

22 FEB-9 APR

Sermon on the Mount

LENT 2023

DEVOTIONAL

Sermon On The Mount: Devotions
Lenten Morning Prayers
Holy Week: Reflections

Wesley
METHODIST CHURCH



WESLEYMC.ORG

LENT DEVOTIONAL 2023 | PASTOR'S MESSAGE

REV RAYMOND FONG

Dear Wesley Family

As we enter the season of Lent, we will be embarking on a new sermon series based on the Sermon on the Mount.

Oswald Chambers wrote, "The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is getting his way with us."* My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will transform us as He has his way with us this Lent.

Starting with Ash Wednesday, Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) marked by an intentional focus and reflection on the life, ministry and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ culminating in his death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The 40-day period represents the time when Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray (Matt 4:1-11). During these 40 days, Jesus overcame temptation in preparation for the kingdom work He was to do before eventually going to the cross.

During Lent, we may practise the following spiritual disciplines:

a. Confession and Examination

The 40 days are set aside to confess our sins and examine the areas of recurring sin in our lives (Ps 139:23-24) as we seek God's grace in earnest repentance.

b. Fasting and Prayer

We may either fast from food or "fast" by giving up something that occupies our time and attention, e.g. phone games or engaging in social media, so we can use that time instead to pray. This is to cultivate the practice of holy abstinence and self-control from worldly pursuits.

c. Giving and Service

We can serve others through generous giving and volunteering. We can donate the money we would normally use to buy the things we are fasting from. These make us aware of the suffering and needs of others and also compel us to deeper sacrifice as we meet the needs of others.

As we engage in these spiritual disciplines during Lent, may we be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and grow in our appreciation of the sacrificial love of Christ.

In line with our directions this year on Discipleship in the Family, we have prepared this special Lent Devotional.

This Devotional has daily reflections on scripture readings from the Sermon on the Mount with a family focus: church family and individual family. These reflections are personal, heartfelt and authentic. I pray you will be deeply encouraged as you identify with them.

In it you will also find the Lenten Morning Prayer devotions and the Holy Week Scripture Readings.

May we be blessed as we encounter God anew this Lent.

May His transforming love cause us to grow in our discipleship in our families as we engage His word in reflection and respond in obedience.

May we develop a more disciplined and intimate prayer life as we take time to draw near to God, listen to His voice and respond to love our Lord and others.

On a journey this Lent with you.



Rev Raymond Fong
Pastor-In-Charge

**Studies in the Sermon on the Mount by Oswald Chambers*

LENT / HOLY WEEK 2023 |



Ash Wednesday Service

Wed 22 Feb 2023

7.30pm | Wesley Sanctuary | On-site

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent. Come and be blessed as we posture our hearts right in repentance at the start of this season.



Lent Sermon Series | Sermon On The Mount

From weekend of 25 Feb to 02 Apr 2023

Over six weekends, study and learn together with your ministry or small groups, this important teaching by our Lord Jesus on discipleship in His kingdom. Invite someone to join your groups.

26 Feb 2023	The Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12)
05 Mar 2023	The Extensions (Matt 5:17-48)
12 Mar 2023	Practise Piety (Matt 5:13-16; 6:1-8; 16-18; 7:1-5)
19 Mar 2023	Our Father (Matt 6:9-15)
26 Mar 2023	Finding Your Treasure (Matt 6:19-34)
02 Apr 2023	The Way Of The Kingdom (Matt 7:6-29)



Holy Week Services

Mon 3 Apr to Wed 5 Apr 2023

7.30pm | Wesley Sanctuary |

(On-site and Live-Streamed www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)

Theme: **Intergenerational Discipleship: Head, Heart And Hands**

Speaker: **Rev Dr Tan Soo Inn**



Maundy Thursday Family Holy Communion Service

Thu 6 Apr 2023

7.30pm | Wesley Sanctuary |

(On-site and Live-Streamed www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)



Good Friday Combined Worship Services

Fri 7 Apr 2023

8.30am | Wesley Sanctuary & Hall |

(Live-Streamed from Wesley Sanctuary www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)

11am | Wesley Sanctuary & Hall |

(Live-Streamed from Wesley Hall www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)

11am | Mandarin Ministry Worship | Plaza Hall



Easter Sunday Sunrise Service

Sun 9 Apr 2023

6.30am | Wesley Plaza Rooftop

Come and watch the sunrise from our roof-top plaza as we worship our Risen Lord together as a Wesley Family.

Join us post-service for breakfast fellowship.



Easter Sunday Combined Worship Services

Sun 9 Apr 2023

8.30am | Wesley Sanctuary & Hall |

(Live-Streamed from Wesley Sanctuary www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)

11am | Wesley Sanctuary & Hall |

(Live-Streamed from Wesley Hall www.wesleymc.org/lent2023)

11am | Mandarin Ministry Worship | Plaza Hall

(Note: There is no YM and TSS The Saturday Service on Sat 8 Apr 2023.)



SERMON ON THE MOUNT GUIDELINES FOR LENT DAILY DEVOTIONS |

1. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was recorded for us in Chapters 5 to 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. During the first 28 days of Lent, we will read the three chapters slowly, verse by verse. There are altogether 111 verses in these three chapters, so we will be reading an average of 4 verses a day. Allow Jesus' teachings to speak to you. It's about transformation of the Heart, and not just information for the Head.
2. **PRAY:** Before you start each day's devotion, say a prayer to God asking the Lord to speak to you through His teaching and to open your heart to be receptive to it.
3. **READ:** Read the day's Scripture slowly. What is Jesus trying to teach you? How are you doing in regards to the teaching?
4. **REFLECT:** Read the daily devotion written by a church leader. Every day, members of the Local Church Executive Committee and Pastoral Team Members will share how they have applied the particular teaching in their personal lives. Reflect on what God may be saying to you through their sharing? Write your reflections in the empty space provided.
5. **RESPOND:** Respond to the Family Discussion Pointers. What would you do to apply the teaching in your personal life? You may do this segment on your own. But as the church theme for 2023 is "Discipleship in the Family", perhaps you would like to discuss the questions in your family, either your individual family (your spouse and teenage children) or your spiritual families (your small group or ministry group). Again, journal your responses in the empty space provided.
6. **REST:** End your daily devotion, whether individually or in a group, with a prayer, thanking God for guiding and speaking to you, and for wisdom and strength to respond in obedience.
7. For the remaining 12 days of Lent, follow the reflection pointers for Lenten Morning Prayers (*Pages 91 to 95*) and Holy Week (*Pages 96 to 99*).

Why Will The Meek Inherit The Earth?

[Matthew 5:1-5]

¹Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,

²and he began to teach them. He said:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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LENT 2023 | DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2023

By Aw Choon Hui, Lay Leader

In 2022, a journalist tweeted, *"The meek will never inherit the earth. Your Bible lied to you. The meek only get stepped on and eaten. Become strong. The strong shall inherit the earth."*

This statement appears to reflect the harsh reality of our dog-eat-dog world where only the strong comes out first, wins the deal, and gets to inherit the earth.

Even during Jesus' time, it was the military might of Rome that was dominant over the civilised world. Why then does Jesus say something so outrageous - that the meek, whom the world derogatorily defines as timid doormats, will inherit the earth?

I found that Jesus' audience had a different understanding of meek as compared with how we define meek today.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines meek as being submissive, mild, deficient in spirit and courage. However, the Greek meaning for meek in Matthew 5 is not a negative but positive quality. It is being gentle, humble, self-controlled, having an inner mastery and quiet spirit to courageously and continually rely upon God. It is a key quality for those who are of the kingdom of God. Not surprisingly then, the examples of meekness cited in the Bible are spiritual giants like Moses¹ and even our Lord Jesus² himself!

First, the meek are blessed or 'happy' – experiencing God's active favour!

Secondly, in God's upside-down economy, the kingdom of God is never about earthly riches, or rulership of the present world. We are joint-heirs with Christ to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given, so we know Jesus has the power to give the earth to the meek when he comes again. In the here and now, I believe God blesses the meek with His peace and presence to triumph over injustice and adversity.

Over Chinese New Year, when I found myself alone with my two-month-old grandson, I felt compelled to pray that he will grow up safe in his identity as a beloved child of God, delighting himself in the Lord and being endowed with meekness. I pray for meekness for myself so that I may point the way for my children and grandson.

Some practical steps I can take with my spiritual or physical family:

1. Hold each other accountable – make a covenant that we will gently highlight to the other when we do not exhibit meekness in our interactions.
2. Keep praying for meekness – for me and my family.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. When we are unjustly treated, how can we respond so as to demonstrate a Godly meekness? Look at examples of how Jesus responded in such situations.
2. When faced with stress and anxieties in school and in the workplace, how can you learn to commit and trust God completely?
3. Who do we see around us as demonstrating meekness? Can we find like-minded brothers or sisters in Christ and encourage one another to be meek like Jesus?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Righteousness, Mercy, Purity

[**Matthew 5:6-8**]

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

By Alex Lai, Associate Lay Leader

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the beatitudes, which comes from the Latin word "beatus" meaning "blessed". We often associate blessings with good health, wealth, and even good looks! However, when I look at the eight beatitudes, I find it hard to count them as blessings.

