concludes *“You have filled my heart with greater joy.”* To get from anxiousness to delight is quite a jump.

Psalms has further advice. **Psalm 31** has the person in focus in an alarming situation. The trick is in verse 6: *"I trust in the Lord."* It doesn't stop the difficult feelings – verses 10 and 11 and 12 and 13! But there is resounding success – verse 23. In this way we trust God with our future.

Turning attention to God naturally leads to asking Him to lead. **Psalm 23:3** *"He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."* **Psalm 143** has a methodology for those in any situation encapsulated in verse 10 *"Teach me to do your will for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."*

Where will He lead, for I want success for myself? And here is that mysterious paradox: what's best for me is to ALWAYS seek to honour God. Through diligence. Through fire. Through prayer. Through delight.

Our Lord teaches in **Matthew 13:44** *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."* I enjoy doing life with God. I am astounded when I see more of the depth of His personality. And am sizzling with delight at the myriad of ways I can express myself in His name. Praise God!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My current challenges

Our Church: Music Team, Tech & Creative Team

Local Community: YWAM Byron Bay

Our State, Our Nation: Substance Abuse

Global: Our partners, projects, and field workers for Thailand

DAY 13 Saturday February 17

A Vague Question? – Don Prentice

I asked myself recently, *"What have I learned about God in the last forty-five years as a Spirit filled Christian?"* It's kind of a vague question, with a multitude of answers, all of which could be true.

After a little while the Lord reminded me of this scripture from **2 Corinthians 13:5** in the ESV *"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?"* Jesus reminded me that the answer to my question, is in the question. *"As a 'Spirit filled' Christian"* Jesus Christ is in me. And has been for forty-five years, through all the ups and downs of my life. It's kind of so obvious we tend to overlook it. Jesus Christ lives in you, and He lives in me. This has amazing ramifications for who we are, and everything that we do, both individually as believers and corporately as the Church.

The number of things that *"Jesus Christ in us"* impacts is limitless. I'll try to give a few examples, which are not in any order of importance and all of which can be expanded on:

Prayer

Bible study/meditation

Fellowship – being together

Ministry (covers so much)

Sharing our Faith with others

Worship

Overseas Missions

Faith, Hope & Love

Giving – Time & Money

Relationships

Family & Friends

Identity

Education – Career – Leisure

Health – Diet – Exercise – Sleep

Can you think of some more which may be in line with what the Lord is saying to you at this time?

And finally, a great verse for our “one by one” series *“Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.”*

Colossians 1:27b NLT In everything that we do in reaching out to others, we do in the knowledge that Jesus is right there with us, praying for us, teaching us, helping us, encouraging us, as He is in us!

Have a great day with Jesus everyone!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My current concerns

Our Church: Equipping and empowering servant leaders and volunteers

Local Community: Families and Marriages

Our State, Our Nation: Economic recovery, jobs, businesses, arts etc

Global: Our partners, projects, and field workers for India

DAY 14 Sunday February 18

Doi Suthep – Neville Strachan

Recently, our team from Eastgate Church, including Sue and myself, visited ‘Wat Phra That Doi Suthep’ – better known by the later phrase of our title referring to the mountain itself. This is a Buddhist Sanctuary some 1073 meters above and overlooking the northern Thailand city of Chiang Mai. It is also known as ‘The White Elephant Shrine’ - where supposedly according to legend in the 14th century A.D., a white elephant carried half of Buddha’s shoulder bone to this location, thereupon after three trumpet blasts dying in this spot. Hence, this place becoming a later Buddhist pilgrimage Centre for Theravada Buddhism.

To visit this temple, one ascends over 1000 meters above Chiang Mai, and then after climbing the final 309 steps, reaching the gold-plated spire positioned on an Octagonal base at the top. Supposedly, as one ascends these “tiers of heaven” one rids oneself of all unwholesomeness, and if truly devoted, then producing a substantial financial offering that will be recorded by the temple on a displayed plaque. This supposedly assists in a pilgrim fulfilling “good works” and contributing to good karma and luck.

What a contrast to the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament. **Ephesians 2:8–9**, ESV, tells us, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* It is by grace alone that we have ascended mankind’s mountains of impossible religious demands. Jesus alone has done the work for us through what he did upon the cross – we can only receive by faith this gift and never by any “works”.

