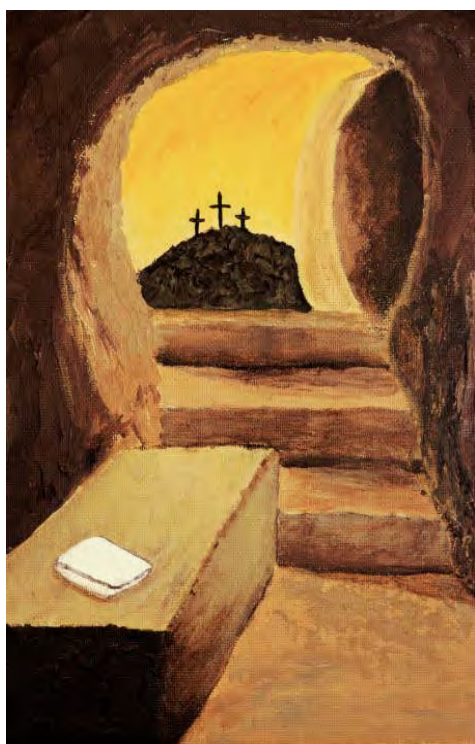


Paul's Epistle



Issue 2.38 - April 2024

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Praise to God for a Living Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Peter 1:3

Reflection: It is vital to reiterate the basis of our hope. We have access to this 'living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' Without this resurrection, our hope would be — like many around the world — temporary, uncertain, and unstable, based on external human and material sources. But with the knowledge that we have a new birth with Jesus, our hope is eternal, definite, and steady.

Among the most difficult questions posed by Christian refugee families from Iraq, who have been uprooted from their homes 3-4 times, are: "Where is God?" "Why would God allow us to lose all our belongings and our ancestors' land to evil powers?" They are traumatised, exhausted, depressed — and rightfully so. But through undergoing our Bible-based, Healing the Wounds of Trauma program, these same families have experienced God's goodness, mercy, provision, and promises. Their wounds are healed and their faith in the living Lord restored. Whether they return back to their homelands or transition to a new land, they do so with restored faith and hope.

Prayer: Our God, reveal your purposes to us so that we may never doubt your presence in our lives. While we may ask — like Jesus on the cross — why you have forsaken us, remind us of your living hope through his resurrection.



What we are *facing*
may feel powerful,
but *not more powerful*
than our God.

HANNAH KUHN

May God Help you to walk in your identity today. As a chosen, loved, called, and desired child of the one true King.

Today, let's remind ourselves of God's steadfast love for us and bring to mind all the ways He has already been faithful to us.

Cover — From Easter to Pentecost

We are on the move

Over the years, St Paul's has moved several times and now we are on the move again. Each time, while some doors may close many more have opened with God's guidance.

The Diocesan office has now advised the ACT Property Group that we will terminate the lease of the Parish Centre in six months (about mid-October).

The planning for the relocation of St Paul's ministries is progressing well and we really appreciate the welcome and cooperation provided by the Holt Anglican parish (St James) and the Charnwood Anglican parish (St Barnabas and St Michael and All Angels). The planning progress to date for some of our larger ministries is summarised in the Table below.

It will be a large job to decide the best outcomes for the many items we have within the Parish Centre – some will be needed by us, some useful to the other parishes or organisations, some may be sold and some may be past having further use. We will organise a clearance sale later in the year and also celebrations of our past and future.

The Parish Council is currently developing more detailed information materials for both parishioners and others involved in the activities of St Paul's.

Ministry	Status	Target Date
Sunday Worship	8am APBA service at Hall, 10.30am more contemporary service at Charnwood	Perhaps Aug 2024
Helping Hand Food Pantry	Arrangements are nearly finalised with Canberra City Care to absorb HHFP members and volunteers.	25 July 2024
Coffee Corner Café	Sadly, this will not continue	To be decided
Craft Group	Combining with St Barnabas Craft Group with no change to the day or time.	To be decided
Mainly Music	At St Barnabas with no change to the day or time expected.	24 July 2024
Mission Stitchin'	Being arranged with St James, Holt	To be decided

David Graham

Special Events at St Paul's

7 April to 12 May 2024 9.00am combined services	Russell Bielenberg preaching On 1 John "That you may know...."
19 May 2024	Pentecost
29 June 2024	St. Paul's Day



WEDNESDAY SERVICE

CHANGE OF TIME : The Wednesday service will be held at 10.00am (non-communion) until Ken returns from leave.



"100 Voices for people with disabilities"

St Christopher's Cathedral, Manuka on Sunday, 5 May 2024 at 1:15 pm. Talk to Maneerat for further details.

Between Easter and Pentecost: 50 forgotten days the Church desperately needs

We are big on Easter, and rightfully so — God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, putting an exclamation mark on the life of his Son. Some branches of the faith are big on Pentecost, celebrating the coronation of Jesus in heaven, and the overflow of the Spirit dripping down to the earth. Between the Easter and Pentecost, there's a span of 50 days.

In the hubbub of Easter, we sometimes forget Jesus stuck around for another 40 days after resurrection. Apparently, he had more to say and do. The very first verse in the book of Acts teaches us that the gospels were about "all that Jesus began to do and teach." The rest of Acts teaches us that Jesus is still doing and teaching in the days, weeks, months and decades after the gospels. The work of the first-century church was the work of Jesus. Isn't that true today? It's all too easy to substitute our work for his, to engage in ministry apart from his direction. What is Jesus doing and teaching in our day? Are we still working with him or simply working for him?

Jesus' message in the 40 days of resurrection was really no different than his message during his three years of ministry: He taught about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Acts opens and closes with the Kingdom of God front and centre. The very last verse in the book shows us Paul, three decades later, proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Acts 28: 31). Have we meditated on the meaning and importance of the Kingdom, or have we reduced the message of Jesus to only his sacrifice of the cross? Individually and corporately, we need to rediscover the Kingdom message.

The angels who were present at the ascension asked a pretty good question: "Why are you looking toward heaven?" (Acts 1:11). It's a question worth considering. Frequently, we are more concerned with heaven than with the Kingdom of God. The breathtaking sacrifice at Calvary purchased the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven, but in our generation, many followers of Jesus have limited his work and message to heaven and heaven only. We should

ask: If the gospel is only about going to heaven, why did Jesus invite us to take up the yoke of discipleship?

I'd love to get the podcast of everything Jesus taught in those 40 days, but it hasn't shown up on iTunes yet. In the meantime, he invites us to work with him just as closely as the first disciples.

So why 50 forgotten days instead of 40?

Why 50 forgotten days instead of 40 between Easter and Pentecost? Simply because there were 10 days of waiting, watching, and praying before Something Big happened to the church. The idea of 10 days to do nothing is desperately needed in the church today, and this is the perfect time of year to embrace that very thing.

The gospel accounts end with Jesus saying, "Go!" Acts opens with Jesus saying, "Wait!" What was so important that Jesus told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem? In our day, many Christians are familiar with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), but are we aware that Jesus also told us to wait? Jesus said, in effect, "Don't go anywhere, don't do anything, until you receive all that I have for you." Have we meditated on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives? We cannot work for God without any special empowerment. We cannot work with him apart from the Holy Spirit.

There are plenty of Lenten devotionals. They help us reflect on the gravity of the cross and the glory of resurrection. But what do you do after Easter? That's really the question of what it's like to live in the Age to Come. *The days between Easter and Pentecost are usually an afterthought, yet they can become an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the resurrection in our lives.* The risen Jesus didn't leave in a hurry: He hung out with his disciples and put the finishing touches on three years of training. He wants to do the same for us.

Ray Hollenbach

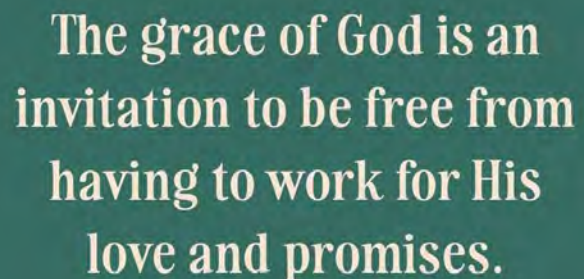
The grace of God

Do you ever worry that if you don't do everything correctly, God might not come through for you?

Oh, friend, we don't have to fear. When we sin and when we don't have anything to offer, God is still showing up for us and offering His abundant love. He is still faithful with His great grace even when we struggle. You can rest in that love.

If you've ever battled with thoughts that God's grace might be dependent on you being good enough or doing all the right things.

Alex Hoover



The grace of God is an
invitation to be free from
having to work for His
love and promises.

ALEX HOOVER

God will always come through

How do we look out over the expanse of our lives and admit the dreams that have died? How do we unearth purpose when the path behind us and before us is painted over with pain — when jobs don't work out, when our children's choices pan out differently than we'd hoped, when marriages crash and burn, and when prayers go unanswered?

In this season, even in this new year, as I find myself encountering (yet again) more dreams dying than I can count, I can't help but dwell on this Bible verse:

"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life ..." (Psalm 27:4).

The truth is, dead dreams bring redirections into our lives, but there is no gamble in going to God.

Even when dreams die, life takes us on detours, and longings turn into losses, with Him there are no chances, no risks that He will fail. He will always come through, even when dreams don't come true.

I cannot tell you that all your dreams will eventually come true, nor can I tell you that you should cling to every dream until the very end. What I can tell you, though, is that you can cling to Jesus. Even in this new year, come what will — though many dreams and needs and desires pull at our hearts — may He ever be the One we seek above all others. The One we trust will always satisfy.

Despite the things you've dreamed of and lost, what is helping you keep your gaze upon the beauty of the Lord?

Rachel Marie Kang

People in Prayer

Surveys of average Australians show that around 30-40 per cent of us pray regularly. This may surprise you but it is true - lots of people pray. For many though, prayer is the last resort when they are desperate - "I have tried everything else, I might as well pray."

If you are one of those who pray regularly, let me encourage you.

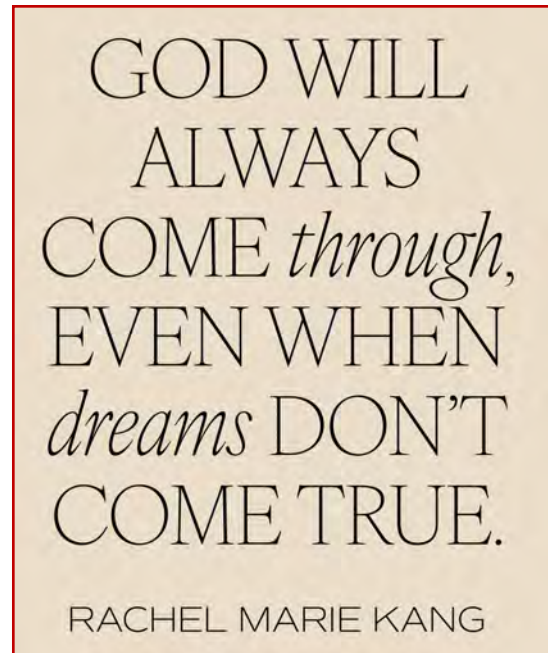
Firstly, be consistent. Don't just pray when you are in trouble. Do so every day, regularly. Constantly seek God in all areas of your life for things such as wisdom and direction.

Secondly, be persistent. Don't give up because your prayer is not answered the first time. Stay at it. Continue to bring your concerns to God.

And thirdly, be resistant. Some people pray but then become bitter because God hasn't answered their prayer. Resist becoming bitter and angry because God doesn't always give you what you want. God is not a celestial slot machine that just pumps out answers to prayer because we've asked. God may have something even better for you that you couldn't even conceive.

Do you pray? Then keep at it. Be consistent, persistent and resistant.

Karl Faase



We can trust that whatever God chooses to create

We may spend days, months or maybe even years pouring into something only to have it gradually fade away — a relationship, a job, a church community, a ministry opportunity. It may even be something good, it no longer satisfies the purpose for which it was created, and we have to say goodbye.