The fourth beatitude says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Am I merely avoiding sin or am I actively pursuing righteousness? What do I hunger and thirst for? The Romans sermon series reminds us that we are made right to walk right with Him. Therefore, I will thirst and hunger for righteousness because Jesus assures me that I will be filled. One of the areas that I will work on is to form right relationships with people that God has placed in my life. I will put their interests above my own (Philippians 2:3-4). For those that God has tasked me to lead, instead of being in charge, I will take care of those in my charge (Simon Sinek).

The fifth beatitude says that those who are merciful will be shown mercy. Mercy is when we don't get punished even though we deserve it. Even though we sin, the Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love (Psalm 145:8). Just as I have received mercy from God, I should also show mercy to others. Truth be told, it is easier said than done. Regrettably, there were times when I chided church volunteers and staff for not meeting my expectations. I should have been more merciful.

The sixth beatitude says that those who are pure in heart will see God. One of the meanings of "pure in heart" is integrity. I recall instances when I told half-truths. There were also instances when I did not speak up when things were clearly wrong. Another meaning of "pure in heart" is to have a single and undivided heart in our devotion to God. King David, despite committing terrible sins, was known as "a man after God's own heart". He had a deep desire to follow God's will and do what God wanted him to do and he was blessed with greater intimacy with God than he imagined possible. I will pray for God to create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What do you hunger and thirst for? How can you pursue righteousness?
2. Think of a time when someone showed you mercy. How can you be merciful to others?
3. Proverbs 4:23 says "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." How can you guard your heart?

LENT 2023 | DAY 2 | *NOTES*
THURSDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2023

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Suffering For Christ – Part Of Christian Discipleship

[Matthew 5:9-12]

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

LENT 2023 | DAY 3
FRIDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2023

By Alvin Chia, Associate Lay Leader

As children of God, we are called to be peacemakers. We are to be prepared to be persecuted, insulted or falsely accused of all kinds of evil because of our faith. This is part of Christian discipleship. We are told to rejoice and be glad for our reward will be in heaven.

In Singapore, we are very fortunate that we do not have to suffer intense persecution for our faith. My own experiences with suffering for the Christian faith have to do with not participating in betting pools for the World Cup or chipping in for the big Ang Pow Toto Draw in the office, or to refrain from smoking in school. At most, we might be taunted or labelled as someone "trying to be holy" or as Christians "who are so square or rigid, where everything also cannot do".

We often read of missionaries or Christians in some parts of the world that are under intense persecution that may cost their lives. The Lord Jesus has reminded us that there is a cost to following Him. We often only associate with the blessings and grace of God. The passage today reminds us that part of the maturity of the Christian faith is to also share in the sufferings of Christ.

I often pray that the Lord will be merciful and that my faith will be able to withstand the test of persecution and suffering, especially if I have to live through the end times, in particular, if the lives of my loved ones are at stake. The Lord's words in Mark 8:34 remain a constant reminder to me that "whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me". May I build my faith to be steadfast to follow Him and remain faithful to the end. The passage today provides the encouragement that all pains and sufferings are temporary. Great is my reward in heaven if I remain in Him.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What are some of the challenges and sufferings that we have to endure as a Christian? How prepared are you to suffer for Christ?
2. In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers..." How difficult is it to be a peacemaker, in particular with people who are difficult and more often our loved ones?
3. How can we be different and reflect our lives as Christians so that God may be glorified through our actions?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Salt And Light

[Matthew 5:13-16]

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.
Instead they put it on its stand,
and it gives light to everyone in the house.

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

By Lucas Chow, Steward, LCEC

For many years I did not consider Matthew 5:13-16 applicable to me. How can someone like me be “the light of the world” and shine before others so people may glorify our Father in heaven?

Although I considered myself an “ok Christian” since I go to church every week, read the Bible daily, tithe as I should and have facilitated DISCIPLE classes every Monday for a very long time, I hesitated to share my faith publicly. The excuse of not being knowledgeable enough about the Bible coupled with the fear of embarrassment and rejection kept me from openly sharing my testimony.

All these changed when I was invited to share my experience and challenges as a Christian in the marketplace at the Love Singapore Summit in January 2015. The event was attended by hundreds of pastors and church leaders. I was very reluctant to do it but with much prayer and encouragement from everyone, I stood on stage and told my story to a large audience.

What happened after the Summit surprised me. Firstly, I felt a burden lifted off my shoulders. Secondly, I was invited to tell my story in many churches thereafter. And thirdly, I was asked to be video-taped and share my story on social media.

You may ask what made me change from being apprehensive in sharing my faith to one that would speak boldly of God’s faithfulness? The breakthrough came when I learned that I don’t need to be a theologian to share Jesus with others. I just need to be willing to be His instrument, be truthful in telling others about the God that I know and share what He has done in my life. I also learned not to rely on my own ability and understanding but trust God to lead me. Afterall, it is not about me but about God.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Do you struggle to share your story, your testimony?
2. What’s holding you back?
3. How can you overcome it?

The Fulfillment Of The Law

[Matthew 5:17-20]

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear,
not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen,
will by any means disappear from the Law
until everything is accomplished.

¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these
commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least
in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practises and teaches
these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law,
you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

LENT 2023 | DAY 5

MONDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2023

By Chan Wai Lup, Chairperson, Discipleship and Nurture

The Torah (the Law) and the words of the Old Testament prophets were very important to the Israelites. The Pharisees and teachers of the Law went to great lengths to make sure the people were compliant in their everyday activities. When Jesus preached on the kingdom of heaven, He did not come to introduce a new religion to replace the Law. Jesus came to explain and show the people how keeping God's Law actually looks like, by demonstrating it in His life.

Even as a young Christian, I discovered that my main spiritual gift is in teaching the Word of God. Apart from a love to study the Bible beyond mere devotional reading, I realised that God has given me understanding and insight into how His Word can be applied to the Christian life. Through opportunities given to me over the years to serve in various church ministries, I have helped fellow Christians understand how the Word of God is applicable to their discipleship journey at various seasons of their lives.

As I was reflecting on today's Scriptural passage, I am reminded that despite all my insights into the Word of God and gift of teaching in the church community, I am also at risk of being a Pharisee or teacher of the Law that Jesus had often condemned because He is more interested in how I live my life according to His Word than how I teach the Bible. Jesus had set the example for me in how He had been obedient to His Father. Over the years, I had many opportunities to be obedient to God through the decisions I had to make in my career, my marriage, in parenting and where to serve God. Did the choices I've made "fulfilled God's Law"? There were also significant circumstances in my life like financial challenges, the death of my daughter, cancer journey for both me and my wife. How have I responded in those circumstances that demonstrate to others how keeping or "fulfilling God's Law" looks like?

I pray that God will be merciful to me and help me through His Spirit. I do not want to end up like the Pharisees. I need to exercise daily examen on how I have walked with Jesus and if I had been obedient to God's Word, so that after I have taught others, I myself will not be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27), for "we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1).

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. How well do you know God's Word? How much do you find it applicable in your daily life (at home, at work, in school or with friends)?
2. How often do you spend time examining your day's activities, the decisions you've made, your responses to circumstances, and how God's Spirit has been present to guide you?
3. How have your obedience to God's Word demonstrated to people around you what it means to know, worship and serve a living God?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Love Your Neighbour As Yourself

[Matthew 5:21-24]

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago,
‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be
subject to judgment.’

²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister
will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister,
‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says,
‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there
remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and
be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

By Audrey Ng, Chairperson, Children's Ministry

As I was reading this part of the Sermon on the Mount, I am seeing for the first time that this part is titled "murder". Jesus reminded the listeners of the 10 commandments that anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. The verse following it was even more sobering – the same judgment will be upon anyone who is angry with a brother or sister. This made me reflect on the times when I have been angry with my husband for forgetting to put his clothes into the laundry basket, angry with my son for insisting to play football despite the rain, and angry with my parents for not asking for help when they needed it.

In verse 22, the word 'Raca' in the dictionary means contempt, a strong word which means feeling that a person or a thing is worthless or beneath consideration, similar to scorn, disrespect, deprecation, detestation, disgust, hatred, loathing, denigration, and the list goes on. When I reflect on the angry feelings I have against my family members whom I love dearly, I am troubled that I do feel contempt for others' choices and actions.

This leads to the next part - what I do in my anger. Sometimes anger boils over and I utter harsh words and sometimes my facial expression of disgust says it all. Verses 22 and 23 remind me that I will be judged for my thoughts of contempt and actions done in anger, and that it is not lesser than the sin of committing murder. I should reconcile, make peace and forgive my brother/sister before I approach the throne of grace with my service or my offering.

From the dictionary, the opposite of contempt is respect. Although we cannot help feelings of anger, I am reminded to respect my family members' choices and actions, be thankful for the opportunity to serve them (picking up laundry, putting toys away) and to reconcile after an argument or disagreement. However, this is not humanly achievable without the help of the Holy Spirit and I pray for the continual renewal of my heart and mind resulting in the right words and actions, as I submit myself to the Refiner's fire.