Ephesians 2:10, ESV, then continues, *“For we are his workmanship...”* (ESV) or where a second translation (NLT) puts it, *“we are his masterpiece”*. In other words, we have become God’s works of art – “...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” We are not saved by “good works” but instead we have been saved for them!!! It is our faith that positions us to become channels of blessing to a world that forever falls short of man’s constant religious doings and attempts of bringing good karma.

Let’s thank God that we have been saved by faith and not by works and that God has a plan for all of us to produce “good works” that bring him glory in a very needy world. What “good works” have you been called by God to do?

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: God’s purpose for my life

Our Church: Pastoral Care and Counselling

Local Community: Local Schools and colleges

Our State, Our Nation: Environmental Care

Global: Believers in all Spheres of Influence

DAY 15 Monday February 19

An Advantageous Gift – Sarah Pridmore

Recently I listened to part of a message from Pastor Bill Johnson and in it he said this:

“If you could imagine with me living in that kind of place (that being the disciples with Jesus) of overwhelming connection with the person of God himself within reach and them having Him say “it is to your advantage that I go.” How is it possible that phase two is better than this?”

He’s referencing **John 16:5** where Jesus is discussing with the disciples the work of the Holy Spirit. *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”*

It is wonderful when a passage in the bible is put into perspective isn’t it? That being how necessary life with the Holy Spirit is. I’ve been dwelling on this thought quite a bit and what it should mean in my life. Sometimes I think a relationship with the Spirit is seriously underutilized and sometimes I think we can get stuck thinking that the Holy Spirit is an afterthought. That we might just have a chance of doing the disciple walk without Him but thinking we have a chance at doing this walk without the Holy Spirit is to believe you can do it without God. And well... it's not even necessarily the fact that we aren’t aware of how valuable/needed the Holy Spirit is in our lives. It’s a question of what comes at the understanding of these words Jesus spoke. Can I comprehend that what I have available now is to a greater advantage than Jesus remaining of Earth. That’s actually mind blowing, and a seemingly incomprehensible gift. Thank you, Jesus!

I want to encourage you to think upon those words in **John 16** and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal some of those advantages because I truly believe that when we can really get a hold of the understanding that we have what the 12 disciples had then we will respond to advancing the kingdom of God boldly.

The Holy Spirit is called Advocate, Counsellor or Healer and out of those descriptions here are just a few advantages to get you going:

- There’s an advantage when you come to the Father in prayer, you are marked as a child of God.
- There’s an advantage when you minister to others,
- There’s an advantage when you are alone and need comfort,
- There’s an advantage when you need clarity,
- There’s an advantage to your kingdom inheritance and your ability to build a kingdom minded culture around you.

John 16:15 says: *“All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”*

What an advantage, that we can go about building the church and revealing the good news in the same way Jesus did. He heard instruction from the Father, in that same way He will reveal those intentions to us, through the Holy Spirit. I love that the Lord’s Prayer says, *“on earth as it is in Heaven,”* and that through Jesus being our role model gives us the ability to hear what *“is in Heaven”*.

As you pray and feast today do so with the knowledge that as you come before the Heavenly Father, you do so with an advocate giving you access to a life empowered but Him. Today you are at an advantage!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: Opportunities to serve the Lord

Our Church: Salvation and spiritual conversations

Local Community: Various spheres of Influence, Godly leaders

Our State, Our Nation: ACC Indigenous Initiatives

Global: Raising up and supporting people to go to the field!

DAY 16 Tuesday February 20

The Unforgettable Gospel Feast – Paul Dent

Matthew 9:9-13

In Matthew's Gospel we discover a dinner party that turned heads, a gathering that left an unforgettable mark on the hearts of those who witnessed it. Jesus, the Son of God, sat at a table surrounded by tax collectors and sinners – individuals considered outcasts by society. But what makes this account truly remarkable is that among those shocked by this event was the very author of the passage, Matthew himself, who confesses to being one of the tax collectors and sinners invited by Jesus.

Imagine the emotions stirring within Matthew as he reclined at that table. How must this feast have felt for him? The Scriptures do not reveal the exact reasons behind Matthew's choice to become a tax collector, but it is evident that there was a departure from the life God had intended for him. Despite the betrayal of his fellow Jewish people, Jesus extended an invitation — to a Gospel Feast, transforming Matthew's life forever.