Hope can be hard in those now empty spaces as the comfort of the familiar gives way to the uncertainty of the not yet created. That's why I love the encouragement found in this verse:

"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new'" (Revelation 21:5a).

The verses leading up to this proclaim things God will do (future tense) in eternity: He will live with His people, He will wipe away every tear, and He will ensure that death is no more (Revelation 21:1-4).

Those promises are beautiful, but this one in verse 5 is different. This one is in the present tense, assuring us that right now, at this very moment, God is making all things new!

We need empty spaces to make room for what God wants to do next. It's not a replacement of what was; it's the creation of something new built on the foundation of all that's come before. And while we may not know what the new picture will look like, we can trust that whatever God chooses to create, it will be something beautiful.

How have you seen God work in and through your empty spaces?

Stacy Lowe

Reading the Bible

Boredom with the Bible is a common struggle. The question is: What do we do with it when it comes? I have found three things to be helpful.

It's helpful to remember what a privilege the Bible is.

The God of the universe, who is holy and awesome, has spoken to us in a book. That is an astounding gift! The Bible is God's breathed-out Word, the very voice of our Creator and Saviour printed on paper pages with ink. Our God wants to talk with us!

It's helpful to remember our dependence on God's Spirit.

When we read our Bibles (or hear a biblical sermon), a supernatural miracle is happening: an encounter with Jesus Christ. The whole Bible points to Him because He is the point of the whole Bible.

But this encounter isn't something we can make happen through our own efforts. Engaging with the Bible isn't about checking off a to-do list, earning brownie points with God, or even just gaining knowledge about Him. It's about knowing and loving an actual, living person: Jesus.

It's helpful to remember to be creative.

There isn't one right way to engage with God's Word. The Bible doesn't give us a prescriptive reading plan but gives us wonderful freedom to be creative! If you're bored with Bible reading, one remedy might be to switch things up and make a change.

For example, instead of following the same reading plan (again!), try a new one. Read alongside a friend, and talk about what you learn. Engage with an in-depth Bible study or a book that centres on Scripture. Listen to an audio Bible while you do chores, exercise or commute. Read a devotional with your kids. The possibilities are numerous, and we are free to be creative with them.

The good news for bored people like you and me? God doesn't want us to stay there.

What are some practical, creative ways you like to engage with Scripture?

Kristen Wetherell

The Joy of restoration

The last few years had been a struggle with birthing multiple businesses, juggling family and aging parents, dealing with painful losses, and wrestling with people-pleasing, performance-based tendencies. Rather than trying to force my old life into my new reality, I needed a soul restoration.

As a landmark birthday approached, I planned an improved version of myself, with better boundaries and balance. This would be my year of letting go, of making lasting changes for a new decade. The birthday came and went. Nothing changed. Instead, I slathered on a few more goals, more things to strive for, more ways to be found wanting. It's no wonder I felt as if I was crumbling inside.

As the old plaster fell to the floor in mounds of debris, I realized why my hopes for change never came to fruition. There must be demolition before lasting restoration can take place. Otherwise, I am continually trying to pour new wine into an old skin. And what is this new wine? Galatians 5:1 says:

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (ESV).

This sets me on a journey to get to the very foundation of my heart, where beliefs and behaviors are established, where Jesus wants to free me from the yoke of sin. It takes me back to

childhood memories long buried, events that formed false beliefs about God, myself and others.

I invite Christ to reveal the truth, expose my sin and heal my brokenness. I accept the new wineskin He offers, knowing it's much better than the old wineskin of my past. This process is hard, painful and long. It's the dirty work of facing memories that form patterns. It involves asking for forgiveness and giving it.

But as difficult as the process is, the joy of restoration is far greater ... and so worth it.

Is there something in your life that you feel needs changing?

Angela Correll



*As difficult as the
restoration process is,
the joy of restoration is
far greater ... and so
worth it.*
ANGELA CORRELL

Every small moment you choose to trust God, even though it feels like the odds are stacked against you, is adding up to great faith.

As we take steps of obedience

Do you ever wish God would give you a sign in your spiritual life?

A look into Scripture shows this desire for confirmation isn't new. But we also see that while we may sometimes receive signs from God, His Word is always a light that directs our steps. In our key verse, the psalmist says, "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

As I read this verse, some key facets stand out to me.

First, the lamp's purpose is to guide our feet, not to tell us what's miles ahead. And second, the lamp is a tool. Like any tool, it is only effective when we're holding it, using it for its intended function. If we stay stagnant, the light will only illuminate what's around us, and its glow will only reach so far. But if we move forward, its effectiveness will have no end. Each step forward will show us the next one as more of the path is revealed.

A faith that propels our feet forward isn't guided by a light in the distance. The Light of the world, Jesus, is already here. And how does He direct us? Psalm 119:105 notes one primary way: through His Word. As we take steps of obedience, He is faithful to lead.

I question His direction the most when my time with Him wanes. But when I'm intentional in prayer and reading His Word, He guides me with these questions:

1. Does this step glorify Him?
2. Does this step show my love for Him and His people?

Friend, if the answer to these questions is "yes," then you and I can move forward with confidence.

God wants us to live lives filled with purpose and joy, but we can't do that if we don't act. Let's go in His love and be empowered.

Is there an area of your life where God has prompted you to take a step of faith, but you're hesitant to move forward?

Abby McDonald



God is always doing something in our lives

Sometimes we battle to surrender our will. Our desire for our dreams to come true feel stronger than our desire to trust God.

But we can ask Him to lead us where we would need to fully trust Him, where we could not walk on our own.

Even in our pain and disappointment may we give our lowest for His highest.

What is one thing you can do today to surrender and trust God's timing and plan in your circumstances?

Kat Shultis

KAT SHULTIS

Faith story - Mark



"To be honest, I'm pretty simple. I left school at 16 and I got an apprenticeship as an electrician with Prospect County Council [part of the Electricity Commission of NSW]. My dad was working there and I thought it'd work for me. It was a plan. I threw myself into it. There were 30 other apprentices and they were all into drugs, alcohol, and sex."

"I thought, I'm going to stand up for my faith. I'd grown up in a Christian family and from early on, I had no doubt that Jesus was Lord. When I was younger, I'd accepted Jesus mostly as an insurance policy ... but at 17, I understood grace. I prayed, 'I'm yours, Jesus!'"

"There's a crazy thing in Australia. If you're good at sport, you connect. I was good at sport, so the other apprentices respected me. They were happy for me to be passionate about Jesus. I shared Jesus all the time. He's amazing, I said! I put stickers on my car and on my cricket bat, saying Jesus is Lord. I wanted everyone to find Jesus! People noticed and some of them came to faith."

"I loved sharing Jesus, but after a while, I thought I needed more time to do that. I was still enjoying work (making a lot of money, working shift work in high voltage operations, lots of adrenaline)."

But then after a while, I did some soul searching. I read Paul's words in Philippians 3:8 - 'What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ.'

"That was my call to ministry. I started to see that God had given me all these capacities that I could use for him. Everything else was loss. In 1993, I resigned from my job at Prospect and told my boss I was going to Bible College. He said, 'Could you please come back afterwards and be a chaplain?' It was amazing. It was Prospect County Council ... and they believed in me, and what I was doing in going to Bible College. They gave me a great redundancy package and I used it to pay our way through."

"Bible College was a different world - wordy, musical, artsy. I'm not like that, but I grabbed all the evangelism subjects ... and during that time invested in the church we helped launch. I just kept telling people about Jesus. And people came to faith."

I'd sit with atheists and listen to their arguments - that we live and die and we're done. I'd say to them, 'Do you like thinking like that? What do you do when you're in trouble? Who do you turn to?'"

"I think everyone knows underneath that there's more to life than we can see. It's in our gut. And God sent Jesus to show us that eternity matters. He fully gets us. But we don't turn to Jesus as a moral code. He's amazing! He's got it all. He knows us better than we know ourselves."

"After some years in the church plant, quite a few of the other churches in Western Sydney began asking me to help them. What could we do? So a mate and I started Greater West for Christ. It's a movement that merged business and the church. It's a way to help the local churches connect with their community. It can be messy, but it's good. We've added chaplaincy and funerals and childcare and coaching. But even in all that great ministry (which is wonderful), I have to say that it's just 'stuff' compared to knowing Jesus."

"Even now, nobody ever calls me Pastor Mark. I'm just Mark, the electrician from Western Sydney, who didn't finish high school and who loves Jesus. My favourite line in a song is from that old hymn. 'My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.'"

Mark's Faith Story (first published in July 2021) was selected by Naomi Reed as a stand-out in her Faith Stories series so far. To read more visit <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/section/faith-stories/>

Regrets

Regrets - we all carry them. It is only those people who suffer from a chronic lack of self-awareness who carry no regrets.

This choice we wish we hadn't made, an angry word out of place, a relationship that was unwise and unhelpful.

Regrets are common but our responses will be unique. Be sure to make regret your motivation, not your condemnation. Recognise where you can do better and focus on achieving that outcome. There is no point beating yourself up over past failure.

Our best response is to take our regrets to Jesus, here is the place of forgiveness and restoration. God has never expected perfection from humanity, but God waits for our repentance so that grace can be extended.

Karl Faase

Because Jesus got up, so will I

During hard seasons, may be for you, it's a hurting heart, a ruptured relationship or a broken home, and our hearts ask, 'How could God's plan include so much pain?' Our agony tells us a story with no ending and no hope. The only thing we know is that we are down, and we don't know exactly how to get back up.

But we don't have to look further than the cross to realise that the most beautiful gift we were ever given came through pain. Instead of taking His place on a throne, Jesus was nailed to a cross.

Did His first disciples also wonder how this could be God's good plan? Of course (Matthew 16:21-22; Luke 24:19-21)!

But, friend, Jesus' pain was not the end of His story, and your pain is not the end of yours either. When the disciples ran to the tomb looking for Him, an angel spoke words that still bring us hope to this day: "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Matthew 28:6a).

Because of Jesus, we have hope. We don't have to pretend our pain isn't real ... It is real. But we don't have to let our pain keep us down. Against all odds, against what was reasonable or rational, despite all that stood against Him, Jesus rose again!

I heard the words "the car is gone" and rolled over in bed to see my husband standing stunned in the doorway. There is nothing quite like a jolt of adrenaline in the morning to replace your coffee. We suddenly realised our vehicle was no longer where we had left it.

This season in our lives had been filled with so many hard things, and here was another incident to add to our ever-growing list. We went through all the motions, filed the police report, and began to figure out how we would manage our busy family with one car — when, to our shock, the car was found!

We were jumping up and down, praising God! Our prayers were answered.

But only days later, the car was stolen again.

If this weren't my life, I wouldn't believe it either. Sometimes life feels ridiculous, inconceivable and just plain unfair.

My husband and I never did get our car back. Life doesn't always get wrapped up in pretty bows like in the movies. But what I can tell you is that our God is faithful. We made it through, and while we didn't know why we lost our car (twice!), we decided to trust God.

As you and I continue to meditate on Jesus' resurrection in the days and months after Easter, let's hold on to the confidence that because Jesus got up, in His strength, we can too.

How does shifting your focus to Jesus' resurrection change your view of what you are walking through?

Oh, Lord! I praise You today because You have defeated sin and death. Thank You for Your sacrifice and amazing love. When I experience pain, help me to remember that You have everything I need to live in the victory You died to give me. When I feel weak, fill me with Your strength. You are risen, Lord. Risen indeed! In Jesus' Name, Amen

Ashley Morgan Jackson

Against all odds, against what was reasonable or rational, despite all that stood against Him, Jesus rose again!

ASHLEY MORGAN JACKSON

Expressing hard emotions is not about perfection. It's about progress.

Our purpose as image bearers is to glorify God, and He has given us so many emotions to feel as we walk out this calling.