May we always remember Matthew 22:36-40, that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God, and to love our neighbours and family members as ourselves.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What does it mean to love your family and neighbour as yourself?
2. How can we avoid allowing our anger to lead us to words and actions that will hurt those who are dearest to us?
3. What does reconciliation and restoration of a relationship look like? (Do we forgive and forget? Be truthful and honest? Show gentleness and kindness? Love and bear with each other?)

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Settling Disputes

[Matthew 5:25-26]

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

LENT 2023 | DAY 7
WEDNESDAY, 01 MARCH 2023

By Tina Khoo, Pastoral Team Member, Membership & Volunteer Care

I had always thought that in this passage Jesus was giving counsel on gaining personal advantage. It is not so.

In Jesus' day, someone who couldn't pay a debt was thrown into prison until the debt was paid. Unless someone came to pay the debt, the prisoner would probably die there. It is practical to resolve our differences with our enemies before their anger causes more trouble. In a broader sense, these verses advise us to get things right with our brothers and sisters before we have to stand before God. Jesus is saying that all disputes should be taken care of without delay and that to fail at this has dire consequences.

I have never gotten into a disagreement that took me to court before, but I've learnt that small conflicts mend more easily when I try to make peace right away. "I am sorry" are three words that are hardest for me to say. I used to be stubborn and would not budge or take the first step to reconcile especially when I thought that I was right. Once when I was much younger, I refused to speak to my elder sister for almost two years because I felt that I was wronged. Now that I am a disciple of Christ, and His Word tells me that "blessed are the peacemakers", I pray and ask the Holy Spirit to grant me the humility to actively seek to be at peace with others. Saying "I am sorry" also gets easier with practice. Sometimes we can agree to disagree without breaking fellowship with one another.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Why is "I am sorry!" the three hardest words to say?
2. Are there instances where someone has been aggrieved by something you did, or said? How might you reconcile with that person?
3. Think of ways where you can be a peacemaker – in your family, church, the marketplace and in society.

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

True Fidelity

[Matthew 5:27-30]

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

By Gordon Tan, Associate Lay Leader; Lay Counsellor, Wesley Counseling Services

This passage sits between Jesus talking about 'anger & murder', and 'marriage & divorce'. But most importantly, "Matthew 5:27-30 continues to expand on a theme Jesus introduced in Matthew 5:20. True "righteousness" is not merely about what a person does but what he or she thinks and feels.

(<https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/5/Matthew-5-27.html>)

To look lustfully at a woman other than one's wife, is an act of infidelity. This is a clear exposition by Jesus of Exodus 20:14, "*You shall not commit adultery*".

Jesus made a shocking statement to tear out the eye, or any part of the body, if it causes us to sin. The truth is, if we allow infidelity to fester in our hearts and minds, it will also manifest in our actions.

Sitting in the counseling room, this subject of lust comes up every so often. In contrast to love, lust is self-seeking. It is driven by the desire for sexual gratification. Lust begins with the eye ("*Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness*", Luke 11:34). This sexual desire is then magnified by the imagination. James 1:15 reminds us that "... desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Jesus makes it clear that our physical needs are no excuse for not obeying the Law (Matthew 5:17-20). What then am I to do?

As I reflect, I learn that I must avoid pornographic sites that may excite me with lust. Instead, I should contemplate how I can love. Love my wife, love my family. I must avoid compromising situations with other females. I may feel attachment from a good relationship but I need to watch my physical distance. I may admire and find them attractive but I need to beware of how I think of them. I will remind myself to do what Proverbs 4:23 says: "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*"

Finally, I need to spend time with my spouse, to love her, cherish and appreciate her. And I need to spend time enjoying my family.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What does it mean to "look at someone with lustful intent" (Matthew 5:28, ESV)? How is that different from admiring someone?
2. If someone really loves you, how would the person show respect in your relationship?
3. What can we do to avoid letting our "... desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15)?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Till Death Us Do Part

[Matthew 5:31-32]

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

LENT 2023 | DAY 9

FRIDAY, 03 MARCH 2023

By Alvin Tay, Chairperson, Local Church Executive Committee

Few, if any, would on their wedding day be talking or worrying about divorce. On this joyous day, the wedding couples are more likely to dream of living together happily ever after, just like people in the many fairy tales I grew up with.

But do marriages always have that fairy tale ending? Yes, there are happy couples and marriages. But lasting marriages do require hard work (aka heart work) by both parties, as is the case in my own marriage.

When I was married to Wendy at Wesley Methodist Church in 1988, we were required to memorise our marriage vow; there was no written script for us to rely on. Looking back, that was the most stressful part of the wedding ceremony, but we were glad we did it. Till today, we can still remember portions of that vow.

I, Alvin, take thee, Wendy, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I pledge thee my faith.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

One flesh? Till death us do part? Frankly, this is easier said than done. Marriage is hard work. The problem is: Wendy and I were quite different from one another when we got married. We came from different family backgrounds and had different upbringings and experiences. We grew up with vastly different family values, and we brought these values into our marriage. It was a recipe for disaster.

We tried to change one another, and hence quarrelled a lot. That was when the issue of divorce began to surface. In 2012, when we started attending the DISCIPLE Bible Study and then Companions in Christ courses together as a couple, we began to discard our worldly values for God's values. As we moved closer to God, we also moved closer to one another.

Come June, we will be celebrating our 35th wedding anniversary. Finally, after 10 years of Intentional Discipleship, we are now more like one flesh. My ministry co-workers would sometimes joke that when they got me to join a project, they would get Wendy as well, and vice-versa. We come as a package. Yes, Wendy and I now tend to do life, and ministry together. All glory to God!

[**Family Discussion Pointers**]

1. What is God's purpose for marriage? What can we learn from Jesus, as the groom to his Bride, the Church?
2. What do children wish for in their parents' marriage?
3. What makes a marriage last "till death do us part"?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Oaths

[Matthew 5:33-37]

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago,
‘Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the vows you have made.’

³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all:
either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;

³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem,
for it is the city of the Great King.

³⁶And do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

³⁷All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’;
anything beyond this comes from the evil one.’

By Adam Leong, Chairperson, Family Life Ministry

"... anything beyond this comes from the evil one" - this statement from verse 37 caught my eye as I was reflecting on what God was impressing upon my heart. The truth of the matter is that I will not be able to control the outcome of any event in my life. And if I use making oaths to convince others (or myself), I have not only pride in my heart but I have also lied to others and myself.

God has been faithful in my life in showing me His love and mercy, and guiding my every step when I turn to Him. I must confess that any misstep is often a result of me not being willing to follow Him more closely. This is usually due to the fear of losing control (lack of faith in Him) and thinking that I can control the outcome (pride in myself). I learn trust and humility only when I submit to His will.

The desired end result of every life-changing encounter is to know that my life is in His hand and I can trust Him fully in my life journey. More importantly, I know that He loves me, YES! His love for me is more than I can ever fathom.

True discipleship is doing what He has commanded. It is more than just the reading of His Word and praying. It is the daily act of following His every command. Submitting my will to His divine will, will lead to the fulfilment of His plan in my life.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Why do you think God allows us to experience failure?
2. What does it mean to trust and obey Him in your life?
3. If God forgives us when we fail to obey Him, how can we do better in forgiving those who have failed us?

LENT 2023 | DAY 10 | *NOTES*
SATURDAY, 04 MARCH 2023

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Extending Grace

[**Matthew 5:38-42**]

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

LENT 2023 | DAY 11

MONDAY, 06 MARCH 2023

By David Mok, Chairperson, Data Analytics

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is amazing beyond words. It can be baffling to the uninitiated, but at the same time, it is so profound to those who appreciate it. Where is the common sense to give more than what someone sues you for? Or when coerced, how is it logical to do more than what is demanded of you? I was reminded of this seemingly incomprehensible logic when I watched the musical, *Les Misérables*. In the play, Jean Valjean had stolen silverware from the priest. When Valjean was caught and brought to the priest, the priest told the police that he had given Valjean the silverware as a gift. To top off the act of grace, the priest gave even more silverware to Valjean.

Justice and fairness are great virtues. But Christ tells us that these values, when used alone, are inadequate. They are to be hung on the two paramount commandments of loving God and loving one another. In doing so, unconditional grace emerges.

It took me a while to understand my mother's act of grace when I was a child. She had lent her brother a considerable sum of money that I thought our family could ill afford. I knew that my uncle could not repay the money, thus it was foolish to part with cash that would not be returned. We were not well-off then and I had to borrow money from the bank for my tertiary education. Being raised to observe justice and fairness, I was certainly upset.

It was not until later in my adult life when I understood God deeper that I finally understood the meaning of grace – the extension of His unmerited favour towards someone undeserving like myself. On a much smaller scale, I recognised that it was grace that my mother had shown to my uncle. Without grace, our world would be a very cold and exacting place.

