

I
31

DAILY
READINGS
FOR
YOUR



NEW
LIFE

IN
JESUS
CHRIST



NEW LIFE

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Adapted, with thanks, from *IGNITE: A 31 day journey to discovering the gospel*,
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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

① There are 31 sections or 'days' in total.

Try to do one every day.

② Days **1 to 10** will reveal what Christians believe.

Days **11 to 31** will - in light of days 1 to 10 - guide you in living the Christian life.

④ You will need a good Bible, like the English Standard Version (ESV)
or the New International Version (NIV).

Each day should take about 5 to 15 minutes.

Enjoy.

CONTENTS

Why Jesus?	1	Day 16: Fruit of the Spirit	26
Do you trust Jesus to save you?	2	Day 17: Obedience	27
Finding a church is important	3	Day 18: Worship	28
A Burning Bush	4	A year of your life	29
Day 1: Who is God?	5	Day 19: The devil	30
Day 2: Who is Jesus?	6	Day 20: Trust	31
Day 3: Sin	7	Big things happen in Life Groups	32
Crossing deserts	8	Day 21: Tough times	33
Day 4: The Cross	9	Day 22: Money	34
Day 5: Faith in Christ Alone	10	God in the pain	35
Day 6: Salvation	11	Day 23: Work	36
He took me as I am	12	Day 24: Make a difference	37
Day 7: Resurrection	13	Day 25: Telling your story	38
Day 8: Following Jesus	14	The strength of forgiveness	39
Day 9: Paying the price	15	Day 26: Serving	40
From distrust to simple trust	16	Day 27: Social action	41
Day 10: Eternal benefits	17	Day 28: The power of the Holy Spirit	42
Day 11: The end	18	The two greatest gifts	43
Getting baptised	19	Day 29: Sexuality	44
Day 12: The Bible	20	Day 30: Making peace	45
With God there is a future	21	Day 31: Commitment	46
Day 13: Church	22	Breaking bread	47
Day 14: The Holy Spirit.	23	Where to from here?	48
Day 15: Prayer	24	Big words	49
Letting God out the box	25		

WHY JESUS?

1 JESUS ALONE CAN FIND US.

Religion is humanity's search for God; Christianity is God's search for humanity. Every other religion puts forward a pathway by which you must earn salvation. But the Bible insists that our sinfulness and self-righteousness has created an uncrossable gulf between God and ourselves. Neither good deeds nor religious devotion can span that gap. *"But God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, he died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Through his death, Jesus spanned the gulf! *"It is by grace you have been saved, not by works - so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8).

2 JESUS ALONE CAN FORGIVE US.

Whether we realise it or not, we all stand guilty before a holy God. Many times we've sinned against God in thought, word and deed. Our self-righteousness often blinds us to this fact. Just as when someone commits a crime there is a penalty to be paid, so there is a penalty for violating God's standards. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). The result of things we do wrong is spiritual death - being cut off from God. We all deserve to suffer that penalty. But God took our sins and put them on Jesus on the cross, and punished them there. Now we can stand before God forgiven, our guilt taken away.

3 JESUS ALONE CAN FILL US.

Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."* (John 6:35). He is the only one who can satisfy our deepest hungers, longings, and desires. We try all sorts of things to satisfy our longings - success, love, thrills, money, adventure, achievement - but the satisfaction is always short-lived. There is nothing wrong with most of these things, it's just that material things can't fill a spiritual void. Only Christ can truly satisfy. He promises to fill us *"with joy in his presence, with eternal pleasures at his right hand"* (Psalm 16:11).

4 JESUS ALONE CAN FREE US.

The things we do wrong have an enslaving hold on us. Jesus said, *"Everyone who sins is a slave to sin"* (John 8:34). Jesus died to free us from this slavery. He gave us his Spirit so we can be free to start living the sort of lives that deep down we have always wanted to live - lives marked by *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23). This change may not be instant, but you will grow into it. *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

5 JESUS ALONE WON'T FORSAKE US.

Though we avoid the subject of our death, we must face up to what happens when we die. Outside of Christ's grace we are separated from God forever. Jesus came so that *"by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death"* (Hebrews 2:14). To know Christ here on earth guarantees we'll be with him forever. *"Neither death nor life... neither the present nor the future... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39).

DO YOU TRUST JESUS TO SAVE YOU?

If you will receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, he will find, forgive, fill, free and never forsake you. This gift is called 'salvation'. Here is a prayer that can help you do just that:

*God, you created me and you have the right to lead my life.
But I have sinned against you, a holy God, and I have been separated from you.*

*Jesus, I believe you are the unique Son of God who died for my sins, rose again,
and who is still alive. You are Saviour and Lord. From now on I put all of my faith in
you alone.*

*So be my Saviour: Forgive my sins and give me your gift of eternal life.
Make me a brand-new child of God.*

*And be my Lord: Take my life. I turn my back on everything which I know displeases
you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and live in me, so I live in you and live out a life that
brings you joy.*

*Thank you that you hear my prayer. Thank you for your promise: that if anyone calls
on you they will be saved. So thank you that I am now saved!*

Amen.

FINDING A CHURCH IS IMPORTANT

Christianity is not something we're meant to do alone, but in an encouraging, loving community on the same mission. Cornerstone Church is one church, but we meet in many contexts and venues all across the city of Johannesburg.

Once a school-term we run what we call our DNA course, which is for people who want to know more about who we are and what we're about. It's a four week course that gives you the space to ask questions, get to know the leaders, and find out the details.

More information and the DNA booklet is available at
www.cornerstonechurch.co.za/our-dna-booklet/

We invite you to join us on this course and decide if you want to be a part of Cornerstone Church and our mission to our city.



HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED A BURNING BUSH?

If you did, it would be a surprise, wouldn't it? Moses, a leader in ancient Israel, did. He found an ordinary bush ablaze with a strange light. When he stepped closer, he realised it was burning with God's tangible presence. What an odd and surprising way for God to reveal himself.

God even spoke to him through the bush. Who would expect God to speak in such a way? And Moses' ordinary life took a new, unexpected turn with the extraordinary reality of a living, speaking God, whom he could know.

Perhaps having this book in your hands is something of a surprise for you. It usually is. God often comes into our lives unexpectedly, in a way we or no one else would ever have foreseen. Our prayer is that during your journey, this book (and the bright-shining truths in the Bible that it points to) will, like the bush did to Moses, spark an eternal, life-changing flame of love for God and his Son in your heart, and keep the surprises coming. You may have questions or concerns. So did Moses. Nevertheless, a new life awaits - a life-changing encounter with the Living God.

DAY 01

WHO IS GOD? MOON OR SUN?

Hundreds of years ago they used to think that the sun revolves around the earth. It turned out that they were wrong. Likewise, in our lives we'll often think that God revolves around us. But this is not so. The Bible paints a different picture of God: a God so bright and glorious that he has a way of becoming the centre of our existence, not just a religious compartment on the side or a heavenly Santa Claus. God is a Father, which is better than a Santa Claus! Although the world of the Bible and our modern world are totally different, the great news is that the God it describes has not changed at all. All the accumulative descriptions of God in the Bible serve as a compass of unchanging reality as we seek to find out who God is. Let's read of one person's encounter with him.