Our full range of emotions is a blessing. Even hard emotions have a purpose: For example, sadness can help us value joy. Anger and frustration can help us respond to injustice and value peace and stability. And our hard emotions drive us to depend on God.

Jesus experienced some hard emotions too:

1. Frustration with merchants in the temple (Matthew 21:12-13).
2. Sadness when His friend Lazarus died (John 11:35).
3. Loneliness when He was on the cross (Matthew 27:46).

Though our emotions, if not dealt with and processed well, can lead us to sin, Jesus' emotions stemmed from His righteous love for His people. In His anger, He did not sin. In His grief, He did not sin.

This "aha!" moment, realizing that all emotions are God-given, was freeing for me. And maybe you find yourself feeling a little freer too?

You may be:

1. Upset with your child who hasn't picked up their toys.
2. Frustrated with a friend who keeps canceling plans.
3. Angry at a spouse for the way they're handling a work situation.

And those are OK feelings. We just don't want to stay there all the time. We want to understand why we're feeling how we're feeling, repent if our emotions have led us to sin, and ask for the Holy Spirit's help to handle our hard emotions with grace.

Expressing hard emotions is not about perfection. It's about progress.

What emotion is hard for you to feel and express? What's one step you can take in processing that emotion in a healthy way?

Kendra Legrand

In the pain of the unknown

It seems easier to trust God when we can cling to the comfort of the familiar instead of navigating something new. Which is why I relate to the Israelites' struggle to trust God as they wandered in the wilderness.

In Exodus 16, we see how God provided food for them: "When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat'" (Exodus 16:15).

How often do we look at what God provides for us and write it off because it didn't come in the way we wanted it to?

When God took Israel out of Egypt, He committed to take them to the promised land. But in the change and the unfamiliar, they started to complain. They wanted to go back to Egypt because at least they had food there (Exodus 16:3). In the pain of the unknown, they forgot God's promises and doubted His provision.

But God met them in their complaining (Exodus 16:12). He told them He would provide bread from heaven just for them every day. The manna spoiled by the following morning, which meant the Israelites had to gather fresh manna every day and trust God to provide it (Exodus 16:4). Still, even when God gave them what they asked for, they didn't trust Him. They gathered more manna than they needed because they feared He wouldn't send more. Instead of letting God's past provision point them to what He promised for the future, they tried to protect and provide for themselves.

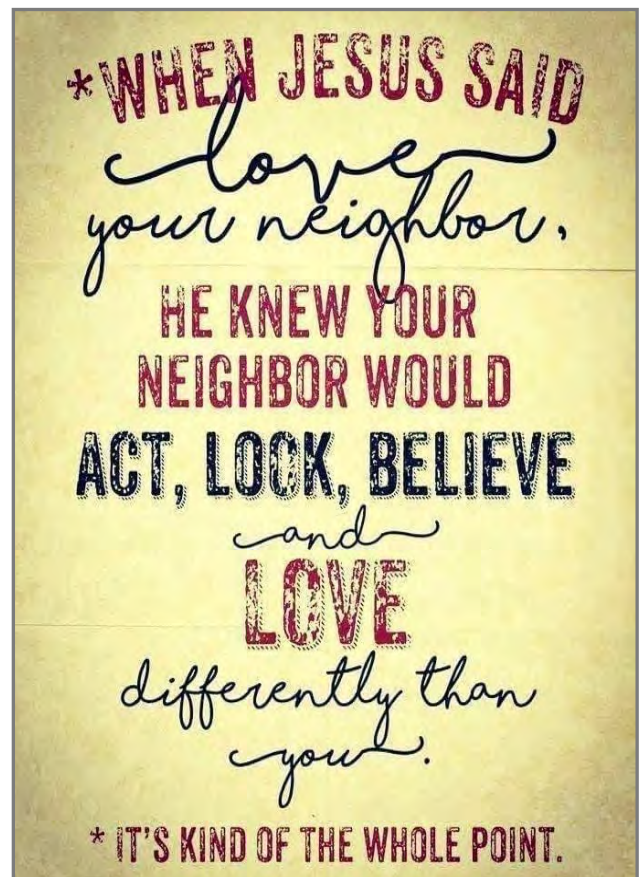
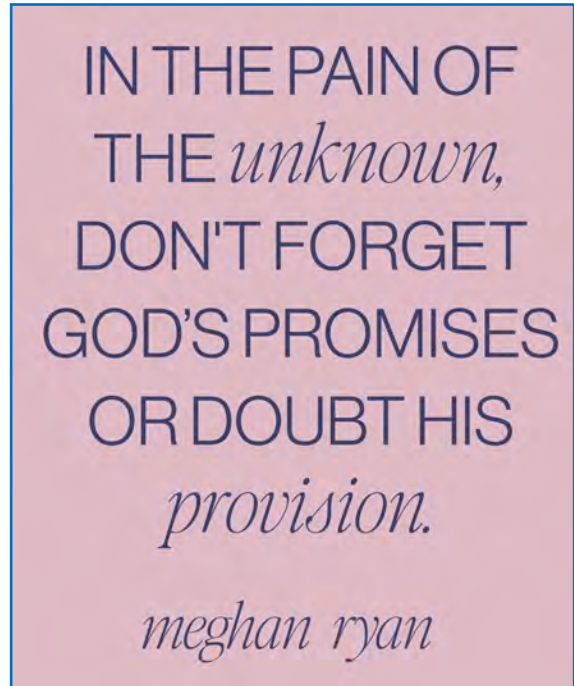
God provides in unexpected ways. It's not just about the manna; it's about what the manna represents. God sent manna from heaven to represent the Bread of Life He would send from heaven: Jesus.

The manna didn't look like the provision the Israelites wanted. Jesus didn't look like the Messiah King they expected. And if we are honest, God's definition of provision doesn't always look the way we want it to or hope it will. But God's perfect provision for us is promised in Jesus (John 14:6).

Let's practice trusting God today by looking to Him to provide what we need through Jesus, the Bread of Life.

In what ways might you be missing God's provision in front of you right now?

Meghan Ryan



God will give you rest.
God will give you peace.
God cares about your soul.
He will guide you through it all.

We can rest assured and not afraid

Is your heart unsettled or your mind uneasy?

While a trip to the mall or a getaway vacation might give us a breather, they are not what our hearts and minds most need. We need something more. And thankfully that something is free for the taking — the peace that Christ offers.

Jesus promises us peace of mind and stillness of heart so we can be free from worry and fright. He declared in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."

The word "world" might first make us think of the earth and the people residing there. However, the Greek word translated here as "world" has a nuanced meaning. It refers to the affairs and adornments the world provides for us humans. The trinkets and treasures that sparkle and shine, many promising peace.

The world offers us activities that can distract us for a while. It attempts to dress us up and adorn us to give us a better existence. Certainly, in some cases, this helps. There are businesses in the world that help clothe our bodies fashionably or enhance our homes with stunning decor. But our hearts and minds are a different story. Outward embellishments and pampering activities don't produce lasting harmony in our hearts — Jesus does.

The peace Jesus promises literally means having hearts and minds that are undisturbed, whole and no longer disquieted. We can rest assured and not be afraid, knowing God is in control. This is an out-of-this-world peace that Scripture describes as surpassing all human understanding (Philippians 4:7).

And we are assured our minds will be kept in this perfect peace when we steadfastly trust in God (Isaiah 26:3).

Take your troubles to Jesus. He sees. He hears. He listens. He alone can provide serenity for your soul.

What one action step will you take this week that will help you seek the peace only Jesus can offer?

Karen Ehman



The Origins and Practices of Pentecost

Sunday, May 19, is the Christian holy day of Pentecost. The name comes from the Greek word *pentekoste* which means fiftieth. The holiday is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter which is also fifty days after Easter, hence the name. Since its date depends on the date of Easter, Pentecost is a moveable feast, that is, the date is not fixed. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks. This important event in the Christian faith is described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–31), the fifth book of the New Testament of the Bible.

In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Pentecost can refer to the entire fifty days of Easter through Pentecost. Pentecost is also called "White Sunday" or "Whitsunday." In the United Kingdom, traditionally, the next day, Whit Monday, was also a public holiday. In Germany, Pentecost is called "Pfingsten" and often coincides with the beginning of many outdoor and springtime activities. These include festivals and organized outdoor activities by youth organizations. The Monday after Pentecost is a legal holiday in many European nations.



<https://www.bpl.org>

Faith Story—Leonie



"I grew up in Lithgow. My mother was a Christian, and she sent me to Sunday school. In 1948, when I was nine years old, I was sitting in Sunday school, and our teacher was praying for us. She was planning to go to Tanzania at the end of that year as a missionary nurse. As she prayed for us, she asked the Lord earnestly that we would all come to know the Lord Jesus and love him."

She said, 'Oh Lord God, take these children to be yours!' While she was praying, I actually opened one eye to look at her. When I saw her face, I realised that she meant it. Her prayer was so heartfelt. I immediately thought, 'I want to be loved like that!' I wanted to know God like that!

I grew in my faith from that moment. I believed in Jesus. But I never told her. At the end of that year, she went off to Tanzania to be a missionary nurse. And eight years later I finished school and got a scholarship to Sydney University. I studied geography.

In 1959, I was at a CMS rally in Sydney. The speaker was urging us to be ready to serve God anywhere. I said to the Lord, 'I'll serve you anywhere in Africa.'

The Lord said to me, 'Sarawak.' I actually heard his voice.

I said to the Lord, 'I don't think that's in Africa.'

Later, I graduated as a teacher, and I taught for some years. I did a final subject in Indonesian and Malay languages. Then, in 1967, I got a letter from a friend of mine who was working in Malaysia. She said that the principal in Miri, Sarawak, needed a trained geography teacher!

I wrote to the principal, and he offered me a job. I left for Sarawak in January, 1968. I've got so many stories! We landed in Brunei instead of Sarawak because the weather was bad and the airstrip was grass. We caught a bus to Miri over flooded dirt roads. I remember the lizards on the ceiling. Someone said be careful or they drop in your coffee.

I stayed in Sarawak for 18 years. After two years of teaching, I was offered the principal role, and I did that for 11 years. It was hard at times. I'd be at school teaching from 7am to 9pm.

One time, I was doing batik painting, and I accidentally burned down my whole house. Amazingly, there were Bible translators staying with me at the time, and when we looked at the house afterwards, the only thing that survived was the box of Bible translations. They weren't damaged at all.

Back then, we had quite a few Muslims in the school – staff and students. But we would have Christian devotions every morning, and they would listen. Every day, they heard something of the gospel. Over the years, some of them became Christians.

The one truth that helped me through all those years is Philippians 4:13: 'I can do all this through him who gives me strength.'

I believe, more than anything, that when the Lord calls, he also enables. He goes ahead of us. If he wants you to do something, he'll give you the strength or the resources or the people you need. Often, I've said to the Lord, 'I don't know how to do this.' And he's helped me. He's always shown me what to do ... even now when I'm nearly 82, and I'm still making regular trips back to Sarawak.

And back in 1988, I visited my old church in Lithgow. My old Sunday school teacher was there, so I told her that she converted me in 1948 by the way she prayed. She was absolutely thrilled. And to this day, I can still picture her face as she prayed."

Leonie's Faith Story (first published in October 2020) was selected by Naomi Reed as a stand-out in her Faith Stories series so far. To read more visit <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/section/faith-stories/>

You may have a lot on your plate today. But remember, your daily tasks are not small to the Lord. They don't go unseen. Show up well where you can, and the Lord will sustain you and strengthen you! (Colossians 3:23).

What we are facing may feel powerful, but not more powerful than our GOD

At 22 years old, I was in a season where every morning it felt like someone hijacked my mind.

Fear paralysed me, and disordered eating controlled me. Both snuck up on me like a thief in the night. What started as an innocent bad thought, followed by a bad habit, ended up cornering me into a prison cell and chaining me to the lies of the evil one.