If I am to love God, I will need to wrap my responses to my family and others in love. As grace was freely given to me, I must show grace to others. It is not easy as I still struggle with fairness. However, I find that it gets easier after much practice in showing grace. I will continue to welcome foster kids to our home even though it is sometimes inconvenient. I will go the extra mile for members of our church family who are in need. May our Lord have mercy on me and grant me strength to press on.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. How different does it look when your judgements based on justice and fairness are also hung on the commandments of loving God and loving your neighbour?
2. How would you extend grace towards someone whom you think is undeserving, even someone in your own family?
3. What are some things you can do to go the extra mile for someone in need?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Reflect, Release And Restore – The Grace Of Loving Your Enemies

[Matthew 5:43-48]

⁴³“You have heard that it was said,
‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you,

⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven.
He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?
Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you
doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

By Yeo Su Chen, Chairperson, Wesley Communications

One of the hardest things to do in life is to forgive those who have hurt us. Yet, one of the hardest realities in the Christian life is that God wants us to do just that.

One familiar story of the power of forgiveness is that of Corrie Ten Boom with the prison guard at the concentration camp where she and her sister, Betsie, were in during the Holocaust. Betsie would later die at the camp. When Corrie came face to face with the guard many years later, she struggled to forgive momentarily but when she decided to release her forgiveness, a powerful warmth enveloped her.

Jesus is my best role model in the difficult business of loving my enemies. He demonstrated to me how despite experiencing hurt, I too can forgive my enemies.

I first experienced the power of loving my enemy when I was 16. On the first day of a new school year, I found myself suddenly ostracised by my close friends who had conspired to take up all the seats in our usual row, leaving me no choice but to take the most undesirable seat in the entire classroom. For many months, I felt hurt and isolated.

On the eve of my GCE O-level exams, one of them called me out of desperation and told me that she needed a place to stay to go through the exam period peacefully. Despite the objections from my parents who were worried that my studies would be affected by the sudden disruption, God laid it on my heart to put aside the confusion and chaos I had endured throughout the year, and say yes to her request.

By accommodating my friend during a difficult period in her life, I realised I had forgiven her for all that had happened. God worked in me and helped me display Jesus in one small action. I experienced what it meant to "heap burning coals" on my "enemy".

In "Everything Everywhere All At Once", a film that has been nominated for 11 Oscar awards, the character Waymond, a passive husband, said: "The only thing I do know is that we have to be kind. Please, be kind. Especially when we don't know what's going on."

To be like Jesus, we need to choose mercy and kindness. This Lent, may I devote myself to allowing God to shape and transform me so that I may love those who are hard to love.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. How did Jesus respond to those who persecuted and punished Him unjustly?
2. What does forgiving your enemies mean to you? Is the focus more about your enemies or your peace and relationship with God?
3. Think of someone who has hurt you recently. Perhaps it was an unkind word or a careless gossip. Will you pray for him or her and think about releasing that hurt to the Lord?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Why Do I Give?

[Matthew 6:1-4]

¹“Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

LENT 2023 | DAY 13
WEDNESDAY, 08 MARCH 2023

By Alvin Chua, Chairperson, Christian Outreach and Social Concerns

I have been serving in our Christian Outreach and Social Concerns (COSC) Ministry in various capacities for many years. As I look back, I believe that God has used me to reach out to and impact the lives of many. My effort has gained acknowledgement not only from COSC beneficiaries but also fellow co-labourers in Christ. Despite my weaknesses and limitations, I have always been grateful to God for giving me the opportunity and grace to serve Him in various roles, and in different seasons.

However, I also felt a sense of pride in these roles. Was this so that my 'righteousness' would be noticed by others?

Some time ago, I had a conversation with a friend with a successful career. We spoke about volunteering in church, especially in leadership positions. My friend shared that in his opinion, the main reason or motivation for people to serve sacrificially of their time was a desire to be recognised, to have a sense of achievement in life which they might not have had outside of the church. I disagreed. I argued that many of our church leaders, clergy or laypersons, are often either in prestigious positions in their respective fields, or have great potential to succeed in the commercial world, but chose to sacrifice their time to do God's kingdom work. However, this doesn't quite apply to me for I am neither in a highly achieving prestigious job nor have I sacrificed other potential opportunities to do kingdom work. So did his comments describe some truth about my past years of service? A more disturbing question is: am I a hypocrite like those described in Matthew 6:2?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also said: "You are the light of the world....let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

I feel relieved and encouraged by these verses. I understand that there is always a fine line drawn between right and wrong motivations. If my motive to share about my social work is to show others the goodness of our great God or to edify fellow co-labourers, then I should share openly but humbly about it. God always blesses me with abundant encouragement and recognition from others, and I should receive it with joy and thanksgiving. May I be reminded that service to God is part of being a disciple instead of something I do to feel proud of myself. I will keep praying that God will give us a pure heart in serving. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." (2 Corinthians 10:17)

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Jesus commanded Christians to do good deeds. Why do you think this is important?
2. When and how do you share about the good deeds you have done?
3. If you have blessed the needy, how has it transformed or impacted you? If you have not, what is stopping you?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Prayer

[Matthew 6:5-8]

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,
for they love to pray standing in the synagogues
and on the street corners to be seen by others.
Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

⁶But when you pray, go into your room,
close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.
Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans,
for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need
before you ask him.

By Audree Tan, Pastoral Team Member, Prayer

Prayer is a discipline Jesus wanted me to hold very close to my heart. I can go to my room or space (bus, mrt, car), close the door (shut out noises) and talk to my Father.

When Rodney and I started our marriage journey in 1983, we decided to begin each day and end each evening with prayer. With this arrangement, it was also difficult to allow anger to brew and for the sun to rise with unresolved issues. In 2023 we will celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary. We have kept our daily prayer appointment. It has kept our marriage anchored on the covenant made at the cross. The car became our prayer closet for the family. The children met God in this closet when we sent them to school each morning. Our prayers now include adoration and worship for Him who loves us unconditionally.

My prayers are no longer a platter of needs and concerns. I do a self-check very often. From Matthew 6:6, I am reminded to go to God in secret, for He has said He will reward when I pray behind closed doors. Through prayer, I have experienced an infinite relationship with our God which has no boundaries. In prayer, I meet God whom I can fully trust. He is always present, always available, always listening, reliable and patient. I have finally understood what it means to not struggle with insecurity, loneliness and anxiety. Through prayer, I have experienced a true contentment of a reciprocal unconditional love relationship. I look forward to completing my life journey with God, continually raising my prayers to him in my whispers, my thoughts, my raising of hands and movement (dance).

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Shall we as a family set aside daily one-on-one time with the Lord?
2. What should our posture be as we enter into the prayer closet to meet God?
3. As parents, how can we encourage our family to have regular deep conversations and prayer with God?

Jesus' Model Prayer

[**Matthew 6:9-15**]

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’

¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins,
your Father will not forgive your sins.

LENT 2023 | DAY 15

FRIDAY, 10 MARCH 2023

By Robin Viva Thevathasan, Chairperson, Worship & Music

This is the most familiar passage in the Bible – but is it so familiar that we tend to recite it rather than actually pray?

John Wesley wrote that the Lord Jesus “has here dictated to us a most perfect and universal form of prayer, comprehending all our real wants, expressing all our lawful desires; a complete directory and full exercise of all our devotions.”*

He further described the structure of the Lord's Prayer as consisting of three parts: the preface, the specific petitions and the conclusion. It is easy to understand and accept the petitions – are we not often guilty (I know I am) of dispensing with the preface and launching into our shopping list of requests?

The preface and conclusion are sometimes glossed over. We use the phrase “Our Father” to address God as our Heavenly Father while acknowledging that He is in Heaven, divine and Holy, recognising that we should accord glory and worship that are due to Him. In doing so, we declare that we believe His words and promises, while accepting the truth of Scripture. It also shows that we are in awe of Him and fear Him in view of His abhorrence of sin. This sets the foundation for us to obey Him and worship Him endlessly, before we make our petitions.

In petitioning, the Lord teaches us to ask for what we need – not in excess of but what is sufficient for us. God often showers us with more than this - that is His Grace which we don't deserve.

Similarly, we need to open our hearts and confess “Forgive us our sins”, and at the same time to forgive others, which is often not easy!

In a similar vein, the conclusion of the prayer, “For Thine is the Kingdom...” affirms that He is the supreme authority who has dominion over all creation, and so all power and glory belong to Him.

Another point for us to contemplate – Jesus did not give us this model to use only in community prayer (which is most common) but also in private and intimate prayer to our Creator Father. We should therefore bear in mind Jesus' Model Prayer when we next pray.

In 2012, I was first asked to lead worship at the 9.30am service at Wesley Sanctuary. Having sung for years in the John Wesley Choir, I was quite accustomed to singing in front of a congregation, but the prospect of having to lead worship, drafting and leading the corporate prayer really petrified me!

After the Lord had calmed me down, He led me to His prayer, and helped me understand its comprehensive yet succinct structure which guided me in drafting that first corporate prayer. Eleven years later, I am still being rostered to lead the congregation in worship and prayer so I suppose I am doing something right. Thanks be to God!

*Ref: https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/commentary/wesleys_bible_study_notes.html

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Take a moment to think about the prayer Jesus taught us compared to the prayers you utter regularly. In what ways can your prayers closely resemble Jesus' model prayer?
2. When we make our supplication, do we contemplate God's Divine and Fatherly character and ask ourselves if what we are asking for is truly best for us?
3. When was the last time we really forgave someone who has aggrieved us?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

When You Fast, Do Not Be Like The Hypocrites

[Matthew 6:16-18]

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

By Shirley Koo, Chairperson, Wesley GYM

Fasting is a voluntary discipline between the individual and God. When I fast, I voluntarily abstain from food or other enjoyment for a specified period. Fasting trains me to stay focused, to be sensitive to His promptings, and to recognise my sinfulness and my need of God. It helps me to align myself to wait upon God and hear His direction for me. To me, fasting when combined with prayer, is a powerful spiritual discipline as it can bring about a spiritual re-awakening within me and is effective in spiritual warfare too.