 **READ** Isaiah 6:1-8

 **CONSIDER**

What is God like? Here we see he is: 1) The eternal King (v1). Though earthly kings come and go, God remains on his throne. 2) High and exalted (v2). He is incredibly great. 3) Holy (v3). This means that he is absolutely pure and totally unique. 4) LORD (v3). The Hebrew word for this is 'Yahweh' which means 'I am who I am'. 5) Almighty (v3). The Hebrew word is 'Shaddai', which means the one who is powerful to act on behalf of those who desperately call out to him. 6) Creator (v3). He created the whole universe. 7) Glorious (v3). God's glory is the magnificent radiance of his perfect character. His glory fills the universe.

How should we respond in his presence? When we truly encounter him, we worship him like these angels do, crying "*holy is the Lord! The earth is full of his glory!*" (v3), tremble in awe (v4), own up to our sinfulness (v5), receive his forgiving and purifying touch (v7), and find ways to tell others about how amazing he is (v8).

 **APPLY**

Do you believe that God is really like the God described here? If your life was compared to the earth, is God more like a moon, which revolves around the earth, or a sun to you?

 **FURTHER READING**

Isaiah 40:12-40 and Psalm 103.

DAY 02

WHO IS JESUS? TALKING TO A FISH

Imagine you wanted to talk to a fish in a pond. You couldn't. You would have to become a fish. Likewise, God - in his massiveness - took the ultimate step in making himself known to us in the clearest way: He became a man. Jesus is God's way of saying, 'Look at my Son and then you'll see me.'

 **READ** John 8:1-11

 **THINK ABOUT IT**

What do we learn about God from Jesus in this story? God cares about truth. Jesus was so eager to teach truth to the people (v2). God knows our hearts. Jesus saw through religious acts to the sin and self-righteousness deep in their hearts. (v7). God is wise. Jesus dealt oh-so-cleverly with the trap set for him (v9). God is loving. We see this in how Jesus dealt so gently with a broken woman (v10). God is forgiving. Jesus didn't condemn the woman - even though she was clearly in the wrong (v11). God is morally pure. Jesus told her to sin no more.

We see God in the life of Jesus! *"In the past God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."* (Hebrews 1:1-3.)

 **APPLY**

What do you think God is like? Let the story of Jesus challenge your view of God.


 **FURTHER READING**

Read Philippians 2:5-11 and Matthew 16:13-18

DAY 03

SIN. THE TEST.

Christ has rescued us. But before we understand how he has rescued us, we need to come to know what we've been rescued from. Have you ever noticed how naughty little children can be? Have you ever asked, "Who taught this kid to disobey their parents? To lie? To steal?" The Bible tells us that it is our sinful, rebellious hearts that lead us astray. We wanted to be 'like God, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:5), which is another way of saying we want to be God for ourselves. The word "sin" means 'to miss the mark'. God created us to live our lives reflecting his love and holiness in the world, because we are to live our lives in him. But left to our own devices we always miss the mark of real love and holiness.

 **READ** Romans 3:10-20 and also v23

CONSIDER

God looks deeper than our achievements, looks and personalities. He sees minds that don't understand him (v10). He sees hearts that have turned away (v12). He hears words that are dishonest and hurtful (v13, 14). He sees self-inflicted pain (v16). He observes that there is no peace or fear of God in us (v17, 18).

How does God feel about our sin? He judges us according to his perfect law, which stands for his own holiness (v19). This law silences our excuses and leaves us standing guilty before him (v20). All of us have sinned, falling short of God's perfect standard (v23).

Is God cruel to judge our sin? How many times have you cried out for justice in a particular situation? The truth is, God is ultimately just. Injustice happens when judges let the guilty off or treat people discriminately. God makes sure that justice happens, but he is able to balance justice with love and mercy. He lets no-one get away from their deserved punishment, judging according to his eternal and unchanging laws that are based on his unchanging holiness. To do anything else would be unjust. But because he knows we have all sinned, and because he loves us, his mercy and love have made an escape from the negative judgement due to us all. That escape is Jesus. But we'll unpack that in more detail tomorrow.

APPLY

In what ways have you seen sin hurt people? How do you feel about being guilty of sin before a holy God?

FURTHER READING

To understand Judgement Day, see Romans 2:5 and Revelations 20:11-15. Also read Psalm 2 for a prophecy about Jesus written hundreds of years before he was born that highlights his response to our rebellion.

CROSSING DESERTS

Marco Broccardo

At 15 I snorted my first line of cocaine. I made a decision in my heart: this is what I wanted, and I was going to become the best at this. To raise money for my new addiction I started selling drugs, making huge amounts of money at just 16. With access to so much, you start using more and more. Until you can't pay back your dealers and you're hooked, desperate for more. That drives you to steal from those who love you and, like the prodigal son, I literally squandered my own inheritance.

*My cocaine habit made me epileptic, which resulted in multiple car accidents. I had been shot and stabbed a few times. I had no friends anymore – I stole from anyone I could and was a pathological liar. I tried to kill myself multiple times and one day almost succeeded. But I still didn't come clean. **Eventually my parents did what they had to and said I only had one more chance before they disowned me – a bus ticket to a Christian care centre.** I realised I had damaged and lost everything that mattered and anyone who ever loved me. So I took that bus to freedom. Three weeks later my life was never the same. **I encountered something I never expected, someone that changed everything forever: the Holy Spirit.***

*I was completely free. I became passionate about this freedom. Now, 15 years later, I have a beautiful wife, a lovely family, and live a life of adventure. I've climbed mountains, trekked across the desert, to show that the people who are discounted from society are capable of succeeding. **Because with God, nothing is impossible.***

DAY 04

THE CROSS. TEARING DOWN THE WALL!

In World War 2, while a group of scientists were constructing the atomic bomb, one of the mechanics dropped a spanner into a radioactive device. Knowing that this would cause the bomb to explode in seconds, one of the top scientists reached in and grabbed the spanner. He saved the lives of all but lost his own because of radiation exposure. It's a story that echoes the message of the cross, where Jesus died for our sins so we wouldn't have to.

 **READ** Mark 15:16-39

 **CONSIDER**

Jesus died a horrible, unfair death for all to see. But something unseen also happened. He, the sinless one, was being a substitute for our sins - in other words, he took the punishment we deserved for our sins so that we could be forgiven. That's why he felt abandoned by his Father (v34). Like a substitute in a sports team plays and wins on behalf of a team, we can enjoy Jesus' victory over sin and death, which he won for us on the cross and through his resurrection. All we need to do is trust Jesus and that victory is ours!

When he '*breathed his last*', the temple curtain tore in two - on its own (v38). What does this mean? Long before Jesus came, the Jews built a temple. God lived in it, in the Most Holy Place. No one could enter through the curtain except the high priest once a year. This reminded the people that their sin was serious and separated them from God. But as Jesus died, the curtain was supernaturally torn, meaning the barrier between sinners (that's us) and God was destroyed by the sacrifice of Jesus! The door is now open for us to live closely to God, despite our sins, which are now forgiven. What good news! Jesus offers freedom from guilt and a close relationship with God, which he calls 'eternal life' in John 17:3. We don't have to do anything to get all this except receive his blood-bought forgiveness, putting our trust (faith) in Jesus, and actually putting our trust in our own good works aside.