I was deep in the brokenness, no longer controlling or mastering my mind. Romans 6:16 says "you are slaves of the one you obey" (NIV). Of course, I didn't mean to give into the enemy's lies, but I did, and it reminded me of something author Oswald Chambers once said: "The first thing to do when confronting a habit or mindset that controls me is to face an unwelcome fact: I am responsible for being controlled because at some point I gave in."

Fortunately for us, our all-knowing God knew the struggles His people would face, so for every lie you hear, there is a truth found in the Bible to counter it. Your Creator says you are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14, NIV) in His image (Genesis 1:27). You were not created too big, too small, too quiet or too loud. You were made intentionally to be exactly the way that you are. The more you cling to these truths, the weaker the enemy's lies will become in your mind.

After I spent months feeling trapped by something outside of myself, God's Truth finally broke through to me, and I said, Enough is enough. I refused to believe my thoughts and behaviours were just part of being a new graduate, woman and human.

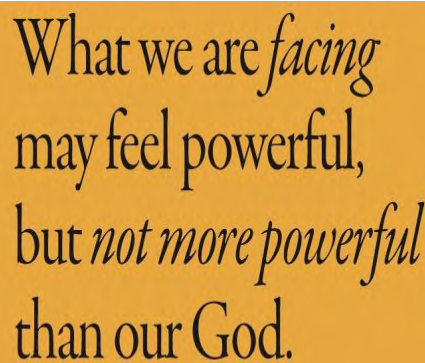
This is why it's so important to recognize the power of both the enemy and God.

God says in Isaiah 45:22, "Turn to me and be saved" (NIV). The next time you're tempted to fear the future or believe a lie about yourself, look up. Seriously, look up and imagine God compassionately smiling down at you. Keep your eyes fixed on Him as you recall everything He promises to do and be. He alone holds the perfect and wise plans for your life (Jeremiah 29:11).

The enemy and the mind are powerful, but nothing is more powerful than our God.

What thoughts, fears or desires do you need to surrender to God today?

Hannah Kuhn



What we are *facing*
may feel powerful,
but *not more powerful*
than our God.

HANNAH KUHN

If we live our lives trying to pretend

Have you ever worked so hard to live a "perfect" life on the outside that you lose touch with who you are inside?

Maybe you feel that you are the poster child for good deeds, serving the community around you and working hard to make everyone feel seen.

Maybe you feel that if you slowed down for a moment, you'd let others down.

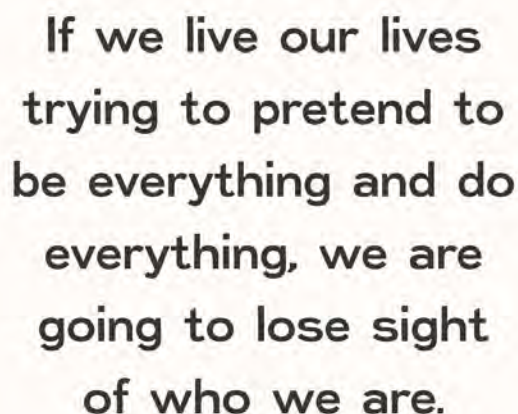
Maybe you feel like something terrible will happen because you let go of control for just a second.

Oh, friend, when we are called to love and serve others, chasing perfection can leave us depleted and unable to live out what God has called us to do.

So how do we escape this performance mindset and better live out our faith authentically?

The book of James teaches us that being doers of the Word does not mean being performers of the Word. We don't have to impress the Lord or the people around us in living out our faith. Being a doer of the Word with works of faith is coming to the end of ourselves and reaching for Jesus anyway. It's living our lives knowing we can't do it without Him.

Taylor Stuart



If we live our lives
trying to pretend to
be everything and do
everything, we are
going to lose sight
of who we are.

TAYLOR STUART

When you become anxious

The season I was in had been harder than expected. If I was honest, I wasn't just physically exhausted — my soul was exhausted. I wanted to please the Lord but felt like I was failing.

Desperate for answers, I felt resentment growing in my heart because the Lord wasn't making things better for me. If I could only figure out what God wanted me to do, I could move on from this awful place I had been stuck in for far too long.

All of this in mind, I impatiently asked my husband, "So what do you think I should do?" As the question hovered, just under the surface were my most pressing thoughts: I don't want to make the wrong choice. I don't want to do anything for the wrong reasons. I don't want to make God mad. I don't want others to judge me. Am I good enough? What should I do to feel good enough?

He replied, "I don't think what you do matters so much. I don't care what you do — I care more about who you are and whether you're kind, loving and happy."

I burst into tears because I knew these weren't just kind words but a reminder from God.

I was immediately reminded of Jesus' words to Martha when she was busy, frantic and upset: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary" (Luke 10:41-42a).

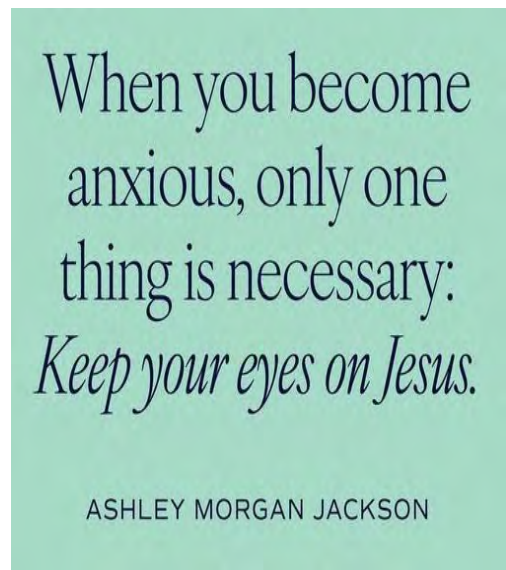
Like Martha, we often worry about solutions, getting help and checking boxes. We become anxious over how it's all going to work out. But the Lord reminds us again and again that we don't need to worry. Only one thing is necessary: to keep our eyes on Him.

While God cared about what I was going through, He was prioritizing who I was becoming.

What is the one thing God is asking you to remember today? If this season has been harder than expected and you feel frustrated, fearful and forgotten, God knows all of that. But He is asking you to trust Him anyway. He doesn't expect you to figure it all out — instead, daily let your heart rest in Him. He has everything you need.

What is one thing you can do today to cast your cares on the Lord?

Ashley Morgan Jackson



We can use our words ...

I work as a nurse, and many times, in traumatic or life-altering circumstances, all I can do is offer a word of encouragement or simply show up and be present with those going through healthcare crises.

But when those moments arise, instead of becoming frustrated with my small offering, I remind myself of Proverbs 16:24: "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." To me, this scripture is a constant reminder of the power of words, which can invite God to transform us and our situations and contribute to our physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health.

Know that right where you are, you can use your words to encourage, speak truth, express gratitude, ask intentional questions and offer prayer. You can make an impact on those you know and love as well as the countless others who are on this journey of life alongside you.

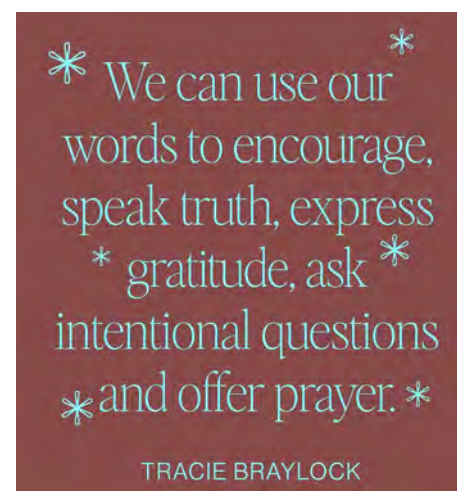
Whether you write a note to a friend or share a kind word with a stranger, your God-honoring words can contribute to the holistic health of humanity.

If you're concerned about what words to say, ask God to meet you in your desire to share gracious words. Then lean in and listen.

What is it that you need to hear right now? Which words is your soul longing for? When you find the words you need to hear, consider that maybe someone else needs them too.

Is there someone in your life who has taken the time to share gracious words with you? How did their words contribute to your health or uplift you, and what can you do to acknowledge the impact they've had in your life?

Tracie Braylock



Jesus can do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine

Throughout my life, I've gone through several seasons of wondering. Wondering why things haven't turned out the way I wanted them to. Wondering why my life seemed stuck while everyone else's seemed to be moving along just fine. Wondering why others seemed to have it so much easier than me. This wondering can quickly turn into looking for someone to blame. For me, that "someone" is usually myself.

Is there something wrong with me? Did I do something wrong?

In John 9, Jesus and His disciples met a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples responded in a way many of us do when we encounter some misfortune: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2, NIV). In other words, Who is to blame?

We may be surprised by the response of the Son of God, the only One who sees and knows the sins of all humankind: "'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him'" (John 9:3, emphasis added).

There was more to the story than the disciples could see. The Son of God had yet to fully reveal His works in the man's life.

Perhaps there is more to your story than what you can see right now, more that God has yet to reveal.

Sin does have consequences, and sometimes our own choices can create or worsen hard situations in our lives. Even then, Jesus always gives us grace (James 4:6). It's equally important to realize that

not all suffering is caused by our personal sin. Sometimes we may suffer for reasons we can't explain — yet "the works of God might be displayed" (John 9:3).

So when we are quick to jump to conclusions and blame ourselves when things don't go as planned, and when we feel like that confused, scared child, Jesus gently and compassionately releases us from our self-condemnation.

What scriptures or experiences of God's goodness can you call to mind to remind you of God's faithfulness to work all things for your good?

Alice Matagora

JESUS CAN DO
IMMEASURABLY
MORE THAN ALL
WE COULD ASK
OR IMAGINE.
WE ONLY NEED
TO TRUST IN
HIM AND WAIT.

ALICE MATAGORA

When we're tempted to give in to despair

In today's world, marked by uncertainties, unrest and persecution, it's easy to become burdened by concerns. When you add your personal struggles it often seems like there's no end in sight.

It's precisely during these trying times that God steadies our hearts. He is a strong and loving Father who tells His children not to worry or anxiously look about but to call out to Him and wait with humble expectation for the help He provides.

This is where God distinguishes Himself remarkably and gloriously, as often repeated throughout Isaiah:

"... For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9, ESV).

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you ..." (Isaiah 41:10).

God assures us of His boundless capacity and joy in helping us! The above scriptures brim with divine "I wills," and it's truly remarkable to understand that God doesn't want us to be consumed by fear.

Instead, He urges us to shed the weighty cloak of fear and dread, much like discarding yesterday's worn-out clothes.

But how do we do this? When we look at the troubling things all around us in the world, how do we exchange fear for faith in our invisible Father?

God encourages us to meditate on the image of being held by His hand:

"... I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

When life gets chaotic and we're teetering on the edge, let's picture God right there with us, a caring Father steadying His child as they navigate rough and uncertain terrain. Instead of giving in to despair or frantically searching for help, let's remember the promise that God is present, ready to help and support us. Then we can pray, calling out to our Father and waiting with humble expectation for the help He'll provide.

What's one challenge you've faced recently, and how do the insights from Isaiah help you find hope and encouragement today?

Kori de Leon

When we're tempted
to give in to despair,
let's remember the
promise that God is
present, ready to
help and support us.

KORI DE LEON

May we be friends

Friendship can be tricky.

In many of my friendships, I was assuming the worst, holding records of wrongs, and letting insecurity rule my perspective. Some of those friends were going through hard seasons and needed my grace, not my assumptions. And other friendships were ones where I needed to love but also set healthy boundaries for trust.