I recalled a memorable time fasting and praying with others for someone who was addicted to gambling. The addiction had an overwhelmingly powerful grip on him and he failed to see the impact it had on his loved ones. His siblings were fervent prayer warriors but were making no headway until one day, in reading Matthew 17:21 (KJV), the words of Jesus enlightened us - "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Fasting proved to be the key in the breakthrough of our collective prayers.

Between January and May 2020, J was suffering from sharp crippling bouts of headaches. Compounded by his own fear of the possibility of brain tumour, he went on his knees in prayer. This occurred during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. We saw this as a timely reminder to fast and pray for J. Today, J is free of the crippling headaches and is a changed man. All glory to God for the power of fasting and prayers. His family is attending church together. His family claims Isaiah 41:20 (KJV) - "That they may see, and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this...."

This episode reveals what an awesome God we have. He is our Resurrection, the One who has the power to renew and transform our lives. It's my prayer that as I seek to grow deep in my relationship with Him, God will keep me humble, teachable and obedient. It's a reminder for me to set aside time intentionally to fast and pray for those in spiritual bondage, especially in these days that we are living in.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What do you understand about fasting? Check out biblical examples, such as Isaiah 58 on fasting. How does praying help us during fasting?
2. How can we pray and fast together as a family? Share with one another your personal and family experience?
3. When you fast, who are you doing it for – earthly or heavenly reasons, man or God?

LENT 2023 | DAY 16 | NOTES
SATURDAY, 11 MARCH 2023

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Give Me Jesus

[Matthew 6:19-21]

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moths and vermin destroy,
and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where moths and vermin do not destroy,
and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

LENT 2023 | DAY 17

MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023

By Eric Ang, Chairperson, Finance

Where are my treasures? What do I treasure most? In today's Scripture passage, Jesus tells me to ask my heart. Two recent life-changing circumstances have taught me to reorientate my priorities.

It all started with my retirement which coincided with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. I was looking forward to my retirement, to do the things I wanted to but never had the time. I also wished to be a grandfather, to do with my grandchildren things I never did with my children.

Little did I know that my world would soon be completely turned upside down.

The first challenging situation was learning at the start of my retirement that my wife was diagnosed with a type of blood cancer. The only cure was to replace her stem cells with that of a matching donor and worse, this had to be done right in the midst of the pandemic.

The second started with good news that I was going to be a grandfather. This was however shattered when my daughter developed complications in her pregnancy. Our family had to contend with either an abortive pregnancy or the birth of a very premature grandson. We prayed for his life and Ethan arrived on 2 Jan 2022, at a prenatal gestation age of 24 weeks.

Those were the darkest moments in my life. What I had and wished for were no longer important. I felt completely helpless and dejected. It was in those moments that Jesus' teaching came to life: What do I really treasure? I clung on to the promises of God that "He goes before me and will be with me; He will not leave me nor forsake me. Do not be afraid or discouraged." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

My story is still evolving but let me pause to share that by the grace and mercy of God, my wife is in remission. To top it off, Ethan and I have just celebrated our 1st and 70th birthdays together!

My family pulled through because of the amazing love of our Heavenly Father and the wonderful support of our extended and spiritual families. They rallied behind us through prayer and intercession, supporting and caring for us.

Let me close with the following lyrics that say it all for me:

More than silver, more than gold.

You are the treasure that I hold.

Now that I've tasted of Your goodness, nothing else will satisfy.

Give me Jesus.

[**Family Discussion Pointers**]

1. Pause and Ponder: Where is your heart leaning towards – treasures on earth or in heaven?
2. Jesus says, "Do not store up for *yourselves* treasures on earth". In what ways can you and your family share your treasures on earth with others?
3. In what ways can you and your family store up treasures in heaven?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Windows To Our Hearts And Souls

[**Matthew 6:22-23**]

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body.

If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

By Alvena Khoo, Pastoral Team Member, Discipleship & Nurture

There is a Chinese saying: “眼睛是心灵之窗,灵魂之窗” (our eyes are the windows to our hearts and souls). Matthew 6:22-23 reminds us that having “good” eyes is key to our inner being. We see people and situations through our eyes, they guide the way we feel and perceive things. What goes through our eyes can either benefit or corrupt our souls. They will always have an impact on our entire being, just like light filling up a dark room.

Before I knew God, I had given in to seeing ungodly content and materials out of curiosity, bad judgement, temptation, peer pressure, and sometimes out of the fear of missing out. What is seen can never be unseen. What is seen doesn't stay on the surface, they creep in and stay in my mind. This is especially so if the content or images are gruesome, unwholesome and violent. What follows are feelings such as fear and anger or thoughts that are disturbing, sinful, and lustful. The impact on our feelings and thoughts is real. At times, it can silently creep into our inner being and take root.

I recall watching a horror movie and it haunted me for decades. The assurance from 1 John 4:4 and reciting it helped me conquer this fear. Unwholesome content on the web or story books have also corrupted my values and expectations of what a godly relationship should be like.

My eyes are the entrance to my heart and soul. I should always guard them by guarding my eyes. Proverbs 4:23 also cautions us to guard our heart, for it is the wellspring of life. In situations when I am exposed to ungodly content, my response should be to flee rather than to fight. Pursuing holiness should be my ultimate goal.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. We live in a world where we are easily exposed to ungodly content in Youtube, movies and social media. In fact, they are everywhere. What are some of your struggles with the ungodly content that you are exposed to?
2. Let's brainstorm! What are some practical ways we can guard our eyes from them?
3. How can we as a family or church family support one another towards holiness? Withhold giving advice and judging, but in the love of Christ, pray for one another.

God And Money

[Matthew 6:24]

²⁴“No one can serve two masters.

Either you will hate the one and love the other,
or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money.

LENT 2023 | DAY 19
WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023

By Philip Oh, Chairperson, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

Every time I read this familiar passage, I am struck by how black and white it is. It emphasises one or the other. Not both!

As I observe the different phases of my life and whether I served God or money at each phase, I am reminded of a loving God that has always been there for me and my family. In my earlier days in England, I was driven by the corporate ladder – working to get the next promotion or a bigger bonus. Even when I did not acknowledge Him, God was there – He had my back. At times I was too busy raising kids and not going to church or acknowledging God in my life, but with hindsight God was there – He had my back.

One pivotal moment in my Christian life after my return to Singapore was when a junior pastor named Stanley Chua invited me to join a DISCIPLE 1 Class of 2002. As a Regional Director in HP with many demands placed on me, I struggled with the daily commitment to read the Bible, to journal, and to attend the physical class on Monday evenings. My business travel schedule just did not allow it. But I joined the class.

To cut a long story short, I realised that when I put God first, He honoured my commitment to join the class and everything from that decision flowed positively to impact my life to this day, and my service to my Lord and God. Being disciplined enabled me to increasingly put God first, no matter the circumstances, so I am able to serve my church, grow my faith and trust God like never before,

After more than 20 years, I can testify that the more I served Him, the more fulfilled I was and found Abba Father's blessings flowing. My financial needs were always met, my service at Alpha Asia Pacific and as LCEC Chair, to name two callings of many, were fulfilling and rewarding. In addition, the shalom I enjoyed was palpable and evident. Praise God!

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Look back on your life thus far and share the time when God was most present in your life. Why?
2. Are you able to pinpoint a phase in your life when God appeared to be unimportant or irrelevant in your daily life?
3. Is there an area of your life where you need to place God first?

Do Not Worry

[Matthew 6:25-32]

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?”

²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

By Liana Seah, Chairperson, BeTween Ministry

This passage has been a great source of assurance for me throughout my adult life. I started a family when I was quite young. With multiple financial commitments, there were moments when worries crept in as I thought of our income streams during the economic downturns. However, the more I tried to control the outcome, the more anxious I became. I prayed that He would replace my worries with His assurance, and use all the situations to make me trust and obey Him more.

I realised that when I let my worries affect how I made life and career choices, I grew to rely more and more on myself instead of looking up to Him. I looked inward to see how I could control the circumstances and the outcomes. However, when I trusted God to place me where He wanted me to be, and do the work He has set for me, I found joy and peace. I know that He has changed my heart and moulded me through these experiences.

God reminds me that we do not know what the future holds, but He is always in control. He shows me that even as imperfect human beings, my husband and I will always try our best to provide for all of our children's needs; hence, what more will our Father, who is the King of all kings and the creator of Heaven and Earth, do to provide for us? Everything belongs to Him and we are His children. He is more than able to provide for us.

Now that our children are older, and are starting to explore their career paths, I shall continue to cling on to His promise in these verses. The measure of their success should not be determined by the world. I pray that Jesus will be the centre of their lives, and that they will live according to His perfect will. They will then be blessed with His joy and peace.