 **APPLY**

Have you put your faith in Jesus' death for your sin? Have you experienced the forgiveness of sins?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Hebrews 10:19-22 and Isaiah 53 (a remarkable prophecy about the suffering of the coming Messiah).

DAY 05

FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE. JUST JUMP!

A young girl wanted to get closer to God and had a dream where God was at the top of a high cliff and she was trying to get up there. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't get there. Sad and tired, she was about to climb down and give up when she noticed a trampoline at the bottom of the cliff. Letting go, she bounced off the trampoline, and landed at the very top, where God was. How do we get close to God? Let go. And jump.

 **READ** John 14:1-9

 **CONSIDER**

We can't get to God by climbing the cliff of our own moral and religious efforts. Jesus came to set us free from the lie that we can save ourselves. We can only get to God through the trampoline of Jesus and his death for our sins (v6).

Why are there so many religions? They are all attempts to reach God through effort. Buddhism has the Eightfold Path. Islam has the Five Laws. Hinduism has Karma. Judaism has the Torah. Although these religions offer elements of truth and beauty that should be cherished, they wrongly assume that we can earn our way to God. They all hold out a 'ladder' to God.

What makes Christianity unique? Although religion is humanity's attempt to reach God, Christianity is God reaching humanity. Since we can't get to him through our efforts, he comes to us where we trust in his undeserved grace! Christ is a kind of 'trampoline' of grace. As we trust in Christ we can overcome troubled hearts (v1), the fear of death (v3), and the ignorance of who God really is (v7). In Jesus alone, we find the way, the truth, real life, and a personal relationship with God as our Father (v6). What amazing grace!

 **APPLY**

Have you stopped trusting in your own ability to earn God's acceptance? Do you now trust in the trampoline of Jesus alone, and his undeserved grace, for your acceptance with God? Is anything stopping you from jumping?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 10:2-4 to see how religion and good works can't save us, but God's grace does.



SALVATION. COME HOME!

A Spanish dad wanted to make peace with his runaway son in Madrid. He took out an ad in the *El Liberal* newspaper: 'Paco, meet me at Hotel Montana at noon, Tuesday. All is forgiven. Papa.' Paco is a common name in Spain, and when the father went to the hotel he found 800 young men named Paco waiting for their fathers! Deep down inside we all long for a home where we are loved without conditions. Let's look at God's offer of grace to us.

 **READ** Luke 15:11-22

 **CONSIDER**

Sin separates us from the God who loves us (v13). In the end, sin hurts us as much as it hurts God (v14, 15), because of his love and care for us. But it's never too late to come home. If we come to our senses, turn from our sin and put our trust in God (v17-20), then we'll be welcomed with compassion, open arms, forgiveness, joy and blessing (v20-25). This story is a stunning picture of salvation and the relationship God desires to have with us.

Here's another story. A father, returning from the shop, caught his little girl with sand in her mouth. He tried threatening and begging her to spit it out but she refused, since she liked the taste so much. He then held out the ice-cream he had bought her and she spat out the sand immediately. When God tells us to leave sin and follow him it's not because he wants to take away our fun. It's because he has something much better for us. Sin actually brings death, not life (Romans 6:23). He offers us forgiveness, eternal life and a personal relationship with himself.

 **APPLY**

Is there any sin or pain that keeps you from coming home to God? From the story in Luke, how is God different to your earthly father?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Ephesians 2:1-10 for more insight into what we are saved from, and what we are saved into.

HE TOOK ME AS I AM

Irene Timm

I didn't like Christians. They had mocked my Hindu faith, whilst making no effort to understand it. But I had difficulties with my own faith too - especially the regime of rituals. For example, every morning would be prayer time which meant getting up early, dressing up, going through rituals, praying in Hindu. When I asked why we do this, the answer was, 'These are the deeds you must perform to get God to answer your prayers.'

To be honest I wasn't a great Hindu. I couldn't jump through all the hoops, starting with the fact that I wasn't a morning person. God felt very far from me.

Then I visited a church at age 28. I was moved by the simplicity of it all.

The god or gods I'd grown up with were cloaked in complexity and philosophy. *I was also impressed that this God invited me to come to him as I am on the basis of grace. So, I started to pray to Jesus. I felt such freedom. And I very soon discovered what I'd always longed for but didn't know was possible: a relationship with God as my friend and Father - who I could speak to in my pyjamas and in English and amazingly, he would speak back. He instructed me to be baptised, and promised blessing would follow my surrender. He's been as good as his word.*

DAY 07

RESURRECTION. THE EMPTY GRAVE!

Has somebody close to you died? If so, you'd know how depressing and final death is. In fact, there's one thing we can be sure of - we are all going to die. When Jesus' friends saw him die a terrible death they were devastated. That's because they forgot he had made a promise to come back. Have you ever wondered if Jesus is still alive, if Christianity is true, and if there is life after death? One spectacular event in history answers all your questions.

 **READ** Matthew 28:1-10

 **CONSIDER**

What does the resurrection mean to us? It means Jesus really is God. That's why the women worshipped him (v9). That's why they were bold enough to tell everyone (v10). It means Christianity is true. Josh McDowell, an (ex) atheist, once tried to prove that the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen - but after looking at the historical evidence he was totally convinced that it actually did. He became a Christian and wrote a best-selling book, *The Resurrection Factor*, which shows how the resurrection is a fact of history. This means we can be sure about eternal life. In the same way Jesus lived beyond death, he promises we will be given eternal life if we trust in him. It means Jesus is alive. This sets Jesus apart from all the founders of other religions - he has no grave! It means we can be blessed. Jesus said to a witness of his resurrection, "*Because you've seen me you've believed; but blessed are those who have not seen me - and yet have believed.*" (John 20:29.)

 **APPLY**

What does the resurrection mean to you?

 **FURTHER READING**

See 1 Corinthians 15:12-22. Read Revelations 1:9-18 to see the Risen One face-to-face.



FOLLOWING JESUS. JUST DO IT!

'Just do it.' This is Nike's motto, but it also describes the pulse of our generation. Today, millions of people call themselves Christians but don't 'just do it'. They don't really seek after and obey the God they claim to believe in. The earliest Christians didn't call themselves Christians but rather disciples, or followers of Jesus. Let's see some people who had a unique opportunity to follow him and just did it.