As we reflect on this Gospel Feast, let us be reminded that the gospel is good news for everybody, especially sinners. It also highlights the inclusivity of Jesus' message – a message that is not just for the righteous, but for those who acknowledge their shortcomings and long for a transformative encounter with the Saviour. Jesus was accessible to everyone at that table. The outcasts, the sinners, those who knew they were in the wrong – they felt welcomed to dine with Him.

This inclusivity challenges our understanding of the gospel. While it is always exclusive in proclaiming Jesus as the only way, the truth, and the life, it is inclusive in embracing all who come to Him, regardless of their past or present state. Consider this: a sinner is someone who doesn't need rebuking, but restoring; not a lecture about errors, but a vision of a different future; not avoidance, but an invitation. Jesus came for sinners. To make the sick healthy. The gospel is a remedy for the rottenness of sin, offering freedom from its havoc and a path to salvation.

Let us carry the spirit of this Gospel Feast into our lives. Just as Jesus welcomed all of us to dine with Him, may we present the gospel without compromise but with unwavering love and acceptance. May we be challenged to extend invitations to those who may feel like outcasts, making the gospel always accessible to sinners — even tax collectors!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: Opportunities to serve others

Our Church: Holy Spirit's presence and Jesus Glorified

Local Community: Indigenous Community

Our State, Our Nation: G'day Farmer initiative and equipping of volunteers

Global: Bible translation for every language group

DAY 17 Wednesday February 21

God's Wonderful Grace – Naomi Johnston

"We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace." **Colossians 1:3–6 NLT**

How wonderful to understand the truth about God's wonderful grace. Dear Jesus, I pray you would deepen and increase my understanding of the truth of God's wonderful Grace.

I thank God that His grace and salvation are a gift. A gift, just to remind ourselves is freely given to you. You don't quickly pull out your wallet and say, *"Hey! Here's \$20 towards the gift!"* No! That would be strange in lots of ways. Today it would be strange because very few people I know carry cash in their wallet except my husband. He definitely would not do that because it would be incredibly insulting.

If I start to meditate on what a gift salvation is.... I realise that everything about life is a gift from God! A song springs to mind something about the air I breathe. Every breath we breathe is a gift from God. Every new day. Each beautiful new sunrise a gift from God. But the greatest gift of all is that Jesus has taken our sin on himself at the cross and has made a way for us to be right with God. The good news in a nutshell – **John 3:16** *"For God so loved the world that he gave (the most amazing gift, Jesus) his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."*

When I read **Colossians 1:3-6** I asked myself, *"What has God reserved for us in heaven?"* I immediately thought a home. When I talked/texted my friend about this she said *"Yes! And all the other stuff, no evil, no pain. Being in God's Presence constantly, (that blows my mind). Joy beyond our imagining.....life without end in fellowship with God"*. Incredible. An eternal home, safe and secure, no fear or pain forever with our God. How wonderful.

This is what the Colossians learned and understood when they first heard this good news. And it changed their lives from that first day they heard it.. And this same good news is going out all over the world Paul says in verse 6. Changing lives just as it changed their lives from the day they first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

Praise God this is still happening today. Maybe not with the Colossians, I don't know. I do know there are many amazing people sharing the amazing love of our God all around the world. This incredible hope we have. The hope of what God has reserved for us in heaven. I think of all our amazing mission people we are connected to, taking the truth about God's wonderful grace all over the world. All the co-workers in Christ, the people we do know and the ones we don't. How incredible that people's lives are being changed because of the love that the Holy Spirit gives us.

Lord Jesus I pray you continue to do your good work through me today. Amen.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: Opportunities to show kindness

Our Church: Identifying people of peace

Local Community: Bay FM, Community Centre, Youth Centre

Our State, Our Nation: Our Police, Military and Emergency Services

Global: Open Doors – and the Persecuted Church

DAY 18 Thursday February 22

Plant, Water, Increase – Phil Bailey

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 NKJV.

Many, years ago I belonged to the Wyong Drama Group – an acting group well known in the Wyong Shire and further afield for putting on high quality stage productions. (We actually performed the world premier stage production of Fawlty Towers but that's another story). One year we put on The Wizard of Oz (I played King Neptune). There was a young girl about 14 years old who played a major part.