I pray the same for the young people in our church. It breaks my heart to see young people filled with worries and anxiety for the future. It takes the joy out of living. I pray that each one will not rely on his or her own strength but will always look to God for His leading every step of the way. Just give it our best and let God do the rest.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Let's spend some time observing the birds and the flowers in the garden or the nearby parks. What does it tell us about God's magnificent design and provision?
2. When making our choices, do we choose first and ask God to bless our choice or do we ask God to reveal to us His will and we follow?
3. Reflect on what makes us anxious and worried? What is the cause of this anxiety?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Seek God First, Worry Less

[Matthew 6:33-34]

³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.

LENT 2023 | DAY 21

FRIDAY, 17 MARCH 2023

By Koh Geok Cheng, Asst Treasurer, LCEC

When I was growing up, I was worried about my academic results. I was from a Taoist family, the youngest of eight children. My family had high expectations for me to excel in my studies and become a doctor so that my future would be secure. I didn't meet their expectations and became an accountant instead. After I accepted Christ, I continued to focus on my career as I wanted to prove myself. I worried about not getting the promotions at the right time. When I had children, I worried about them being unable to cope in the education system. I stopped work and focused on raising them to excel in school and secure a bright future.

After we attended our first church camp "Becoming a People of Prayer" in 2000, I realised that what I was seeking for myself and my sons was not true security in life. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33-34 to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. What does it mean to seek God? I started to learn that it is to passionately seek God's presence and purpose in all things. In seeking God first, I began to trust in God's purpose in everything and worry less.

I recall the time when my son scored 256 in his PSLE results. He was a point short of qualifying for the IB programme. I trusted in God's plan because if God wanted him to qualify for the IB programme, God could have easily given him one more point. I was not worried and felt God's peace in not appealing for him to enter the IB programme. By God's grace, after two years in the O level track, there was another opportunity to apply for the IB programme and he got into IB then.

Seeking God requires discipline. It is easy to worry about many things. Jesus told us not to worry but to seek God first. To do this, my husband and I decided to make time to read God's Word and pray together in the morning. We did family devotions with our sons every evening and prayed as a family until they were in their late teens. Throughout the day I tried to consciously give thanks to God in small things to focus on His presence with me. I pray that as I continue to seek God first, those around me will know God's love and grace and be drawn to Him.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Who or what are you seeking? Does it cause you to worry?
2. What are some things that distract you from spending time with God?
3. What is one step that your family can take to help everyone seek God first?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

The Invisible Plank In Our Eyes

[**Matthew 7:1-6**]

¹“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

By Foo Yu Da, Chairperson, Witness & Evangelism

The longer I am with someone, the more I take them for granted and zoom in on their weaknesses as opposed to my own. We often judge others by our own standards since our expectations are often set by our own. I am certainly prone to falling into this line of thinking eight years into my marriage. "Why would you not appreciate all my contributions for this family?" and "Why am I always the one that needs to work on my weaknesses?", I would ask.

What a reminder from God on our human condition. The speck I see in my wife's eye is often magnified without me realising the plank in my own eye, which is exponentially larger. To the question "Why would you not appreciate all my contributions for this family?", the answer could well be because I have not spent quality time with her, which is far more important to her than any other contribution I have made. Similarly, to the other question, "Why am I always the one that needs to work on my weaknesses?", it could well be because I have failed to appreciate the extent of my weaknesses, such as my lack of communication and intentional connection, which means so much to my wife.

I could argue that this is who I am, so take it or leave it. But I am not who I am. I am who God intended me to be, and that is a child of God. I need to first look inward to acknowledge my own sinful nature and work on my weaknesses and then allow God to transform me so that I can bless those around me. By the grace and strength of God, this perspective has really helped transform me to be a blessing in my marriage just as I have been very blessed by my wife in our marriage. A marriage with God at the centre indeed serves to make me holy, which is infinitely more meaningful and fulfilling than simply to make me happy. I am so thankful for this transformational work of God in me. It is grounded in truth, exemplified by the death of Christ on the cross, and supported by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What is our natural reaction to conflicts in our family?
2. What is God's instruction for how we should react and approach conflict in our family?
3. What practical steps, that are God-centred, can we take to be better at handling disagreements and conflicts?

LENT 2023 | DAY 22 | NOTES
SATURDAY, 18 MARCH 2023

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

God Answers Prayers In His Own Time

[**Matthew 7:7-8**]

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.

⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

LENT 2023 | DAY 23

MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2023

By Cheryl Seow, President, Women's Society of Christian Service

When my daughters were younger, they would throw tantrums if I didn't accede to their multiple requests, especially involving the use of mobile devices during mealtimes. Through their tears, they would appeal against my verdict, pleading "But I asked politely, and I even said 'please' and 'thank you!'"

Yet, there were many other occasions where I was too quick to answer their requests. I did this with the misguided hope of avoiding their tantrums and causing a scene in front of family members and friends. This resulted in their expectation that they would always get what they want, as long as they asked for it.

The verses in Matthew 7:7-8 remind me that God does hear our prayers. But He answers them in His own time. Our Heavenly Father is not a parent who practises instant gratification. God may not answer my prayers and petitions at the point in time that suits me or at all. He will answer me, in His own time and in accordance with His plans for me. He is doing so for my own good, to mould my character. He wants me to persist in praying, trusting and worshipping Him, while I await His answers to my petitions. This is also a useful reminder to me, as a parent, as to how I should approach certain requests from my kids.

As I enter a new phase of parenthood with my daughters on the cusp of being teenagers, I look back and thank God for answering my prayers and bringing me through many parenting challenges. As for the trials and tribulations of parenting teenagers, I place my hope and commit these challenges into the Lord's hands. I trust that God will use these experiences for my good.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. How can parents equip and teach their children to face disappointment, rejection and challenges?
2. How can parents help their children to answer God's call to believe in Him?
3. What can spiritual family members, e.g. small group members, do to encourage one another to persist in praying, trusting and worshipping God, through the storms of life?

Do To Others What You Would Have Them Do To You

[Matthew 7:9-12]

⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

By Irwin Seet, Steward, LCEC

When I was in Primary 3, my class teacher first introduced the class to the concept of the **Golden Rule**, which she elaborated to mean: *"Do to Others What You Would Have Them Do to You"*. She shared with us that while the major religions of the world have different doctrines and teachings, the one common teaching across all religions was the **Golden Rule**. She taught us that we should always treat people with the concern and kindness that we would like them to show towards us.

In Leviticus 19:33-34, it states that "when a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat him. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." There is a tendency for us to extend kindness to friends and family and to those who can benefit us. Matthew 7:12 does not limit whom we should extend kindness to, but is all inclusive. In other words, we as God's children, should reflect our Father's heart and extend kindness and generosity to everyone around us, especially those who are vulnerable and need our help the most.

How can I apply Matthew 7:12 in my life?

1. **Be Watchful** – I will ask the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to see those around me who are more vulnerable in the community. (*Philippians 2:4*)
2. **Be Caring** – I will ask the Father for His heart of compassion to put myself in the other person's shoes and for the Holy Spirit's wisdom to understand the feelings and actions of others. (*Romans 12:15*)
3. **Be Understanding** – I will recognise that everyone is different and ask the Lord for wisdom to discern if what I would like done for me, is what others would like to be done for them as well, before taking action. (*1 Corinthians 10:24*)

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Reflect on the people around you whom you currently do not extend love, care and show concern to. What changes do you see yourself making after reading Matthew 7:12?
2. Discuss the Parable of The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Why do we tend to only show kindness to certain people and not to everyone we meet?
3. How may you apply Matthew 7:12 in your life?

The Narrow Gate Leads To Life Everlasting

[**Matthew 7:13-14**]

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate.

For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads
to destruction, and many enter through it.

¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road
that leads to life, and only a few find it.

By Tony Tng, Chairperson, Missions

Playing as a young boy in my early kampong days was so much fun. The playground was wide and spacious. The group of us would play like there was no tomorrow. It was tiring but fun. The next day, we would do the same again. That was good when the weather was sunny. However, after a heavy downpour, the playground became soggy and muddy except for a narrow path that led to the higher ground in the centre. That did not deter us from carefully treading along this narrow path to reach the dry ground to play. Anyone who did not focus or tread with care would slip off the path and into the mud. If that happens, it would lead to a big scolding from our mothers when we reached home. At times, we boys would hold on to one another as we walked the narrow path, preventing anyone from falling into the mud. We definitely relished the feeling of achievement whenever we reached the higher ground without getting muddy!

This memory of my younger days reminds me that the narrow path is never easy to tread but once we have navigated it, we will find something rewarding. In these two verses, Christ reminds me that the narrow path will bring me to the gate that leads into the Kingdom of God where there is life. This is the path of Christ and it is the only way into the Household of God. To walk this narrow path, I need discipline, including spiritual discipline, to persevere and keep distractions away. I also need companions to encourage and support me, to prevent me from falling off the narrow path. At the end of this path is Christ who is the Way and the gate that welcomes me into His Kingdom.