 **READ** Matthew 4:17-23

 **CONSIDER**

What does it mean to 'follow Jesus' today? It means six things: 1) Get stunned by his wisdom and strength. Why else would these people have followed him so eagerly (v20)? Jesus has the wisdom and strength we need to live life at its best. 2) Start a personal relationship with him. This event was the beginning of an eternity of friendship with Jesus for these people. Jesus wants to be our friend too. 3) Copy his example. Later on people commented on how much these men reflected Jesus in their lives (see Acts 4:13). Jesus wants to, and is able to, make us more like him too. 4) Believe and obey his teaching. These disciples took his teaching seriously. It affected how they lived (v17-23). Jesus' teaching, which revolves around faith in him, can also lead us to think properly and live passionately. 5) Join him on his mission to reach people. He promised Peter and Andrew he would use them to change other people's lives (v19). That promise applies to us too. 6) Give him your highest loyalty. They left their jobs and families at once (v22). Whatever we give up is nothing compared to what we gain. The most important decision we can make is to 'just do it' and follow him.

 **APPLY**

Have you decided to follow Jesus? If not, why not? Which of the six above aspects of following Jesus challenges you most?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Luke 5:1-11 for the longer version of some of this story.



PAYING THE PRICE. THE COST.

In April 1999, a teenager pointed a gun at 17 year old Cassie. “Do you believe in God?” he asked. “Yes, I believe in Jesus,” were the last words she ever said. At her funeral, 75 of her friends became Christians. They could see her faith was real enough to die for and they wanted something that meaningful for themselves. The question is: if you were in her situation, what would you have done?

 **READ** Luke 9:18-26

 **CONSIDER**

When we see, like Peter and Cassie did, who Jesus really is (v20), we will be willing to pay a price to follow him. Like Jesus, our role model and leader, we may even be killed for our faith (v22). Following him means denying ourselves and carrying our cross (v23). This means things won't always be cosy and easy. Pain, discomfort and unpopularity may result from being obedient to him. We can't keep anything in this life forever (v24). It's pointless trying to gain what this world offers, but losing our souls in the process (v25). At Judgement Day our devotion to Jesus will be greatly rewarded. Knowing him makes it impossible to be ashamed of him (v26). Jim Elliot knew these truths well. He was murdered while trying to share his faith with man-eating South American Indians. His grieving wife found his diary, in which he had written this line, '*He is no fool to lose what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose.*' She was so inspired by his example that she led a mission to the same men who had killed her husband - and led them to Christ!

 **APPLY**

Do you have a revelation of Jesus? What is the cost of following him for you? Are you willing to pay that price?

 **FURTHER READING**

Matthew 13:44 shows how giving up everything for Jesus can be a joy.

FROM DISTRUST TO SIMPLE TRUST

Justine Engelbrecht


*When I was three years old my parents divorced. **Throughout my life I always felt worthless, trying to fit in.** When I was 12 I walked in on my stepfather watching pornography. That instilled in me a deep distrust for men. I was a typical teenager, hating everything. We had a neighbour who took us to Sunday School and today I'm so grateful for what I learned there. I was always looking for a home, somewhere to find love. At 21 I got involved with a drug addict and moved in with him, and soon he started hitting me. He stole from me and cheated on me. **I got tired of life, tired of trying, and twice took an overdose of tablets.** Both times someone saved me.*

*My mother started going to a church and finally, at 23, I gave my life to the Lord. Such a huge burden had been lifted from me! But God became my personal saviour that I kept in my pocket and I didn't follow him that much. I got married at 25 but divorced at 34. God worked on my heart and I finally got married again six years later, this time trusting in God. I've now been happily married for over fifteen years. **My husband and I are proof that God will make a way for you and that he loves you, despite your wrongs.** I have forgiven all those who hurt me and God has reconciled so many of my relationships. I am so grateful today for God's grace and my beautiful family. And I am grateful for the amazing friends we've made who walk alongside us.*

DAY 10

ETERNAL BENEFITS. DON'T SETTLE FOR STALE BREAD.

A man once sailed in a ship across the sea. He could only afford the ticket so when everyone went to meal times, he sat alone, eating stale bread. When they arrived at their destination, the captain asked him, *"Why did I never see you at our meal times?"* He replied, truthfully, *"I could only afford a ticket, and didn't have money for the meals."* But the captain replied, *"But the meals were part of the price of the ticket!"* This story reminds us of so many people who think trusting in Jesus only provides a ticket to heaven. To be a Christian means we have other wonderful benefits in this life as well.

 **READ** Romans 8:14-17 and 8:35-39

CONSIDER

If we trust and follow Jesus, what happens? We receive the Holy Spirit (v14). He is the presence of God who comes to live in us. We receive a brand new identity as a child and heir of God (v16, 17). We don't need to be fearful of rejection from God ever again. We know who we are because we know whose we are. We receive an invitation to enjoy God as our loving Father (v15). We can now relate to him as Abba (which means 'Dad'). We receive the promise that God will never stop loving us, no matter what (v35 - 39). These are incredible promises. Sadly, many Christians either forget them or struggle to believe them. This sounds like the story of the ugly duckling that just didn't seem to fit in with the other ducks, until it found out it was really a beautiful swan. This discovery made it spread its wings and fly for the first time! Let's use our meal ticket and start eating from God's table. Let's use our wings and begin flying on God's promises.

APPLY

Do you believe these promises? Has your faith been based on your changing feelings or on the unchanging facts of God's Word?

FURTHER READING

Read Ephesians 3:14-19 for more about God's love.

DAY 11

THE END. SNEAK PREVIEW?

Ever watched a sad movie that you knew would end well? Knowing that things will get better helps you get through the painful parts. The Bible allows us to glimpse the end in order to help us get through our present trials. On 11 September 2001, the Twin Towers in America collapsed, killing thousands. On 9 December 2004, a giant Tsunami killed 200 000 people. On 12 January 2010, an earthquake in Haiti added yet more deaths to the number of those killed by natural disasters. These catastrophes, and more, have made millions ask, “*When is the world going to end?*” Let’s see what Jesus taught about the end...

 **READ** Matthew 24:3-14 and 24:24-31

CONSIDER

Jesus teaches us about the end of the world. He gives ten signs (v5-14) including false Christs and false prophets, worsening wars, natural disasters, many Christians being hated, and some Christians even losing their love for God because of the increasing evil in society. It’s all happening! The end is coming closer. But he also tells us that “*this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*” (v14.) One unexpected day, Jesus will return in full glory and power to end the world as we know it. Those who have rejected him will mourn (v30) but his own people will be gathered to him (v31). We don’t know when it will happen, but one thing we’re sure of is this: we are closer to the end today than we were yesterday. We need to learn how to live with the end in mind. We should heed the Bible when it says, “*Fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary and what is unseen is eternal.*” (2 Corinthians 4:18.)

APPLY

Practically, how can you fix your eyes not on what is seen and is temporary, but on what is unseen and eternal?

FURTHER READING

See 2 Peter 3:3-15 for more about the end and how to prepare for it. Revelation 21:1-7 tells us what heaven is like. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 to learn about living with eternity in mind.

GETTING BAPTISED

Getting baptised in water is the first step of obedience for a person who has committed their life to Christ. Here is why: Jesus and the early church leaders commanded that all believers must be baptised in water as a form of initiation into the adventure of following Christ. See Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 10:48. We do not get baptised because we feel like it, but because we take Christ's leadership seriously.