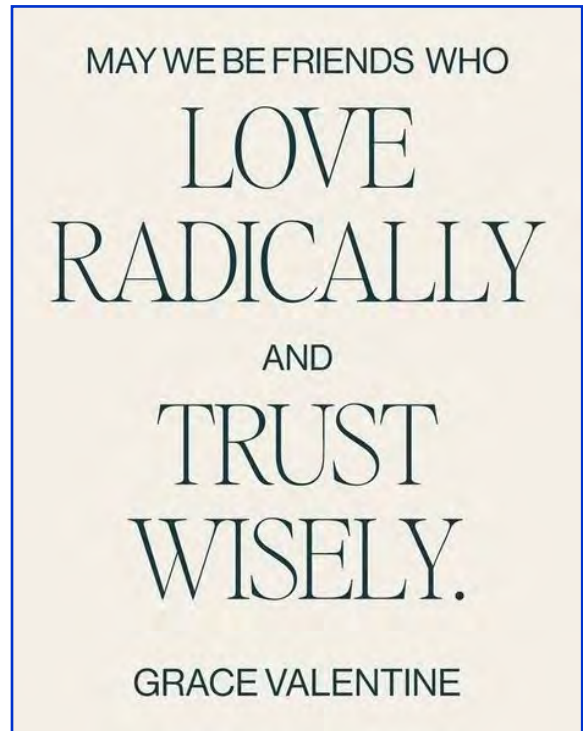
It's important to remember our calling in Christ and these four truths when we feel like our friends have let us down:

1. Give unreasonable grace to everyone. It's not pathetic to be kind. Let's be friends who are willing to celebrate and love others without calculating what they owe us in return — because that's how Christ loves us (1 John 4:10-11). Don't feel pathetic for caring; instead, celebrate Christ's love in you.
2. Healthy friendships are built on love, not a scoreboard. Scripture says love "keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5, NIV). If Christ has wiped our slate clean, how can we act any differently toward our friends? Unforgiveness not only destroys friendships, but it also destroys our hearts.
3. Trust comes from wisdom and discernment. If you pray about your friendships daily, God will reveal who you can trust (James 1:5). Yes, be compassionate to everyone because of the cross, but trust only those the Holy Spirit confirms you can trust. You're not mean for setting boundaries or walking away from people who you discern are not good for you.
4. Let your light shine. Your good deeds and kindness show God's light. When your friends see this, they'll experience God's love and praise Him. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

I know how hard loneliness is. But I pray you and I can become friends who pick up others in hard seasons (Ecclesiastes 4:10), who are content with being kind, and who remember that we're daughters of God, letting His light shine. May we be friends who love radically and trust wisely.

What does it mean to give unreasonable grace in friendship?

Grace Valentine



Keep your hopes on Jesus. He loves you and He will never fail you.

We can surrender the weight of our worries at Jesus' feet and He will continue to show us where to walk as we continue to walk with Him.

Faith Story — Pasra



"I grew up in Kalimpong, North India. My dad was a Hindu. My mum was a Buddhist. They were both very much against Christianity and I never heard about God. They quarrelled a lot and there was violence in our house when I was a child.

When I was in grade 2, my dad left. He said he was going on a trip, but he never came back and we never saw him again. He vanished, completely.

After that, my mum lost it. She began to drink and smoke. She ended up in wrong relationships. I never knew where she was, or if she was coming back.

I was an only child and I was completely alone. My neighbour sometimes let me into her house, and sometimes they put me in a hostel. I didn't know what was happening and I felt no hope at all.

When I was 12, my mum suddenly came home. I hadn't seen her in weeks. It was December. This time, she brought three friends who I'd never seen before. She was drinking and smoking a lot.

It was getting late, so I told my mum I was going to bed. She hugged me goodnight. I went to sleep, but in the middle of the night, I woke up and my bed was shaking. I saw one of my mum's friends stab my mum. I screamed and they pushed me and then ran away.

My mum was still breathing. I went outside for help. It was 2am. Nobody would come. I went to my uncle's place, who lived some distance away. By the time we got back home, my mum was dead.

I didn't cry at all. I was so traumatised. I didn't even cry at the funeral. Afterwards, I went to live with some relatives. It wasn't good at all. I hardly ever laughed or smiled. I felt so lost all of the time. I had big questions in my heart. Why me? Why is it like this for me? Why has this happened to my parents?

When I was 16, I went to stay with another uncle. His wife was a believer. She asked me if I wanted to come to church with her.

I said, "Yeah, why not?"

I really liked it. Everyone was so welcoming and nice to me. It was the first time in my life anyone had been nice to me. So I went back. I wanted to know if God was really real.

That Sunday, the people in church were praying. I didn't know how to pray, so I prayed a strange prayer. I said, "God if you're real, please give me back my family."

I knew it was an impossible prayer, but I prayed it anyway. I was really craving love and a family.

A few weeks later, there was a couple in church, sitting by themselves, praying. They didn't know my story. But while they were praying, God said to them, "That girl over there ... you have to make her your daughter."

They were shocked. They came outside and asked people about me. They found out my story and they felt amazed. They called me over to them and told me what God had said. Then they said, "We want to make you our daughter."

They really loved me! They disciples me. They had such a big role in my life! And I slowly opened up to the word of God.

I realized that God was real and he cared about me. He had bestowed on me 'a crown of beauty instead of ashes.' (Isaiah 61:3) I completely gave my life to Jesus and everything was different, from then on.

Later, I saw God's timing. After my mother was killed, the police were never able to catch the person who killed her. But five years later, after I became a Christian, the police finally caught the person and I had to go to court and face them.

I didn't want to go, or forgive them. But I prayed about it and I felt God say to me that it was important. On the day, I took a key chain with me. It had the words of Isaiah 41:10 written on it. "Fear not, for I am with you."

I stood in the court and I held the key chain so tightly! I was shaking, but in the end, I let go. I said to God, "I forgive them. Whatever they have done, I forgive them."

It was like a breakthrough, from my heart; I was completely free. God was so gracious to me. And from then, it's been a journey of healing. It takes time but I want to tell everyone ... there is hope when you trust in Jesus!"

Pasra's Faith Story (first published in May 2021) was selected by Naomi Reed as a stand-out in her Faith Stories series so far. To read more visit <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/section/faith-stories/>

The *only* person
God wants us to
imitate is Him.

my Life vs the Truth

Our minds are a battleground of affirmation and deception. But it's hard to discern what's true and what isn't.

Every thought is a game of truth versus lies. Because if you're a follower of Jesus, you have the ultimate Truth. And that makes you dangerous to the enemy, who is the "father of lies" (John 8:44, NIV).

But take heart: If you believe in Jesus, the devil can't touch your eternity (Ephesians 1:13-14), though he will try to render you ineffective on earth. And one way he tries to do that is through the "normal," everyday lies that pop in our minds:

I am not [fill in the blank] enough.

I am the only one who feels this way.

I don't think God means what He says about me.

The good news is: You don't have to have a black belt in karate to fight back.

Step One: Take Inventory

What decisions have you recently made, or what are you weighing the pros and cons of? The greater the impact of your decisions, the greater the battle Satan wages to try to keep you from following God's will.

What godly influence might the evil one be trying to stop you from having?

Step Two: Bring to the Light

Bringing your dark thoughts to the light can mean a lot of things, including releasing your thoughts through prayer, journaling, or processing with a trusted friend or counsellor. In the dark, you feel alone, and fear, worry and hopelessness multiplies. But in the light, you have company, support and freedom.

Step Three: Discern the Lies From the Truth

The Holy Spirit convicts us when we make sinful choices so that we can repent, but the devil shames us to hide instead of heal. Satan's lies will undermine, discourage and destroy, but God's Truth will empower us in — or convict us toward — our true identity and affirm God's character.

What biblical truths will help you go into battle today?

Meghan Mellinger



**There are different kinds of gifts,
but the same Spirit distributes them.
There are different kinds of service,
but the same Lord. There are different
kinds of working, but in all of them
and in everyone it is the same
God at work. (NIV)**

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

Nothing is too hard for God

For more than two decades, I pleaded for God's intervention in a close family relationship.

I was in a waiting period, sandwiched between my request and God's answer to it. Seasons passed — I met and married my husband, birthed two sons and watched them grow — all while wondering if God would bring calm to my storm.

I still believed God was able to do immeasurably more than I could ask or imagine. I just wasn't sure He would do it for me.

Maybe this is where Sarah found herself too. For several decades of her marriage to Abraham, she waited for God to make her a mother. When Abraham was 75 years old, God promised to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3). However, this promise would not be fulfilled for another 25 years.

An impatient Sarah suggested Abraham sleep with her maidservant to build a family through her (Genesis 16:2). This was Sarah's attempt at obtaining the offspring she longed for. She was driven to manipulate the circumstances of her life because she saw no other way, and heartbreak followed her actions.

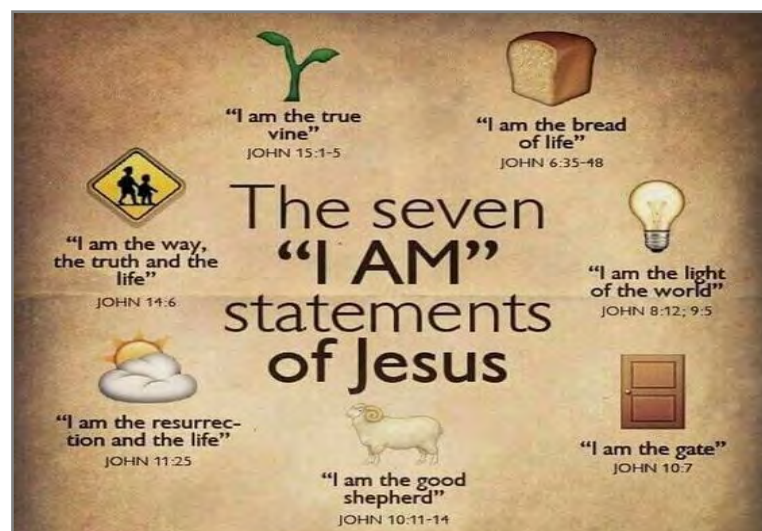
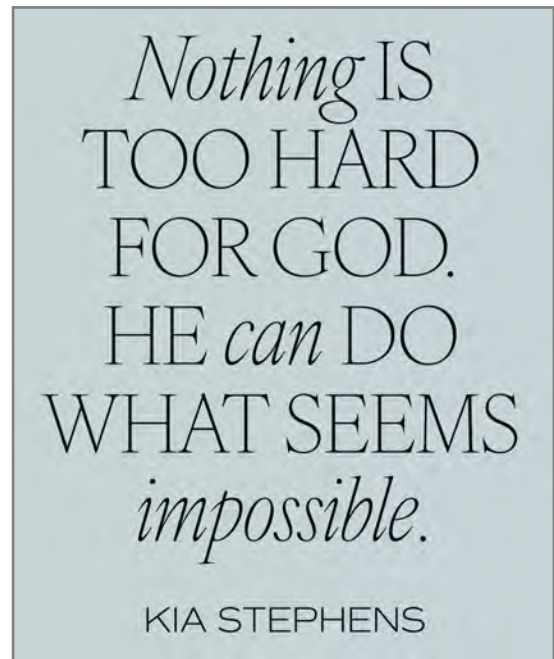
God challenged Sarah when He responded to Abraham in Genesis 18:14: "Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Despite Sarah's disbelief, God kept His promise: She birthed a son, Isaac — the embodiment of what Sarah perceived to be "too hard for the LORD."

Is there anything in your life that seems impossible?

Lingering for days or years, these challenges tempt us to believe they are beyond the reach of God — sickness, financial need, wayward relatives or difficult relationships. No matter what it is or how What in your life seems too hard for God? How is God drawing you into a deeper relationship with Him as you wait on a resolution?

God chooses to bring about a resolution, obstacles that seem impossible are possible with Him.

Kia Stephens



The Miracle crop that saved our farm



Jarrod Amery with four of his six kids

How this faithful farmer survived the drought

It's nine months since Eternity caught up with 37-year-old farmer from Central West NSW, Jarrod Amery. At the time, Amery was simply blown away by the "miraculous" canola crop he had planted just weeks before – after a dream that he believed to be from God.