I need to walk this challenging but right path with fellow believers as my companions in Christ. I want to be the few that will find the gate at the end of this narrow path and be rewarded with everlasting life.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What makes people prefer to enter the wide gate via a broad road, even if that leads to destruction? Is it difficult for you to avoid this path?
2. Discuss the importance of spiritual disciplines in helping us to enter the small gate via a narrow path. Choose one or two spiritual disciplines to practise as a family.
3. Think of people you can call or rely on to walk with you on this narrow road that leads to life.

Fruit And The Father

[Matthew 7:15-20]

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them.
Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit,
but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit,
and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

By Charis Lim, Chairperson, Digital Ministry

As a disciple of Christ, how do I produce good fruit in my life? The Psalmist declares that those who delight in the Lord are to be "people like trees planted in the House of the Lord...bearing fruit...whose leaves never wither". (Psalm 1:3)

I'm reminded of the Fall where Adam and Eve's calamitous choice to behold that one tree with its fruit led to the downfall of all of humanity. It's interesting that the problem began when Adam and Eve started reaching for the fruit instead of the Father.

We can learn a lot from our children. When my son was a baby, I would play with him and help him to reach and grab toys. And I realised that putting the toy in his hands didn't quite help him to grab hold of it well. His coordination was all over the place. After a few tries, I realised that instead of putting the toy in his hands, the trick was to put it in front of his eyes. I remember him lying on his cot and I would dangle a toy directly above his face. When he saw the toy, you could almost sense the desire forming in his brain and the intent saying, "hands go get it"! And suddenly, he would reach out with his hand and grab the toy! In catching the toy, he grabbed it first with his eyes. I've come to understand that babies reach with their eyes first.

There is a powerful spiritual lesson behind this simple observation. In my own discipleship journey, what am I reaching out for? What am I beholding? For whatever I behold, is going to dictate what I will become.

Original sin began when Adam and Eve started looking at the fruit and not the Father. Here's the question: In my family life, work, ministry and all that God has called me to do, am I looking at what my hands can get hold of for my own benefit or are my eyes consumed with the one who makes me whole? God is saying to me, "What you behold, you will become".

May my family, friends and community around me see God's good fruits (the fruit of the Spirit) in me as I seek to be what the Psalmist exalts, "People like trees" whose eyes are firmly "planted" only on the Father. Amen.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. What are we reaching out for in our work, family life and ministry? Are we reaching for the Father?
2. What do our family, friends and community see in us? Do they see the bad fruit or the good fruit?
3. What aspects of the "Fruit of the Spirit" do people recognise in us?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

Heart's Posture

[Matthew 7:21-23]

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’

²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

LENT 2023 | DAY 27

FRIDAY, 24 MARCH 2023

By Paul Gwee, Associate Lay Leader

I noticed that it was Jesus Himself who gave these warnings to His audience. Hence, it is critically important that I pay careful attention.

The first warning is that simply calling Jesus "Lord, Lord" will not guarantee entry to the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of God will be able to get there.

Secondly, those who claim that they prophesied, exorcised demons and did many miracles in His name will also be disqualified.

In fact, Jesus' heart-wrenching words to many of such people will be "I never knew you." It must be shocking to hear this especially when they would think in their hearts that they had done all the right things. Not only would they not be recognised, they would probably also be shaken at being told to depart from Jesus' presence and called evildoers.

These are severe warnings to me about my relationship with Jesus.

Jesus said that only those who do the will of His Father who is in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven.

I believe doing His will starts from having the right motives and a living faith in Him. Jesus always looks at my heart. When my heart's posture is not right with the Lord, whatever I say and do will be meaningless and not be recognised by Him.

I will yield my heart to be obedient to Jesus my Lord. It has been said, "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). It is not about how much we achieve for God but how obedient our hearts are in doing His will.

I will use the discipline of examen to deepen, refresh and repent in my daily personal relationship of obedience to Him and to bear fruit. I will work out my salvation with fear and trembling. I will set aside family devotion and prayer time with God.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Jesus tells us that what we profess verbally must be accompanied by our obedience to God. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Pause and reflect on your obedience to God.
2. In Matthew 15:8, Jesus said of the Pharisees, "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. What is the posture of your heart today?"
3. How can you and your family be men and women after God's heart?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

The Wise And Foolish Builders

[Matthew 7:24-29]

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,

²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

By Roger Chan, Chairperson, Small Group Ministry

Many of us are familiar with the story of the "Three Little Pigs". The first pig was lazy and built its house quickly on flimsy straw before going to play. The second pig was a little more hardworking and built its house on sticks, then it went to play. The third pig was the most industrious of the three and built its sturdy house with solid bricks. Then, a hungry big bad wolf came and blew the first two houses down with relative ease. The first two pigs ran to the third pig's house to seek shelter. At the third pig's house, the wolf huffed and puffed but could not blow the brick house down. The third pig laid a strong foundation and built a strong house.

This childhood story is somewhat similar to our scripture reading today. For the last 27 days of Lent, we have been reading devotions based on the Sermon on the Mount. The emphasis today is the commitment to put them into practice and be obedient to Jesus' teachings. For those who put them into practice are like the wise builders who build their houses on the rock, akin to the third pig building his house with bricks. This provides a solid foundation to our faith, which will not quiver when faced with challenges and difficulties.

In contrast, if we choose to only listen and not act on the teachings, we are like foolish builders who build their houses on sand. Like the first and second pigs, their houses will not be able to withstand troubles and will be blown away easily.

The Bible warns us of trials and tribulations which Christians may have to endure. There will be temptations. Our faith will be tested. If we do not build a strong foundation, we will run the risk of faltering in our faith.

I find fully obeying Christ and His teachings easier said than done. I have to confess that I struggle with balancing work, family and ministry commitments. These are often at the expense of doing my daily devotion and guiding my family spiritually. I run the risk of building my spiritual faith on sticks, or worse, straw. To build a strong foundation, I will need to slow down and be disciplined to prioritise what is important. I pray for God to guide me through this season and help me be a better Christian.

[Family Discussion Pointers]

1. Examine your daily walk as a Christian. Are you building your life on rock or sand?
2. How can we be doers and not merely hearers of God's Word?
3. As a family, each member can make a commitment to be a doer for one area in his or her life. Will you faithfully follow Jesus and be accountable to one another?

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

"LORD, Forgive Us."

LENTEN MORNING PRAYERS

27 – 31 MARCH 2023 (MON – FRI)

7.30am – 8.00am, Zoom

<https://wesleymc-org.zoom.us/j/81239715705>

Meeting ID: **812 3971 5705**

Passcode: **LMP**

As we approach Holy Week, the week leading up to Christ's crucifixion, it is good and only appropriate to take stock of our thoughts, inclinations, speech, and actions in our daily lives, and how these affect our relationship with God, with creation, and with one another.

After all, why did God's only Son lower himself to become fully human, and to eventually be betrayed, tortured, and crucified on the cross—the One who is blameless and sinless?

How often do we pause from our daily schedules and allow God to inspect our hearts, with no area hidden? How often are we convicted of our own sinfulness, however "small" it may appear to us?

How honest are we with ourselves? How conscious are we with the thoughts hidden in our sub-consciousness?

Every morning during the week of 27 to 31 March 2023, we will be setting aside thirty minutes, 7.30am to 8.00am, via Zoom, for silent reflection using Scripture, confessional prayers, and songs, as a faith community. Some of the prayers and reflection questions may be uncomfortable for us,, but it is good for our souls, as we begin the day with a sombre reflection of our lives, and hopefully an eventual awakening and quickening of our spirits. *LORD, forgive us!*

LENTEN MORNING PRAYERS |

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 27-31 MARCH 2023

Monday
27 Mar 2023

Psalm 51:9

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Read Exodus 34:1-17

In what areas of your life have you been “stiff-necked”? (v.9)
What other “gods” are you worshipping? (vv. 14-17)

Pray

Lord, forgive us,
we, who bow to other masters and by their promise live.
Redeem our wayward passions; our rebel wills forgive.
Have mercy on us, Lord.

Tuesday
28 Mar 2023

Mark 8:34

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me.”

Read Exodus 35:1-29

What have you been withholding from God? What is your
“freewill offering” to the LORD? (v. 5, vv. 21-29)

Pray

Lord, forgive us,
we, who search for meaning where transient joys abound,
and seek the soul’s contentment where peace cannot be found.
Open our eyes, Lord!

Wednesday
29 Mar 2023

Matthew 3:2

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Read Matthew 6:19-24

What treasures have you stored up on earth?
How have you been serving both
God and money?

Pray

Lord, forgive us,
we, who rob the poor and the weak by our greed.
We have grasped for more possessions,
wanting things we do not need.
Lord, take away our lust for more!

Thursday
30 Mar 2023

Psalm 51:9

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Read Matthew 5:21-24

Have you been angry with anyone? How have you reflected upon the possible causes of your anger? Would you be having a conversation with this person in order to listen and to understand him/her, and possibly to reconcile, or would you be sweeping it under the carpet?

Pray

Lord, forgive us,
we, who foster hatred, strife, and unforgiveness.
Help us to live as one.
Recreate us in your image;
speed the day your will is done!

Friday
31 Mar 2023

Mark 8:34

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Which beatitude spoke to you the most? Why is that so?