WHAT BAPTISM MEANS:

- The baptism waters are like a press release. Although choosing to follow Christ is a deeply personal decision, it is not a private matter. Jesus instructed us to go public with our choice (Mark 8:38). Baptism is an outward sign to all of what has already happened on the inside.
- The baptism waters are like a bath. In Acts 22:16, Paul was “baptised, washing away his sins”. It depicts spiritual cleansing from the guilt of sin.
- The baptism waters are like a graveyard. Romans 6:4 says that “we were buried with Christ in baptism”. Baptism reflects an inward decision to die to ‘the old you’ who rejected and ignored Christ’s leadership over your life, following your own way and justifying yourself before God. Baptism is a break from your sinful past.
- The baptism waters are like a maternity ward. Baptism also reflects how we are united with Christ in his resurrection. We have a new life. “If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM/CHRISTENING?

Infant baptism, though often being special to the parents, is a religious tradition that is simply not mentioned in the Bible. Biblical baptism always happens to a person who understands what is going on, since they have just freshly repented of their sins and put their trust in Jesus.

GETTING BAPTISED

Once you receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour (see the beginning of this book), speak to your Life Group leader or one of our elders about getting baptised. It can happen anywhere, any time. And any Christian can baptise you. It is also a great opportunity to invite friends and family.

DAY 12

THE BIBLE. HONEY AND LIGHT.

God didn't write the Bible with a pen and paper, but he did inspire its 40 writers, including a poet, a king, a shepherd, a doctor, a tax collector and a fisherman, who wrote different books over 1600 years. The Old Testament (39 books) was written before Jesus. The New Testament (27 books) was written after he came. God made sure they wrote what he wanted them to and that it contains the truth of who God is, what he's done and is still doing, and how to have a relationship with him. The world when the Bible was written has changed, but its message remains as true and relevant today as it ever did.

 **READ** Psalm 119:9 - 21 & 103 - 105

 **CONSIDER**

Why get into the Bible? It keeps us pure (v9) and sin-free (v11). It brings us joy (v14) and wonder (v18). It nourishes our souls, like honey feeds our bodies (v103). It guides us in decision-making, like a path leads us when we're lost (v105). It gives us understanding (v104).

How do we get into the Bible? Obey it (v9). Memorise parts of it (v11). Speak it aloud to yourself and others (v13). Treasure it (v14). Think about it often until it becomes part of you (v15). Don't neglect it (v16). Ask God to open your eyes as you read and hear it (v18). Long for it (v20). Be humble, not arrogant, as you receive it (v21). Find pleasure in it (v103). It's not enough to get into God's Word and be informed. God's Word needs to get into us until we're transformed! Every time you read or hear it, ask God to speak to you through it.

 **APPLY**

What part has the Bible played in your life so far? How can you get more of the Bible into you?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Joshua 1:6-9 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 for more.

WITH GOD THERE IS A FUTURE

Paul Firth

I was gazing down the barrel of a gun. I was 14 and it was my mom pointing the gun. She arrived home drunk and said, "I'm going to shoot your sister, then you, and then myself." But God was there. By his grace and his mercy she just never pulled that trigger. And today everything is different.

We were by no means the perfect family. Alcoholism meant our lives were constant chaos. Sometimes my sister and I would sleep in the car, sharing a jacket to keep warm. This was life for us - we didn't know why it was like this, but it just was. My mom divorced my dad when we were young and he was eventually believed to be dead. But then one day, when I was 16, he arrived on our doorstep!

*I started dating a girl with an amazing family. Eventually I went with them to Cornerstone and I finally gave my life to Jesus. **God was suddenly near me and within me and living through me. The Holy Spirit showed me my heart and miraculously transformed me.** I could suddenly make mature decisions. If your parents are alcoholics, statistics show you have a high chance of going the same way. But God had other plans. I stopped my drinking, God dealt with my heart towards my parents and reconciled me to them! My dad also accepted Christ. Two years later he died of cancer. **Looking back I can see God's incredible plan for me and my family. I should be living in a gutter, but God is real.** In God there is a future! His plans are bigger and his love is bigger than the difficulties of our life!*

DAY 13

CHURCH. WE'RE FAMILY.

If you take a burning log from the fire, it soon dies out. It needs other pieces of wood to keep burning brightly. In the same way, our passion for God dies out if we try to follow Jesus alone and don't connect with a church that loves him. In heaven the headlines are not about politics or movie stars. They're about what's happening to God's Church all over the world. The Church is God's family. It exists to reflect him and his message in the community it's placed in. It's not a building or a meeting. It's people. We belong not only to God, but also to each other. The Christian life is about togetherness. No lone rangers allowed! Let's take a look at Church at its best:

 **READ** Acts 2:41-47

 **CONSIDER**

This story tells us how to be the Church. Devote yourself to being taught and living out God's Word. Do everything you can to understand and obey the Bible better together. Build strong relationships. Don't only go to meetings; get into the homes and lives of other people in the church. Break bread with them, remembering Christ's death (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Pray to and praise God with them. Draw close to God together, expecting him to reveal more of himself and his ways to you. Care for others. Try help each other, especially the hurting. Draw in outsiders. Keeping God to ourselves is selfish, so share your faith with others, inviting them to come along to certain gatherings. Don't give up. Every church is an imperfect bunch of people connected to a perfect Head, Jesus. He gives us the grace to not be critical of leaders and each other. He wants us to be part of the solution, not the problem.

 **APPLY**

What experience have you had of church? What's stopping you from integrating and functioning in your church?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Hebrews 10:24-25 for more. See 2 Timothy 4:2-5 for warnings about the danger of churches teaching error. To understand why Christians break bread together read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Also check out Cornerstone's "DEVOTE" series on the website at www.cornerstonechurch.co.za/tag/devote/

DAY 14

THE HOLY SPIRIT. WATER, ICE, GAS.

H₂O can exist in three different ways (water, gas, ice) and yet be the same substance. In the same way, God reveals himself to us in three ways: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19). There's only one God, not three. But mysteriously, he is all three at the same time. Today we'll look at the Holy Spirit, who comes to live in us when we become Christians. A sailing boat needs wind or else it will not move. The Holy Spirit is the wind in the sails of each Christian life.

 **READ** John 16:7-15

 **CONSIDER**

Who is the Holy Spirit? He's called "Counsellor" (v7) which means comforter, strengthener, advisor and helper. He's also called "the Spirit of Truth" (v13).

Why is he given to us? Because Jesus is not physically with us anymore (v7). Jesus could only be in one place at a time, but through the Holy Spirit he can be with millions of people at the same time. That's why it's good that Jesus went back to heaven.

What does he do? He convinces people to turn from their sin towards God (v8-10). He helps us understand the truths in the Bible (v13). He communicates the will of God to us (v14). He leads us to worship and glorify Jesus (v14). He allows us to experience God's wonderful grace (v15). That's why knowing and obeying God is impossible without the Holy Spirit! Thank God for this wonderful friend and gift!

 **APPLY**

In what ways have you been aware of the Holy Spirit's activity in your life? Pray for more of his activity in your life.

 **FURTHER READING**

Ezekiel 37:1-10 gives a powerful picture of the enlivening effect that the Spirit has on believers. Also see John 14:16, 17.