It was a big leap of faith. In the dream, Amery was standing in the midst of lush, green canola in a paddock on his 6500-hectare farm outside Forbes. Many drought-stricken locals would simply have written off the dream as wishful thinking; canola crops were few and far between, and those that did exist were struggling. Yet Amery, convicted by his desire to be a "supernatural farmer", went and purchased \$36,000 of canola seed. Then he and his wife Emma sowed it into the dry, thirsty earth and waited on God.

"I remember praying about the crop and saying, 'God, we've done all we can do, and we're trusting you.'" – Jarrod Amery

It was a leap of faith that paid off. "The crop grew and grew and it flourished better than any other crops we planted," says Amery. "It was the best crop in the area by a mile ...

"Every Sunday after church, Emma and I and our six children would intentionally drive past that crop, even though it took longer to get home, and we'd thank God for the crop. I remember one Sunday in early June, we got out of the car and I said to Emma 'this crop has grown to a stage where it's exactly like I saw in my dream', and I was like, this is amazing! This is a dream in reality."

But when this "supernatural" crop was looking its best, the rain dried up during the middle of 2019.

"Pretty much from the first of July onwards, the rain stopped," says Amery about a common problem across drought-affected areas of Australia.

"From July 1 to the end of January 2020, we had 46 millilitres, which is virtually nothing. Last year was the driest year we've ever recorded.

"As the crop went on, it got thirstier and thirstier. It still looked like one of the best crops in the area, but over time it started to wilt."

Amery began to question God, saying: "God, I thought that this dream was going to have a happy ending."

"I remember praying about the crop and saying, 'God, we've done all we can do, and we're trusting you that whatever happens, happens because you've got a good plan going on.'"



The Amerys' property

While other canola crops on the Amery farm withered up and died, the miracle crop continued to grow, although "not at a great rate".

"We made a decision that we're going to put faith in God and that the dream was from God," Amery reflects.

"We made a choice near the end of March [2019] that we were going to sow [canola seed]. So we just started sowing 24 hours a day. We got 80 per cent of the paddock sown, but the other 20 per cent we didn't quite get sown because it started to rain.

"We came back and sowed that last 20 per cent seven days later when the paddock dried out. That part of the paddock, that we sowed after the rain, withered up and died – it was un-harvestable.

"If we hadn't have taken a step of faith ... then we wouldn't have had any crop at all." – Jarrod Amery

"So if we hadn't have taken a step of faith and started to sow the crop when God gave us the dream to sow it into dry soil, then we wouldn't have had any crop at all."

"That was a miracle in itself!" laughs Amery incredulously.

When the Amery family eventually cut the canola crop and sold it for hay (to be used as animal feed), they "got heaps and heaps and heaps of hay bales. More than anyone else in the district."

"These hay bales were in great demand. Our hay was being sold from Tamworth to Guyra to Condobolin and even up near the Queensland border. It was going all over the place.

"That canola was approximately 10 per cent of our land mass, but provided us with around 80 per cent of our income in 2019."



.../cont

The Miracle crop that saved our farm, cont ...

"We had heaps and heaps and heaps of hay bales. More than anyone else in the district," says Jarrod Amery.

While the farm is still running at a loss, Amery says: "If we hadn't done what God had shown us in the dream, we wouldn't have had any income whatsoever from that paddock. That would have probably resulted in Emma and I not being able to carry on with our agricultural business."

"That small thing we did by just sowing in faith has enabled Emma and I to continue on during this drought, which has been ever so hard, and to come out the other side and continue to live the dream of being farmers."

The next leap of faith

"We're off to a far, far better start this year than last year," says the ever-positive Amery. During the past week, they've received 115 millilitres of rain – that's 80 per cent of the entire rainfall at the property last year.

"That water will stay in the ground until we want to plant our crops. So it's money in the bank pretty much."

Amery believes that the drought is starting to break, although he qualifies: "but I don't shout it from the hilltops because some of the farmers haven't got that rain yet."

For farmers in his local area, the recent rain has been a "massive morale booster" and "a game changer".



Jarrod Amery

Reflecting on the lessons he's learned during this drought, Amery says: "It has been really hard at times and very challenging, but I know that God is so faithful and he's so good. And I also know that I've learnt the most important lessons in life when life's been most challenging.

"I have not wanted to waste such a difficult time by sitting around twiddling my thumbs, waiting for my environment to improve. I've been really consciously seeking out what can I do better on my farm; God, what do you want to show me about my heart, what skills do you want to teach me, what do you want to show me to help me to be a better farmer, a better business person, a better family man, a better community man at this particular time?"

While he doesn't want to minimise the impact of the drought, Amery goes as far as to say that the drought is actually one of the best things that's happened to him as a farmer.

"I reckon that this drought could be one of the greatest opportunities that I'll have in my career." – Jarrod Amery

"I've been thinking about this. The drought for some people seems like a waste of time, a waste of effort and a waste of money. But I reckon that this drought could be one of the greatest opportunities that I'll have in my career.

"The number of things that I've learnt – that people have taught me, I've taught myself or God's shown me – turns you into a bigger, better and wiser person."

Amery says he's "only on the start of this journey" of faithful living. He is currently waiting on God to direct his decisions about stock purchasing and crop planting in the next month or so.

"I'm determined not to do what I've always done because if I do that, I'll get what I've always gotten," he explains.

In summing up, Amery adds: "The crux of it is if you believe that God's speaking to you, you're better off giving it a go rather than waiting and waiting to see if it was from God."

"Don't just sit around, step out in faith and ask God 'Was this really from you?'"

Rebecca Abbot | Eternity | FEBRUARY 2020

WHEN YOUR SOUL IS
EXHAUSTED BY THE PAIN
YOU CARRY, JESUS HAS
THE **REST** YOU NEED.

Not only is Jesus approachable

What heavy burdens are weighing you down right now?

- A situation that seems impossible to figure out.
- Financial stress and pressure.
- Hope so long deferred it makes your heart sick.
- Anxiety over your child's future.
- Broken promises from someone you thought you could trust.

Whether you're experiencing one of these or something else, here is my prayer for you: May you catch even the slightest glimpse of the tender mercy of our Lord Jesus. For one drop of God's mercy is better than an ocean of the world's comfort.

You see, Jesus deeply understands and cares for us. If only we could see the wonder of His love. The skies He paints, the flowers He blooms, the plans He arranges just for us. The love letters He's written to us throughout the Bible.

These are all mercies from Him.

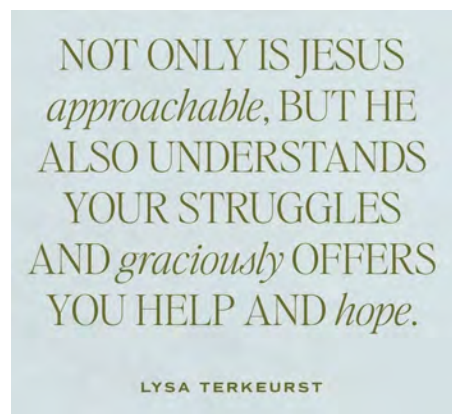
The world will offer us relief in the form of escapes. But trying to fill our aching hearts with things that won't satisfy us is like trying to fill an ocean with a tablespoon. It's never enough. So we clench our fists and keep trying to find something to comfort us.

If you find yourself wanting to escape today, ask Jesus to help you, comfort you and direct you.

Hebrews 4:15-16 reminds us how approachable He is, how He understands our struggles and graciously offers us help and hope: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (NIV).

When we're at a breaking point, "the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3, NIV) will sustain us. Indeed, one drop of the Lord's mercy is better than an ocean of the world's temporary comforts.

What worldly comfort or escape can you lay down today?



God is patiently, powerfully & mercifully pursuing ...

Sometimes it feels like God has forgotten the names I've placed before Him.

I'm still praying for many friends and family members to come to faith. But waiting for that day feels so hard.

In Psalm 13, the psalmist, David, wondered if God had forgotten his concerns too. He was wrestling with sorrow in his waiting and desperately called out to God just as I do. "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1, ESV).

David begged for change and the Lord's intervention, but the time had not yet come. Rather than giving in to defeat, allowing disappointments or disillusionment to crush him, David did something unexpected.

He said, "But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me" (Psalm 13:5-6, ESV).

In the face of his fear, David resolved to trust God's steadfast love. He rejoiced in salvation, recognizing it as a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). He knew the Lord cared for him, and so he sang even in his waiting.

Our Father cares about all people as His image bearers. He formed us in the womb and has numbered the hairs on our heads). If we care so greatly for our loved ones, how much more can we trust our Father to care deeply and compassionately for each of them as His creations? In the Lord's timing, He established David as king of Israel. Fourteen generations later, through David's family line, Jesus was born. Through David's patient waiting, the Lord was working out all things for good.

God loves your friends and family immeasurably. He hasn't forgotten them. He's patiently, powerfully and mercifully pursuing lost hearts so that many might come to know Him. In the meantime, we can trust and rejoice in His steadfast love.

What's one way you might redirect your worry back to worship?

June Chapman

Lord, as You continue to renew my mind, help me to see myself as You see me.

The more time we spend with Jesus

How do we find our way back to the rest God desires to give us? Hebrews 3 lays the groundwork:

Fix our thoughts on Jesus

¹Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. (Hebrews 3:1).

When we're preoccupied with our circumstances, our eyes wander from our Saviour to our struggle. Immersing ourselves in God's Word refocuses us on the One who wants to carry our burdens and direct our path

²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Don't harden our hearts to the voice of God

⁷So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-8).

The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we will recognise His voice. Calluses form on a heart that continually turns from His voice, so let's keep our hearts soft to His gentle whisper.

Exhort one another

¹³But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:13).

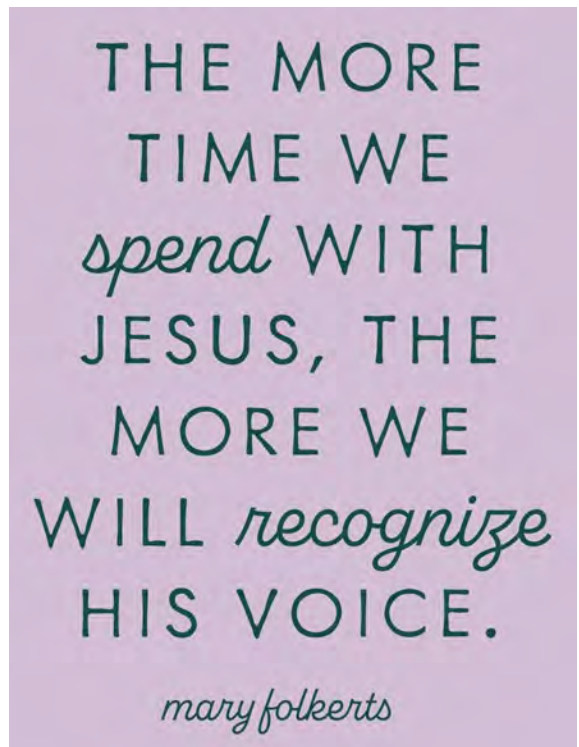
Staying connected in Christian community is vital for spiritual health. Fellowship allows us to know and be known, to encourage and correct, to receive and give godly wisdom, using God's Word as our road map

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16).

Do you trust God's promises? Take hold of the truth that God's direction does not hinder your joy but leads you to true rest. It all begins and ends with faith, changing "yes, but ..." to "yes, Lord."

Which of these specific areas are you asking God to work on in your heart today?

Mary Fokerts



One of the bravest things you may ever do is believe God is good even when life is not

Various names for God

- Jehovah: "the self-existent one."
- Elohim: from the Hebrew root meaning "strength" or "power."
- Adonai: "Lord" or "Master."
- Jehovah-Jireh: "the Lord will provide."
- Jehovah-Rapha: "the Lord is our Healer."
- Jehovah-Nissi: "the Lord is my Banner."
- Jehovah-M'Kaddesh: "the Lord who sanctifies."
- Jehovah-Shalom: "the Lord our Peace."
- Jehovah-Tsidkenu: "The Lord our Righteousness."
- Jehovah-Rohi: "the Lord my Shepherd."
- Jehovah-Shammah: "the Lord is there."
- El Shaddai: "God Almighty."
- El Elyon: "Most High God."
- El Olam: "Everlasting God."
- Emmanuel: "God with us."