Read Ephesians 2

In what ways have you built or are building the dividing wall of hostility that Christ himself has destroyed? (v. 14)

Pray

Lord, forgive us,
we, who by our silence, let the voiceless suffer.
Let Your justice flow! (Amos 5:24)

Lord, forgive us,
we, who build walls of classes, prejudice, and division.
Open our eyes!

JOURNAL

Journey TO THE CROSS

PALM SUNDAY

Jesus rides triumphantly into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-11
Mark 11:1-11
Luke 19:28-44
John 12:12-19



Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, marked Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling a prophecy in Zechariah 9:9.

It is called Palm Sunday because many people cut palm branches from the trees and spread them on the road to welcome Jesus. They shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Matthew 21:9).

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Reflect:

1. Is there someone who is asking, "Who is this Jesus?" Is there someone among your relatives and friends who needs Jesus to ride into his/her heart this Easter?
2. In the post pandemic, is there someone who is in need of the Resurrection Hope of Jesus?

Pray:

1. Commit the names that come to mind to God and ask God for divine appointments to reach out to them this Easter, for wisdom to share with them the Resurrection Hope in our Lord, and for open hearts to receive Jesus into their lives.

HOLY MONDAY

DAY 35

Jesus curses a barren fig tree and clears the temple courts again

Matthew 21:12-22
Mark 11:12-26
Luke 19:45-48

On this early Monday morning, while walking back to the city, Jesus saw a fig tree by the road and went up to it. Finding that the fig tree had no fruits, nothing on it except the leaves, he said to it: "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered. The disciples were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

The fig tree episode symbolises Jesus' judgement on faith without substance, or fruitless faith. Faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26).

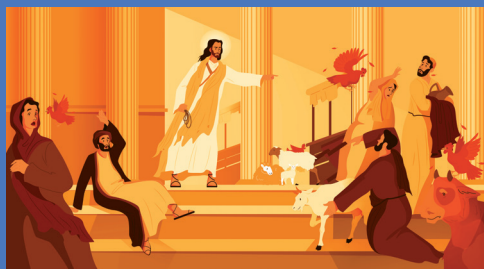
On the same day, Jesus also entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," Jesus said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"

Reflect:

1. Examine your faith, your life and ministry. Is your faith bearing fruit, or is it fruitless or barren just like the fig tree?
2. Is prayer a part of your spiritual life? How may you make it a daily spiritual discipline?

Pray:

1. For God to grant you grace and wisdom to bear fruit in your faith.
2. For God to develop in you, and in every Wesleyan, the Discipline of Prayer, so that Wesley Methodist Church can remain a House of Prayer.



HOLY TUESDAY

DAY 36

Jesus condemns the religious leaders, and teaches on the Mount of Olives

Matthew 21:23-25:46
Mark 11:27-14:11
Luke 20:1-21:36

Jesus entered the temple courts, and while teaching, the religious leaders came and challenged his authority. They questioned Jesus on issues such as paying taxes, resurrection and the greatest commandment, all of which Jesus responded with great wisdom. Jesus also condemned the religious leaders and warned his disciples against them.

On his way back to Bethany, Jesus stopped at the Mount of Olives and was asked by his disciples about the future. This set the stage for what is known as the Olivet Discourse where Jesus told his disciples not only about the future, but also about his return, and about remaining watchful.

Jesus told three parables: The parable of the 10 bridesmaids (25:1-13) reminds us of the need to wait and be ready for Christ's return. The parable of the talents (25:14-30) shows that waiting for Christ's return is not passive; we are to work faithfully and energetically with what God has gifted us. The parable of the sheep and goats (25:31-46) focuses on the final judgement and the importance of serving others in need, especially the least and the last in the community.

Reflect:

1. If Jesus returns again today, are you ready to meet him? If not, how may you be better prepared?
2. What have you been doing with what God has given you – money, time, natural talents and possessions?
3. How is your heart for the poor and the needy in the community?

Pray:

1. Ask God for insights into what you are still lacking in your faith as you keep watch and be ready for Jesus' return. Then ask for foresight to Go and Be, and Do!



HOLY WEDNESDAY

DAY 37

Jesus' disciples prepare for the Passover while Sanhedrin plots to arrest Jesus

The four Gospels are silent on what Jesus did on this day. But Jesus and his disciples were probably resting in Bethany, and preparing for the Passover.

Besides the Passover, Jesus was also preparing to complete his earthly ministry through his crucifixion and resurrection. He had earlier told his disciples three times (Matthew 16:21-28; 17:22-23; 20:17-19) that he would be delivered over to the religious leaders to be crucified. And on the third day, he would be raised to life.

The Sanhedrin, as expected, was plotting to arrest Jesus. Meanwhile, Judas agreed to betray Jesus.

Rest:

1. Rest in God's presence today, just as Jesus also rested on this Wednesday before his crucifixion and Resurrection.

Reflect:

2. Take the time to reflect on what Good Friday and Easter mean to you. What is your Resurrection Hope this Easter?

Renew:

3. Thank God for His sacrificial love for you and us. Present your Resurrection Hope to God and may the Lord renew you in your faith – your life and ministry.



JOURNEY TO THE CROSS |

MAUNDY THURSDAY

DAY 38

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper and washes his disciples' feet

Matthew 26:17-74
Mark 14:12-72
Luke 22:7-65
John 13:1-38

In the Upper Room, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and washed his disciples' feet.

Jesus and his disciples then sang a hymn and together they went to the Garden of Gethsemane. There he predicted that his disciples would be scattered on account of him. And Peter would deny him three times.

Finally, Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested. As predicted, all his disciples deserted him and fled. And Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

Today, this day is known as Maundy Thursday. Maundy is derived from the Latin word for "command", and refers to Jesus' commandment to the disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). Maundy Thursday also commemorates the Lord's Supper.

Reflect:

1. What does Holy Communion mean to you as you partake in it?
2. Jesus commands us to 'Love One Another'. Are there people in your midst that you find difficult to show agape love to?

Renew:

1. Present the "Difficult to love" name-list to God and pray for humility and strength to love them – just as Jesus first loved you.
2. Ask God for humility and a contrite heart to repent of your sins as you partake in Holy Communion in church this evening.



GOOD FRIDAY

DAY 39

Jesus dies on the cross

Matthew 27:1-61
Mark 15:1-41
Luke 22:66-23:49
John 18:28-19:37

Early in the morning, the religious leaders made their plans to have Jesus executed. They escorted Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the governor, who found no basis for any charges against Jesus. Pilate's wife even sent him a message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man (Jesus), for I have suffered a great deal in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19).

The governor finally gave in to popular demands and sentenced Jesus to death. Jesus was flogged, tortured and taken to Calvary to be crucified on the cross.

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. At about three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Finally, he cried out again: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two and the earth shook. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Reflect:

1. What would you say to Jesus when you see him again?
2. What does the cross mean to you?

Renew:

In prayer, let's thank Jesus, our saviour, for redeeming us on the cross. In him, we can have Resurrection Hope. Yes, Sunday is coming!



HOLY SATURDAY

DAY 40

Jesus' tomb is sealed and a guard posted

Matthew 27:62-66

The religious leaders were worried that Jesus' disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. So they persuaded Pilate to give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Pilate put a seal on the stone and posted a guard.



Rest:

It's Sabbath Day then. Let's rest in the Lord's presence today, and look forward to Sunday.

Reflect:

1. What or who, if any, is stopping you from sharing the Good News of Easter with others?
2. Are there obstacles preventing you from sharing the Resurrection Hope with others?

Renew:

1. Ask God to grant you wisdom, courage and strength to overcome any difficulty that you face in sharing the Resurrection Hope with others. Then Go and Share!



EASTER SUNDAY

Jesus is not here; He is risen, just as He said. And He appears to many

Matthew 28:1-20
Mark 16:1-20
Luke 24:1-53
John 20:1-21:25



Yes, Jesus' tomb was empty. "He is not here; He has risen, just as He said," these were the words that the angel of the Lord told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary when they went to the tomb that Sunday morning hoping to anoint Jesus' body.

Besides the women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome and Mary, the mother of James), Jesus also appeared to Peter; the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; and his 10 disciples (except for Thomas) that day. One week later, Jesus appeared again to his disciples, and Thomas was with them this time. He also appeared to seven disciples while they were fishing, 11 disciples on the mountains, a crowd of 500, his brother James, and those who watched him ascend to heaven.

And in what is seen as a response to Peter's denial, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. To which Peter answered: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

The Book of Matthew ended with the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Reflect:

1. Take this time to reflect on Jesus' Journey to the Cross. Reflect on Jesus' Great Commission. Then ask the Lord what he would like you to do, and to be.

Renew:

1. In this church year of 'Discipleship in the Family', let's draw near to God as one united Family, listen to His voice and respond to love our Lord and others.

May God grant us renewed strength and wisdom to grow as good disciples of Jesus Christ, and to go forth to make disciples of all nations.

**LET'S GO AND SHARE THE RESURRECTION HOPE OF EASTER WITH OTHERS!
BLESSED EASTER TO ALL!**

A person is standing on a path, looking out over a vast, hazy mountain range. The scene is captured in a monochromatic teal color. The person is in the lower foreground, and the mountains stretch far into the distance, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

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