DAY 15

PRAYER. WELL WORN PATHS.

It's said that early Sudanese converts to Christianity committed to praying every day. Each one had a separate spot in the thicket where they would pour out their heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. As a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, "Brother, the grass grows on your path."

 **READ** Matthew 6: 6-13

CONSIDER

How should we pray? Cut out distractions and focus on God, who is with you. He is eager to respond to your prayer (v6). Be real. Don't try to impress him with fancy religious talk (v7). Express gratitude, sorrow, curiosity, love, anything.

Why should we pray? There's so much stuff to pray about: Focus on who God is and tell him how much you love him (v9). Think about what he wants for you and the world around you; then invite him to have his way (v10). Ask him for what you need, even small things (v11). Say sorry for any sins you've committed (v12). Give him your pain and forgive those who've wronged you (v12,14). Ask him for protection from temptation and the devil (v13).

When should we pray? "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You can keep talking to God non-stop. Push through the times when it seems he's not listening. He is. Also, realise that not everything you ask for you really need or are ready to receive. Be patient. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray. Stay connected.

APPLY

How much do you pray? How can you make your prayer life more interesting and real? Why not try reading Psalm 42 aloud to God, making it your prayer to God?

FURTHER READING

See James 4:2 and Matthew 26:42 to see why some prayers are not answered.

LETTING GOD OUT THE BOX

Nicola Goldblatt

I grew up Catholic - not a good Catholic, but enough to feel that God and I were fine, as long as he stayed in his box, of course. Never for a second did I allow my little bit of religion to restrain my lifestyle. I was a party-animal, surrounded by mates and boys, inebriated, having the time of my life. I was that girl dancing on the bar counter.

*In London, a house-mate invited me to a non-Catholic church. I went and wept the whole time - I felt so moved. Although I tried to explain this away, something drew me in and over the next while I attended three consecutive courses that introduced people to Christianity. But somehow this delusion kept me from progressing spiritually: **I thought I was a Christian because I'd been brought up one.** When people spoke of having a relationship with God, I just thought they were being excessive. It was during my fourth course that I first understood you can't be born a Christian, you can only become one when you trust and surrender yourself to Christ.*

***I met Jesus, and my heart exploded with joy.** Letting God out of the box I let him start having his way in my life. I experienced his presence powerfully. This is what I'd been missing all those years. And the Christian community amazed me - especially a group of girls who surrounded me, supporting my newfound faith.*

Being a Christian didn't make life easier: I was staying in London illegally, and was living with my boyfriend. God gave me the courage to let the boy go (he couldn't accept the change that was happening in me) and I came back to SA. But the joy of discovering Christ swallowed those lesser pains.

*My discovery of Christ was a gradual process, I was a slow learner, but when I finally 'got it', it blew me away like fireworks! I'm so glad God is patient with the slow kids. **I am glad he never stopped pursuing me.***

DAY 16

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. THE MASTER SCULPTOR.

When they asked Michelangelo how he made his statue of David he is reported to have said, *"I looked inside the marble and just took away the bits that weren't David."* God is our master sculptor. He wants us to become more like Jesus. He wants to chip away everything that's not like Christ in us. When we were saved we received Jesus' innocence and righteousness, but not his character. That takes time, obedience and the help of the Holy Spirit to grow into.

 **READ** Galatians 5:16-25

 **CONSIDER**

Jesus was, and still is, loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled (v22-23). That's why he is so good to others. Imagine you're a fruit-bearing tree. As you stay close to the Holy Spirit and obey him (v25) you'll bear the fruit of Jesus' character. You don't have to try to be good - just do your best to stay close to the Holy Spirit, which is ultimately about faith in Jesus. He'll work in you to stir up new desires for purity and love, and a new hate for sins that, though bringing you pleasure briefly, bring long-term hurt to you and others.

What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit (v25)? It means we obediently listen to his voice that comes through the Bible and our conscience. It means we give up on our own works and trust wholly on Christ to form us into his own. When we're tempted, we'll feel his gentle warning in our heart. We must obey him! If we do, we'll feel his peace and joy. If we sin, he will lovingly urge us to repent. We must not harden our hearts against him. The more we keep in step with him, the more of him we'll experience, and the more like Jesus we'll become.

 **APPLY**

How aware are you of the Holy Spirit's activity in you? Which of the nine fruits are you needing most? Pray and trust God for these.

 **FURTHER READING**

See Romans 8:28-29, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and 1 Timothy 4:12.

DAY 17

OBEDIENCE. GET UP AGAIN.

If a child steals something from their parent, they don't stop being their parent's child, but they do damage the relationship temporarily. The way to make peace is for that child to own up to, and turn from, their wrongdoing. In the same way, when we become a child of God and then sin, we don't stop being his child, but we break fellowship with him until we admit the sin and sincerely ask for his help to change.

 **READ** 1 John 1:5-2:6

CONSIDER

God is light (1:5). Since he hates sin, he wants us to live openly and obediently before him. This makes fellowship with him and other Christians possible (1:6-7). If we sin, we must confess it and not hide it (1:9). God promises to forgive us and purify us with the blood of Jesus (1:9-2:2). As we grow in our relationship with him, we'll become more obedient (2:3) and more like Jesus (2:6). No matter how many times we fall, if we confess, he'll lovingly forgive us. Like a child learning to walk, we must move beyond falling all the time to learning how to walk in obedience. God is gracious, but he's also committed to making us more like his Son.

One more thing - it's important to know the difference between the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and the devil's condemnation. When you sin, the Holy Spirit will lovingly highlight your sin and gently draw you back to God. But the devil will try to make you feel unworthy of God, causing you to run from God in shame. Reject these lies and feelings of shame. Rather run to God's grace.

APPLY

What are the sins you struggle with? Do you hide or confess them? In what ways have you noticed even small changes in your life that show that you are becoming more like Jesus?

FURTHER READING

Read Psalm 51 and Romans 8:1.

DAY 18

WORSHIP. IT'S WHAT WE WERE MADE FOR.

God enjoys being enjoyed. *“The Father seeks after worshippers”* (John 4:24). We worship God because we can confidently access God through Jesus and the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). Worship is our total devotion to God because of who he is, all he’s done, and all he still will do. Worship is not just singing once a week with other Christians. It’s loving and being in awe of God throughout the week. Worship is the heartbeat of a Christian. It’s also the pathway to real peace, joy and power.

 **READ** Psalm 98

 **CONSIDER**

Why worship God? Because He is a holy (v1), righteous (v2), loving and faithful (v3) King and Judge (v9). He has done marvellous things (v1) - like saving people, revealing himself, creating the sea, rivers, mountains and everything!

How should we worship? Worship God with your mind by filling it with thoughts of God from the Bible. Worship him with your heart by shouting for joy and bursting into song (v4). Worship God with your body by clapping, dancing and, if possible, making music (v6-8). Lastly, worship God with your will by giving everything to him as your King, starting with yourself. *“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy Name!”* (Psalm 103:1). Worship is the one thing we will do forever. God wants us to learn to worship him even when we don’t feel like it, because he never changes. If we put this into action we will soon discover that worshipping God brings greater satisfaction than anything this world offers.