Sarah Raiter

The Lord gives us strength

When our souls feel weak and weary and our lives feel chaotic, the enemy will try to convince us that we have to pull from our own strength or that help is not available to us.

But friend, we have a God who sees us. He sees our pain. And when we're too tired to carry on, He promises to restore our strength with His own.

When you need reminding of the power of God's strength, cling to these truths from His word:

- ◇ His grace is sufficient for you. His power is made perfect in your weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- ◇ He offers rest to the heavy-burdened. He offers rest for your worn-out soul. (Matthew 11:28-30)
- ◇ He gives us peace beyond our understanding, guarding our hearts and minds. (Philippians 4:27)

Everything we need in any season in life can be found in Him, friend!

P31 Ministries

Watch and Pray

Stay alert; be in prayer so you don't wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire."

Matthew 26:41 (The Message)

Keep these two together. *Watching without praying* is like getting a diagnosis without a prescription. *Praying without watching* is like being in a pharmacy without knowing what's wrong with you. The medicine you need is available, but you don't know what to ask for.

Praying about your temptations can make them worse, if all you do is focus on them. This is especially true with worry, lust, and conflict. The more you focus on them, the more they multiply. So pray positively: "Lord, enlarge my capacity to love. Don't let me give in to despair."

Notice Jesus' promise: "Watch and pray... that you may not fall into temptation." Temptation is a double-edged sword. It was the undoing of Judas, but it was the making of Peter. Some people receive God's Word. They're like plants that spring up quickly. But when temptation comes, they wither (Mat. 13:3-6). This is what happened to Judas.

But God also uses all kinds of trials to prove that your faith is genuine. This will result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Pet. 1:6-7). The time of your greatest testing may prove to be your finest hour! Maybe you're thinking, "That's great, if a person triumphs over temptation. But I failed." Well, so did Peter.

Jesus prayed for Peter when Peter didn't pray for himself: "Simon, Satan demanded... that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31-32). This made it possible for him to be restored, and what Christ did for Peter, He's able to do for you.

What situation do you need to pray about today?

<https://openthebible.org>



When you feel isolated, may God's presence surround you.

When you feel defeated, may God's hope fill you.

Elijah's story



'I was born in South Sudan in 1985, two years after the civil war began. I was born into a Christian family, the only boy among four sisters.

My mum's faith was very strong – she was a laywoman in the Anglican Church – and as a little boy, I learned the value of hope and compassion. She used to read the Bible to me in our language, Dinka, and the verse that really stuck with me was Colossians 3:12: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

I saw bombs being thrown at us all the time, and when we saw gun barrels, we would run to hide behind trees. If you were scared that a bomb was coming, you'd find a big hole in the ground where you could hide.

After a while, it became normal for us because we saw it every day. But you were always thinking, when would that bullet land on you? It is still the same today with these children in the conflict in Gaza and Israel and between Ukraine and Russia.

The war in Sudan separated a lot of families in the 1980s. As a result of the war, my mum was in the town of (Bor in central South Sudan) with my sisters, and I was in our little village with dad. When I was six, we got the news that my mum had been killed through crossfire. We didn't see Mum's body, but there were eyewitnesses who said she was shot; many people were killed at the time and the bodies put into the River Nile.

My sisters went to the north of Sudan, to Khartoum, with my aunty, and my dad said, "Look, your safety is very important because we don't know when this war will end and who it will take. So it will be very important to go and find a safe place where you can survive."

So my dad gave me to my cousin, who was travelling to a displaced persons camp along the border of Uganda and South Sudan. We travelled

for weeks on foot because it's a vast country and we walked from the northern part of South Sudan to the southern part. There's no road, so we had to cross rivers and creeks and walk in the bush.

In 1996, when I was at the refugee camp in Uganda, my uncle managed to make a radio call through the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency). The UNHCR went and looked for me in the camp, and conveyed the news that my dad had passed away. He was very engaged in the conflict and was fighting for the freedom of South Sudan. He had been shot and died from his wound, but again, I never saw his burial place.

I was shocked, but I never actually cried when the news came. I did not shed a single tear. I think it was because I accepted the reality and hoped that God had a reason for us to exist and he had a reason for taking us.

It's hard when you lose your mum at the age of six; you miss a lot of things, but you just have to be hopeful and push ahead in life. That allowed me to say, when that news of my dad came, "Look, this is just another tragedy. But how can I hold onto my hope?" There's a reason for us to exist. And God will always be on my side to allow me to be hopeful and give me a space where I can overcome those challenges.

Faith has played a critical part in my life up to now; it has allowed me to trust God when he said to us, "I will be there for you." It's a really affirming and reassuring thought that, regardless of the difficulties we're in, God has created us equal and his compassion for us and his kindness, mercy and grace are the anchors that keep us moving through all those challenges.

In the refugee camp, you live ration by ration, one meal a day sometimes, and it's not a balanced diet. You just eat maize flour and beans, or if you're lucky, you get a bit of oil. But the great thing was, it was safe. You didn't have to run away from bullets or bomb bombardment from the air. It was tough being there with no parents. But I learned how to build connections and relationships and feel safe among the adults who were there.

I spent seven years in Uganda, at two refugee camps, which allowed me to engage in education. I lived with other young men and we went to a school under the trees together, and I was able to finish my primary school education there in 2000.

Then I got a UNHCR scholarship to go to a boarding school and they said, "Look, we'll take you to Australia because it's a safe place where you can explore your potential and do what you're passionate about." So, I ended up here as an unaccompanied minor in 2002.

All along I've been living on the mercy of those who've got hope and kindness and compassion and humanity, and I think that's what really makes me who I am today."

For more on Elijah's story and work, visit <https://www.eternitynews.com>.

When we are faced head on with disappointment, we can choose to remember the faithfulness of God in the past and all the ways He has shown up for us, over and over again.

Our life won't come with a map

"... *I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.'*" Exodus 33:19a (ESV)

"This wasn't part of the plan." I sat on the bed in the hotel room in the middle of China and whispered those words. As my husband and I held our newly adopted daughter, we realized that her physical needs were much more severe than we had originally thought.

The first day I held her, I cried. I didn't understand what God was doing. I didn't feel prepared to be a mother who had a child with special needs. Suddenly, my story had shifted. There were so many questions and no answers. Would she go to school? Who would take care of her after I was gone? Could I really do this? I was not equipped!

I'm the type of person who wants solid answers because I want to prepare and make plans. Through our daughter's adoption, God was starting to teach me that certainty cannot be found in my plans or in the ability to predict the future. God has shifted my story many times since that day in March with our daughter. He is still teaching me — because when this happens, I'm often still quick to question God's goodness.

Your life has probably shifted over the years, too, and maybe you just want to know what to expect. I'm sorry I can't tell you what your future looks like. But I can tell you who holds your future.

Our daughter has thrived these past eight years, but some aspects of her future are still unknown. Will she live on her own? What kind of care will she need three years from now, or 10, or 20? Those questions remain unanswered, but God's goodness has never left her or the rest of our family, and I know He never will.

God is so incredibly good. In the Bible, the story of Moses has shown me how God's goodness isn't necessarily tied to my plans but to His glory. Before heading toward the promised land with the Israelites, Moses said to God, "*Please show me your glory*" (Exodus 33:18, ESV). God's response was, "*I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD'*" (Exodus 33:19a).

God's glory is tied to His goodness, and God's goodness is tied to His name, which reveals His character. Moses had met this Lord at the burning bush (Exodus 3:15), and even through plagues and wilderness wandering, God continued to be good to Moses and His people Israel, just like God has been and will continue to be good to you and me.

God might lead us on a path we didn't plan for, but God's goodness never leaves us. Moses didn't need a detailed plan before heading to the promised land; he needed to be reminded of God's goodness. The thing about this goodness is that it passed before Moses. All Moses had to do was rest in it, and so do we. Our life won't come with a map, but it comes with a promise: If we follow God, His goodness will follow us all of the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6).

Dear heavenly Father, I don't know what lies ahead, but You do. Help me to rest in Your goodness that is rooted in Your character as I confidently step into whatever You have planned for me. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Sarah Frazer

Our life *won't* come
with a map, but it
comes with a *promise*:
If we follow God, His
goodness *will* follow
us all of the days of
our lives.

SARAH FRAZER

A Prayer for the person who wants to prioritise God in their life again...

Dear Heavenly Father,

I've missed spending time with You in Your Word. Thank you for the patience You continue to show me as I learn to draw nearer to You again.

Your Word says to set my mind on things above and not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2)

But lately, I've been feeling distracted and indifferent toward the truth of Your word. I miss the hunger and thirst I used to have for our time together. I want to commit to setting my mind on things above again.

Holy Spirit, help me to not entertain the things that threaten to distract me from prioritizing you in my life.

I want the truth of the Gospel to dwell in my heart and inspire me to make an effort to choose you daily. Remind me that I have been redeemed, not by the things of this world that might distract me, but by the blood of Jesus.

May this gospel truth inspire me to stay connected to you, even on the days I don't feel like it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

P31

The McDonald Messenger

with Glen & Beth McDonald



January 2024

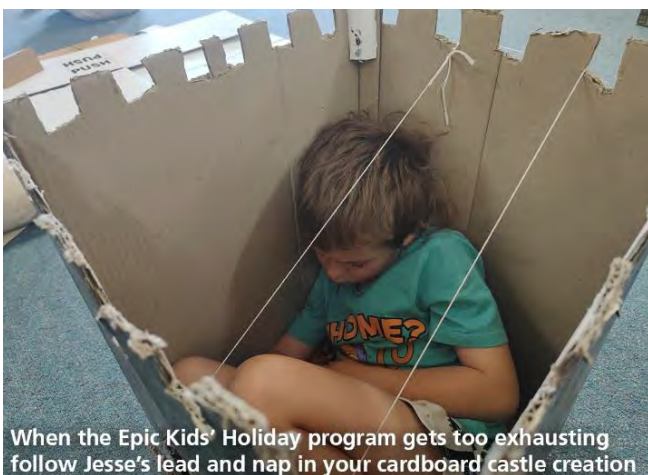
Church life

God's kingdom continues to be declared, and we are seeing His fruit born in the life of His church and community at large.

We have been blessed with a visit from an old friend, whom Beth went to Youthworks College with (over 20 years ago!). She has supported and encouraged us while serving in our church community. Through her partnership, we were able to present several songs at our recent Community Carols.

We have also been invigorated in seeing the children of our church disciplined, following a training morning with Rachel Dirks from BCA. This training day gathered a team of people wanting to serve our kids and be involved with child-specific programs during our Sunday and Saturday services.

We planned an *Epic Kids' Holiday program* (three mornings) leading up to Christmas and are looking ahead to a regular program during church.



When the Epic Kids' Holiday program gets too exhausting follow Jesse's lead and nap in your cardboard castle creation

Please pray for wisdom in forming this team and programs; that Jesus will be at the heart of it and maturity in faith will be the outcome (for the team and the children). Pray that this ministry will enable us to unite some of our connections, through *Epic Kids Holiday Programs* and *Tots and Tunes*, into the life of our church. Please pray for a leader to drive this ministry forward.

We continue to be encouraged by several people who have shown interest in wanting to be involved with the church. It is often through trials and hardships that people know that they need something more in life than what the world can offer. The last few months have brought us into contact with a few people who want to come to church, yet are finding it hard to come, sometimes due to work shifts, sometimes through energy levels, and sometimes due to fears and anxieties. Yet the consistent follow-up and pointing people to grace in Jesus keeps their eyes fixed on God's kingdom. We had the joy of seeing these aspirations occasionally translate into being present at church. Seeing them welcomed and barriers built up slowly knocked down gives us cause for great praise.