As was usual at the end of a production season the Group threw a big party where everyone let their hair down a bit. Most people got fairly intoxicated including this young girl. I spent some time talking with her – I don't recall what I said – but I do remember telling Pam about it when I got home as I was a bit upset. Anyway, I didn't see her again at the Drama Group.

About fifteen years later one evening after church one of the pastors introduced a woman and her husband to me. They were visiting the pastor. He asked me if I knew the woman. I replied that so far as I knew I had never seen her before. She then told me she was the 14-year-old who had been in The Wizard of Oz and that at the party she had got pretty drunk, and I had spent a long time talking to her about life decisions and Jesus. She said that what I said had been a major turning point in her life and she had become a Christian.

Why do I tell you this story? Well over the past year we have been going through the One-by-One series at church where we have been challenged to share our faith with people as we have opportunity. How often do we feel a failure or inadequate in this endeavour – maybe we let an opportunity slide; or maybe we thought we stuffed up in what we said.

Since I joined Gideons 39 years ago I have had the opportunity to share the Gospel with hundreds of people but there has probably been a bigger number of times that I have whimped out and missed the opportunity. Whenever I feel I haven't done a good job in sharing with someone God sometimes reminds me of the 14-year-old girl at the Drama Group party and the fact my job is to tell people. The response and the timing are God's business.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: Opportunities to turn hearts towards Jesus

Our Church: Opportunities to serve our community

Local Community: Support For New Mums Network

Our State, Our Nation: Community recovery from disasters

Global: Gideons Bibles international work

DAY 19 Friday February 23

Pass The Baton – Robyn De Grosbois

Colossians 1:5-6. *"This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace."*

July 7, 1980, marked the day my whole world changed. September 30, 1980, marked the day my husband's whole world changed. Jesus set these captives free from chains which held us, the blindness that kept us bound. We found the treasure that had evaded our New Age searching and became rich and children of God Almighty.....forever.

When you find such eternal treasure your first response is to share the joy you have found. All your questions answered, all your searching come to completion. This desire to see others set free is our Saviours daily quest by the Holy Spirit through us.

For my husband Louis and I, God moved in our lives supernaturally when an elderly couple took it upon themselves to pray for the lost (us) who had crossed their path. A battle ensued to save us from the kingdom of darkness into His glorious light. The deception of sin no longer ruled.... what glorious victory!

The baton now passed on, Christ in us the hope of glory. God's Word and His family, prayer, worship, and fellowship makes disciples to pass the baton on until He comes. Oh, what a Saviour!

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My understanding of God's Word

Our Church: Next Step lunches, connecting new folk

Local Community: Gideons Bible distribution

Our State, Our Nation: Mental Health

Global: A living church for every people group

DAY 20 Saturday February 24

Faithfully Discipled – Julie Smout

“This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace.”

Colossians 1:4-6 NLT

Jesus discipled us faithfully. Remember that God saved even you and He is doing it again for others every day.

I prayed for decades for my family to be saved. Last year that prayer was answered when my daughter gave her heart to Jesus. A couple of years ago I heard a message that encouraged Christians that what we do and say for Jesus in our families can actually be discipling even before they accept Jesus.

It was soon after that, that out of left field my beloved daughter gave her life to Christ. Then I realised I had to put my anxiety aside and trust that God had this. Babies in Christ are scary. I felt like a Mother watching over the first steps of her baby. I wanted to protect her from the fall, pick her up at every point and brush her off.

Recently I dreamt of a lion and a lioness that unexpectedly appeared when I was on my way home walking through a beautiful field of swaying grass. The lions in my dream came right up to me. I was quietly terrified and believed my life would be taken. The lioness was at my back and nudged me with a stern grunt as the male lion put his teeth around my lower arm. Was she protecting me, I thought. Then I suddenly woke up.

After waking I prayed for interpretation. My Bible reading for the next day was of Daniel in the lions’ den. Also, at church the children had colour-ins of Daniel being unharmed in the lions’ den. Such a heavenly happenstance.

All this reminded me that God has always been faithful and always will be, to me and the others who choose to put their faith in Him. Jesus said He will never leave us or forsake us. This has encouraged me that though I may disciple others, when their walk looks shaky, they have to walk their own unique path with Jesus because He knows how to help them more than I do.