 **APPLY**

Are you a worshipper? How can you worship God more on your own? And with others?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Psalm 63 and Revelation 4:2-11 for more.

A YEAR OF YOUR LIFE

Nicola Pilkington

*I joined Cornerstone's Life Team on a whim, completely unsure how fundamentally God would change my life. The only thing that I had planned on was being open to what God had for me. I learned what it means to be a part of the body of Christ; to be involved and make a contribution that is valuable. Not to simply go to church and expect to receive. **For it is in my contribution that I often learn and receive the most.** I learned how to relate to people of different backgrounds and to be as much of a blessing as I can be.*

A church is a safe environment that allows for mistakes to be made and to be lovingly put on the right track. God used so many people to teach me and to impart foundations in my mind and spirit that will never leave me. On my team and amongst the church I made friends that taught me what being friends actually meant. Our hearts were knitted and we loved each other in a way that I had never experienced before.

Service has such a negative connotation but it is out of that place that one is able to lead. **And such amazing things happen as you serve.** You get the privilege of even seeing a man get out of a wheel chair (like I did), (awkwardly) lead people to Jesus for the first time, and see lives surrendered to Jesus! The God we serve is amazing – you've just got to get out there and do it!

DAY 19

THE DEVIL. THE CAGED LION.

A man was once stranded in a game park at night. He heard a lion roar, and spent the night in a tree terrified, only to find out the next day that the lion had been caged all along. He had nothing to fear. This is a picture of spiritual warfare. In some ways, life gets tougher when you follow Jesus. The reason is that we have a new enemy, Satan. When we become Christians we become soldiers in a war. But we don't fight him in our own strength. And if we trust Jesus we have nothing to fear.

 **READ** 1 Peter 5:6-11

 **CONSIDER**

The devil is like a roaring lion looking to devour you (v8). But if you're in Christ then he's in a cage. Jesus has all authority over him and has given you his authority too (Luke 10:17-19). Satan may not harm you, unless you enter his cage.

How do we resist the devil and stay out of his cage? By our faith in Jesus (vs 9). We cast our anxieties on Jesus (vs 7), we humble ourselves before Jesus (vs 6), we are sober-minded and watchful (vs 8). When we give in to pride, unbelief, temptation, and spiritual laziness, we lose a spiritual protection. Stand firm in your faith (v9). The main battlefield is our mind. Satan will try to get us to believe his lies, and his lies are found in so many aspects of our society. So we must stand in our faith, our trust, in Jesus and the truth of the Bible and its promises. Stay in community (v9). Satan preys on isolated ones. Together, we can watch one another's backs. Also, don't mess with occultic practices like psychics, Tarot card reading, astrology, and so on (see Acts 19:19). Know that God overcomes Satan's efforts to harm you (v10). After all, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). So be aware of the devil, but be in awe of God (v11).

 **APPLY**

Have you experienced spiritual attack? How can you better fight this war in the future?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Psalm 91, Matthew 4:1-11 and Ephesians 6:10-18.

DAY 20

TRUST. VERTIGO.

Pilots flying through thick clouds sometimes experience something called ‘vertigo’. This means they lose their sense of whether they’re flying upwards or downwards. Many, following their untrustworthy senses, have crashed into the ground. But good pilots rely on the equipment that tells them exactly what angle they’re flying at. In the same way, many Christians give up on faith because feelings like doubt, guilt, fear and worry overwhelm them. In those times, we should distrust our feelings and rather trust in God’s unchanging promises and faithfulness and learn to fly the right way up.



READ Mark 4:35-41



CONSIDER

Jesus sets us off in a direction (v35). Then, as we obey him, a storm often comes and things go wrong (v37). When this happens we often feel like Jesus is doing nothing to help us and doesn’t seem to care (v38). But He does! Since he’s in control, he doesn’t panic. That’s why he could sleep. Our lack of trust in him makes us fearful (v40). But he can end the storm any time. Why does he allow storms to come our way? He does this to develop our faith in him. Faith that is untested is not real faith. In the midst of every storm, remember that God’s grace can and will sustain you.

How do we grow in trust? Remind ourselves that Jesus is with us. He does care. And he’s made promises he will keep. He has the power to change any situation. But until he does, we must trust him. If we don’t, our emotions may overwhelm and shipwreck us. It’s better to hold onto promises God makes to us in his Word. Promises like, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5).



APPLY

What promises in the Bible mean the most to you? What storms have you experienced? How did you handle them? How can you grow your faith in God’s faithfulness?



FURTHER READING

Read Romans 4:18-21 and Hebrews 11:1-12 for more about faith.

BIG THINGS HAPPEN IN LIFE GROUPS

At Cornerstone, we believe in the importance of meeting in each other's homes. We call these small regular meetings *Life Groups* and they're great for three reasons:

- ① Jesus call us to build relationships with other Christians so that we can encourage, strengthen, care for, support, challenge, and sharpen one another. Together we stand, isolated we fall.
- ② Our Sunday meetings are not enough to develop enduring relationships. But committing to meet with a few people on a regular basis is a great way to do this.
- ③ Life groups are a good environment for deepening our insight into the gospel, applying it to our life, growing in spiritual gifts, and partnering with others as we seek to better serve the city and the church.

A BIT ABOUT LIFE GROUPS:

Each group meets weekly in a home. They range in size from five to twenty. Usually they include a meal or refreshments, a conversation about the Sunday message, some Bible discussion and a time of prayer, though there is no pressure to pray aloud if you're not ready. Every group aims to grow in number until it is ready to multiply into two groups, with a new leader leading the new group.

HOW TO JOIN A LIFE GROUP:

Either join a group with someone you already know, or check out the Life Groups board at most of our sites. Otherwise, chat to an elder about a group where you can go, or simply contact us for details. You might want to visit two or three groups before you commit to one where you feel you can relate to people in the group.

DAY 21

TOUGH TIMES. DON'T DIE, BUTTERFLY.

A butterfly struggles for hours to break free from its cocoon. But if you were to try help it, it would die. The fight to get out is the very thing that develops in it the strength to fly. This is the reason God often doesn't answer our prayer to take away the tough times we're facing. He loves us too much to spare us from all suffering.

 **READ** 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

CONSIDER

Why does God allow us to suffer at times? These verses give some answers:

1) So that he can comfort us (v3). It is when we hurt most that he holds us the tightest, even when we can't feel his presence. 2) So that we can comfort others (v4). Our wounds enable us to later help other people with the comfort God gave us. 3) So that we can experience Christ, the wounded healer (v5). God knows what pain feels like. Jesus lived the human life and suffered a painful death. That's why he is so gentle with us in our suffering. 4) So that other suffering people are inspired by our example of perseverance (v6). 5) So that we rely on God more, and on ourselves less (v9). 6) So that God can get glory by delivering us from the suffering (v10). 7) So that spiritual community is strengthened as we pray for one another (v11). God finds no joy in our pain. We must persevere in trusting God as the Father of Comfort (v3) and our Deliverer (v10). He doesn't always take the suffering away, but he promises to always take us through it.