Over the last year, Glen has regularly talked with John (not his real name). His long-term relationship had broken down which has left him with financial struggles (managing the rent on his house with one income). His bigger struggle however is how emotionally broken he was following the relationship breakdown. Yet John continues to look to Jesus for his identity, and it is encouraging that in those low moments, he is turning to Jesus. It is a challenge for him to overcome his social anxiety and come back to church after many years of being away. Yet he has come and was warmly welcomed. Please thank God for John, that despite the challenges he is turning to Jesus. Pray that we as a church would be patient with him, meeting him in his need and holding him in his hope in Jesus, even when he is not at church.

Over the last six months, there has been a growing sense of belonging in the church family. It was exciting that we ran a fundraiser during the Referendum (which was held in our church building) and another fundraiser at a school market day. While the money will be helpful for repairs needed to the church house and building, what was most encouraging was we were serving together. This has fostered a sense of family which is growing.

It is this sense of belonging and feeling connected in ministry that will stir our hearts to want to see us reaching Roxby Downs, Andamooka, and Woomera together as God's church.

Mission in partnership with the Trinity Church Network

In the September holidays, we held our third annual mission in partnership with the Trinity Church network from Adelaide.

Some of the team, have been on all three missions, and it has been such an encouragement seeing some of the youth growing in their faith, boldness and service. There were some on the team, who, three years ago, were hesitant to stand up and run an activity. We now see them volunteering for everything.

But it is more than the things they are doing; it's seeing how their gospel convictions are shaping their relationships, and their desire to see the kids they are serving growing in knowledge and faith.

Mac, one of the kids coming to our *Epic Kids' Holiday program* for the last three years, both the ones run on mission and also the ones we have run as a church, gets so excited when he hears about the September Mission *Epic Kids*. This year, Mac was given the option of going to his grandparent's house which is near the beach (remember we live in the desert!), yet he chose to stay to come to Epic Kids. Every time he hears about Epic Kids, his first words are: "Are Lauchie and Fletch coming?" (two of the mission team who have been every year). Below is a wonderful photo of the three of them, which has been replicated each year. This year Mac's sister, Everal, joined in as well.



Mac and his family joined us on the Sunday church service and have been to church at different times over the last number of years. We continue to connect with the family and pray that our opportunities to point them to Jesus will grow in them a deep trust in Jesus.

Regularly running these programs, which this mission enables us to do, keeps us connected with these families. Each year the gospel is proclaimed, and families are taking further steps in the life of our church.

In a town like Roxby Downs, you are constantly meeting people in different contexts, down at the pool, at the shops and at school. As families are taking further steps and relationships are growing, we are having deeper conversations during the informal times we see people, allowing more opportunities to invite them to church and come be part of the life of our church family.

Pray that we would keep our eyes on the end goal of seeing people putting their trust in Jesus. This is in God's timing in God's power, with our privilege in serving, praying, and holding out the Gospel.

Community Christmas Carols

With temperatures rising, school finishing a week earlier than most of South Australia and many people leaving Roxby Downs for the holidays, our community Christmas Carols were earlier than most.

Glen had the privilege of chairing the committee made up of the churches, Christians, and other community representatives. The challenge has been to keep the Gospel at the centre when there are others from the community involved.

In 2023 there were challenges, with several performers dropping out in the last week leaving gaps in the program.

But these changes meant that all the Christmas Carols were focused on Jesus.

Roxby Downs Christian Community Church was able to perform some songs. The group was made up of Beth, Lili, and Glen, along with friend Gillian (mentioned earlier) who has been visiting for the last term to teach at the local school (and is coming back in Term 1 2024- Yay!)

We were blessed to have BCA SA/NT Regional Committee and National Council member, Andrew Harris, speak on the hope of Christmas.



It is great to have the Gospel so clearly presented in a personal way pointing to hope. We are not expecting to see an increase in our numbers directly at church through this event, yet it presents an alternative view to the season when much of our town is focused on work, holidays or partying. This alternative picture of the season provides the basis for our presence in the community.

Family life

With our family now spread over 650 kms, lives continue to be busy. With the regular visits to Adelaide for doctor's appointments for Zac and others, along with staying in touch with Zac,

it has been draining on the family. Jaxon, Jesse & Asher find this separation difficult at times.

Yet despite the challenges of Zac living in Adelaide, it has been a joy to see him growing in confidence and tenacity. Zac has been flourishing at school; stretched and equipped in science and maths which feeds into his interest in aeronautical engineering.

The biggest encouragement has been his growth in faith, an answer to our prayers. This was our biggest fear with him moving to Adelaide. Zac has continued to serve at Trinity Tansley, sometimes travelling over an hour and a half to be at church when he must take public transport to be early to serve. We are most thankful to God for his church family, who have encouraged him, picked him up for church, cared for him, and listened to him. Zac's faith has also led him, along with a friend to start a Christian group at the school, encourage a friend who is not allowed to go to church, and invite others to church.

Unfortunately, due to family circumstances with the host family where Zac was staying, he will need to move families. We were getting anxious about finding a host family, but by God's grace, two families offered their help. We are so thankful to God that Zac will be living with a family from his church, five minutes from school and church. God is indeed good!

Beth has continued to be encouraged in her role as the Family Coordinator at the Community Hub, continuing to build relationships with people. There is that wonderful surprise people get when they find out that Beth is also a part of the church and that she is normal. This has opened many conversations about her faith. Beth also played netball last year but injured her shoulder early in the season (yet she was still happy to be part of the celebrations for her team winning the grand final!).

We had such an encouraging time on a cruise to New Caledonia with Beth's family in August for Beth's parents' 50th Wedding anniversary. It also allowed us to spend time with Glen's family before we sailed out.

It was a joy to celebrate Christmas early with Glen's parents visiting, and for time spent with Beth's family in January at our annual holiday in Port Broughton.

Love from,

Glen, Beth, Zac, Lili, Jaxon, Jesse & Asher

Our ministry in Roxby Downs is supported by [Bush Church Aid](#)
[Click here to make an online donation](#)

Reaching Australia for Christ since 1919



We continue to be encouraged and see God's mighty hand at work in Roxby Downs. We continue to see God has a place for us here in Roxby Downs in His mission to see people putting their trust in Jesus, growing in faith, and being equipped to serve Jesus in His mission.

Prayer Points

- * Thank God for the connection of people in our community with the church. Pray for wisdom to grow these connections into gospel discipleship relationships.
- * Thank God for Zac's growth in faith and serving in his church. Pray for the Christian group at his school.
- * Thank God for the excitement of people at church to see children disciplined in faith. Pray for fruit from our Christmas Epic Kids Holiday program and for planning for a program during church services.
- * Pray for the establishment of a ministry to the mining camps to provide a Christian community to encourage those who are fly in/fly out.
- * Pray that as a family we can rest and enjoy time together



Ian and Jenny Wood

Serving the Lord in Darwin



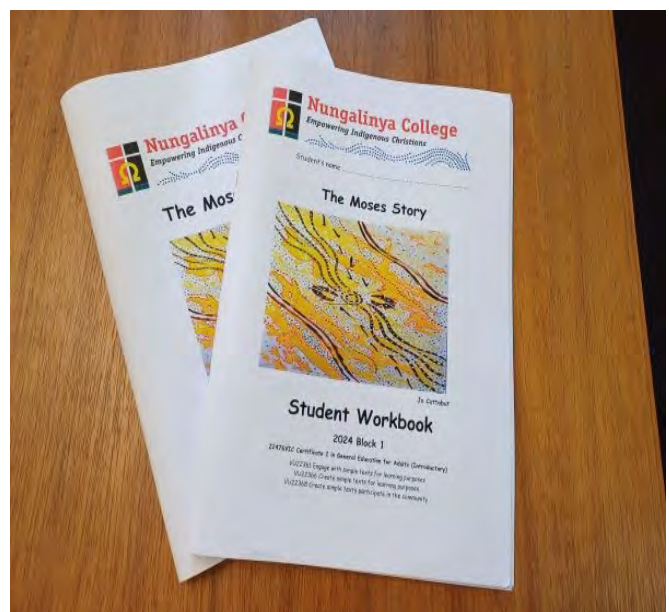
A Christmas break

Over Christmas and New Year's, Ian and I enjoyed a break from Nungalinya. Early in December we were thrilled to attend the graduation of one of our sons, Hamish. It was great to spend a weekend with him and his partner. Later in December, our other two children joined us for Christmas in Darwin. It was

lovely to spend time with everyone and relax. We've been back at work at Nungalinya for the last two weeks. We've both been busy preparing for our next courses.



Even before the monsoon arrived, Wangi Falls were spectacular.



The Moses Story

The Moses Story

I, Jenny, expect to be teaching *The Moses Story* six times this year to 6 different Certificate I classes. Right now, I'm busy writing all the materials that I'll need to teach with and my writing my assessment tasks. The first class will start on February 12

I taught the subject back in 2021 but I need to make lots of changes. One of the changes that I'm making is that I'm changing the version of the Bible that I'm using in class. When I can, I prefer to use the Plain English Version of the Bible. This is designed specifically for speakers of Aboriginal English from the Top End. But they haven't translated Exodus yet. Last time I used the CEV (Contemporary English Version) but I've decided to use the EasyEnglish Version because it uses simpler language than the CEV. If you're interested, it's <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible/easy/>

Certificate 3 and 4

Ian will be teaching a number of different Certificate III and IV subjects again this year. Nungalinya has received the paperwork for the new Certificate III and IV courses and there will need to be some changes for the new course. The plan is to help as many existing students to finish their Certificate III or IV and to enrol new students in the new course. His first class will be Certificate III (old course) *Hope and Healing* starting on March 13.



Now the monsoon has arrived, everywhere is very green. This is at Nungalinya.

Prayer Points

We're grateful

- That we live in such a beautiful part of the world.
- For air-conditioning.

Please pray

- For everyone's moods during *the buildup*.
- That our students will learn well and be able to complete their courses.

Email: ijwood@cms.org.au

Profile: cms.org.au/woodij

Give: give.cms.org.au/woodij

Our address: Ian and Jenny Wood, 21/29
Woods Street, Darwin



After this, I saw a large crowd with more people than could be counted. They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood before the throne and before the Lamb.
Revelation 7:9

From Ian and Jenny

About St Paul's

St. Paul's Ginninderra was re-established in 1973 to serve the suburbs of Spence, Melba, Florey, Evatt and McKellar. Four decades later people are more mobile and parish boundaries mean very little and yet a large proportion of those who attend St. Paul's today come from within that area and we also welcome people from all over Canberra. The church leases a section of Mt Rogers Community Centre (old Spence Primary School).

At St. Paul's we endeavour to:

- make Jesus Christ central to our life-related preaching
- nurture adults, youth and children in a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ
- encourage people to discover and exercise their Spiritual gifts
- offer opportunities for people to find wholeness in their lives
- create an atmosphere of love and friendship
- live out the Great Commission of Jesus
- see "His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven"

Worship Services - normal time

SUNDAYS

8:00am - Holy Communion - a Traditional Service

10:00am - Holy Communion - a Contemporary Service with Kidz Alive (1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays) - [this service is available on Zoom, see the Parish's website \(https://stpaulsginninderra.org.au\)](https://stpaulsginninderra.org.au) for the link

10:00am - Prayer, Praise & Proclamation with Kidz Alive (2nd & 4th Sundays) - [this service is available on Zoom](#)
Kidz Alive may not run in school holidays

MONDAYS

2:00pm - Prayer Time

WEDNESDAYS

9:00am - Lectio 365 Prayer Time with Holy Communion and fellowship morning tea

10am Play Group — Mainly Music (during school term)

Contact Us

Parish Priest: The Rev. Ken Rampling - (Day Off: Tuesday)
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