May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom from heaven as we pursue discipleship.

Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: My devotional life

Our Church: Finances, giving, provision

Local Community: Jesus presence to make our community liveable again

Our State, Our Nation: Godly Leadership

Global: Samaritan’s Purse – Operation Christmas Child, Women’s Shed

DAY 21 Sunday February 25

From Little Things Big Things Grow – Sue Strachan

I love immersing myself in the good news stories of how the Gospel transforms both individuals and communities.

Colossians 1:3–6 NLT says *“We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God’s people, which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace.”*

Inspired by this scripture some of our of devotional writers have already briefly shared how they came to faith or passed on their faith or have experienced “God’s wonderful grace”. I am so encouraged by verse 6; *“This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives.”*

Many years back Nev and I attended an ACCI missions conference in Melbourne where the concept of ACCI’s 1Day was being shared that we as a church sowed into for the best part of a decade. We also heard some amazing stories from the field. One story I always remembered was from Pastors Erik & Mariaana Klar. These field workers had been serving in Thailand in the Hill Tribes north of Chiang Mai for a number of years at the time and had been working with a particular unreached people group – The Tin Tribe. They gradually gathered faithful workers to come alongside them and planted a church among these people.

Erik told of a supernatural phenomenon that was a significant part of the Hill Tribes people groups opening up to the Gospel. This area was experiencing severe drought. The local spring had dried up. Things were very desperate. A local man from the village had suggested to Erik that he should pray for water. Several shamans had also done this previously but with no result. The team went and prayed at the spring. Initially nothing happened but in a day the locals reported with great excitement that water had begun to flow from the spring. Hallelujah! It was fresh, life-rescuing water.

Other Hill Tribe villages benefitted from this spring water as well. The spring ran abundantly for 7 years – all through the drought. Interestingly enough a counterfeit spring of water came out of a tree branch nearby, but it ceased providing water when the believers prayed *“if this water is not from you Lord, dry it up”!*

I’ve shared the miraculous spring story several times in various missions messages over the years but never thought I’d get to visit where this took place. However, on our recent trip to Thailand with the team from our church, we were given the opportunity to go up to the remote Hill Tribes. We all piled out of the van and looked across at the mountain vista with its very steep valleys and almost vertical market gardens. Then Erik began to tell the story of how their work here had begun and the amazing doors that the Lord opened to these Hill Tribe peoples because of persistent prayer. I began to wonder if this was where the spring miracle had taken place.

As we walked through the village where a church had been planted all those years ago, Erik stopped at a particular hut with a man sitting on the veranda and began to tell the spring story! I was so happy to hear it all over again. The man on the veranda was the very man who had suggested Erik pray for water all those years earlier! If we had had more time we would have had the opportunity to walk to the place of the spring. (Next time!)

We met Yingvit, the man who had been raised up to pastor the church in the Hill Tribes and heard his testimony of being a mistreated orphan who had taken refuge in a Buddhist monastery. He’d been a very devoted Buddhist, and he was also a great cook. He eventually came to faith in Christ because of his very persistent Christian friend who needed his help to prepare food for a church service and this is how Yingvit first heard the Gospel!

Pastor Yingvit took us up to a large football field size of levelled clay ground. The view was spectacular. This levelled ground is to be the site of a new multi-purpose facility to be built for the community to use and also host their church services. It was a really special moment when Yingvit asked his dear friend Cal McDonald (our very own team leader) to come back and lead worship at the opening when the building will be completed. Yingvit’s vision is for a 1,000 Hill Tribes people to come to Christ.

Be encouraged today that this same Good News dwells in you and will keep on *“bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives”*. Pray expectantly.



Prayer Focus today:

What can I be thankful for?

Personal: A heart of thankfulness

Our Church: Children, Families, Singles, Marriages, Seniors

Local Community: Local primary schools – need for SRE teachers

Our State, Our Nation: Numbers 6 – The Blessing & Revival

Global: Compassion and Sponsor Children and communities

Thank you for joining with us in these 21 Days of Prayer and Feasting.

Bless you richly in the Name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

(Please note: If you would like to write a devotion for our next 21 days of prayer in August, please let us know and we'll be in touch about the theme. office@eastgatechurch.com.au)