APPLY

What tough times have you experienced? What did you learn in them? How can you deal with tough times better in the future?

FURTHER READING

Read Psalm 23, Romans 5:3-5 and Hebrews 12:1-11.

DAY 22

MONEY. STARLIGHT OR BRIGHT LIGHTS?

You can't see the stars well when you're next to bright lights. In the same way, you easily drift from your devotion to God and your faith in him when you're captivated by money and the privileges it brings. You then dream of getting even more money hoping it will bring good things in life, and the respect of people. If this is a major goal in your life then you're in real danger. You need to step back from the bright lights of money and material things, and see God's glory afresh.

 **READ** 1 Timothy 6:5-11

 **CONSIDER**

Why is loving money (and what it can get you) dangerous? You can't take it with you to heaven (v7). It's a root of all kinds of evil (v10). Loving money will cause us to break God's commands in many ways, because we will do anything to get it – even lie, cheat, steal or use others for personal gain. It can make us turn from God (v10). It promises happiness but it brings pain, ruin and destruction in the long-term (v9). It's uncertain and temporary and easy to lose (v17).

How can we use money in a God-pleasing way? Realise that we can be content with very little (v8). Put your hope in God, not money (v17). Enjoy all God gives you, seeing it as a generous gift (v17). Ask God for what you need. Give generously (v18) to needy people and to the church you're part of, underwriting the God-given vision of the church. Focus on the eternal riches that come from obedience to Christ in this life (v19). You can't take money to heaven with you, but when invested in the advance of God's kingdom, you can send it on ahead of you. Don't run after wealth. Rather, run after God and use any money he trusts you with in a way that pleases him.

 **APPLY**

Do you put your trust in wealth or God? How can you better use money and things in a way that brings praise to God?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Malachi 3:6-12, Matthew 6:19-34 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-12 for more.

GOD IN THE PAIN

Shalati Machimana

*I put my faith in Jesus when I was 16. But after two years my faith was shaken. **My 17 year old brother was in a car accident at midnight, close to home.** He and his friends got trapped in the burning car. I found out about it on Facebook the next morning. That Saturday was my mom's sisters wedding so she wasn't home. The funeral took two and a half weeks because they had to do DNA tests to identify the boys' bodies.*

My brother's death was difficult and even drove my parents apart. Over time, even the middle-class life we enjoyed was stripped away from us. Then one Sunday my dad complained about a headache. Later he got hit by a brain stroke. I was also having a difficult year with my studies at university.


*When we serve God we don't expect to go through such things. But through all the pain I was reminded: it's not about me but Him. **Amidst all the pain I still found joy and peace in God.** That is miraculous. Then God completely healed my dad in less than a year! The doctors were shocked.*

***I have seen and experienced God. He does not leave you in your pain!** I now live a life with purpose and meaning - a life that makes God happy regardless of the season I am in.*

DAY 23

WORK. WATCHING ME PLAY.

David was a talented soccer player who played poorly. His father never watched him. Then his father died. Curiously, he started to play really well. He never missed practices. When his coach asked him what had changed he said, “*Now that my father is dead, he may be watching me play - I don't want to let him down.*” Let's read about how God, our heavenly Father, watches over us, and how this inspires hard work in us.

 **READ** Colossians 3:17 & 3:22-4:1

CONSIDER

In the days of this scripture, up to half of the known world were slaves. So most Christians were very poor. They lived on hand-outs from wealthy masters. They felt unmotivated to work. Without a vision for their work, they felt used by their ‘masters’. Even today, our work and duties can sometimes feel like slavery. But as Christians we can learn to please God in our work.

How should we do work in a God-pleasing way? Do everything with God's help and for God's glory (v23). God wants to help you develop your knowledge and skills. Do it for God, not people (v23). Don't focus mainly on pleasing people (like bosses, lecturers or teachers). Please God first. This will push you to work hard when no one, except God, is looking (v22). Put your whole heart into whatever you do (v23). The way to success is hard work. However, overworking doesn't please God either (see Psalm 127:1-2). Work towards a vision (v24). Ask God to help you have a vision for your life and work wisely towards it. A great vision will inspire great sacrifices, which will result in great rewards. Don't abuse power over others (4:1). God wants equal opportunity for all. That's why Christians led the way in ending slavery a long time ago.

APPLY

Would you say you're a hard worker? How can you be motivated to work harder? Alternatively, how can you make sure you don't overwork? What are some of the dreams you believe God has given you to pursue?

FURTHER READING

See Proverbs 5:6-11.

DAY 24

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SALT AND LIGHT.

Why are you on this planet? To reflect Christ's character and to do the will of God. If Christ is the hope of the world, then God's people are the messengers and models of that hope. Following Jesus means we're on a mission with God to bring change to our world, starting with the people around us.

 **READ** Matthew 5:11-16

CONSIDER

How can we be salt (v13)? Salt only works if it leaves the salt shaker and makes contact with the food. God has a mission field for you - it's the people in your family, community, place of study or work. If you try represent Christ but have lost your love for him and his ways, then you'll make no impact. Your ungodly life and attitudes will speak so loudly that no one will hear your words. But a life that is 'salty' with a passion for God and his ways will make others thirst for God.

How can we be light? Light should be made obvious to all, not hidden. Following Jesus is a very personal thing but it's not a private thing. Let your light shine before people (v16). How will people respond? Some will hate you (v11-12). But they really hate the God of light within you who exposes their darkness. So don't take it personally. Look forward to the rewards from God for persevering in suffering (v12). Some, however, will see your good deeds and be drawn to the God that motivates you (v16).

APPLY

How do you feel about being salt and light? How can you begin to see the people in your world as your mission field? Who are the people that you are trying to reach for God?

FURTHER READING

See 1 Peter 3:13-18 and Hebrews 11:32-40.

DAY 25

TELLING YOUR STORY. REALITY TV.

Look around. People surround you who are not Christians. How can you reach them? One way is by being real. Reality TV is the trend that looks into the real lives of other people. Our generation doesn't want second-hand or made-up stories. They want reality. That's why one of the most powerful ways to influence other people towards God is simply to tell them how you came to know God and what he has done in your life since then. The most unbelieving friends may listen if you do this.

 **READ** Acts 22:1-16

CONSIDER

Paul tells some unbelievers his God-story. Learning from him, what should we say? Firstly, tell people a little of how your life was before you became a Christian (v1-5). Then, explain the events that led you to become a follower of Jesus (v6-11). Lastly, tell them how your life has changed since then (v12-16). Never feel like your experience of God is not radical enough. Some people, like Paul, meet God powerfully, but most meet him less dramatically. Just tell your story and trust that some people will connect with it. Keep it simple. Let the focus shift from your life to God's grace. But if you speak about God's work in you and your life hasn't begun to change, don't be surprised when people ignore what you say.

APPLY

Practise telling your God-story by writing it down or by telling a Christian friend. What was life like before? Then what happened? What's life like now? Now step out and ask God for an opportunity to tell someone.

FURTHER READING

See Mark 5:19-20.

THE STRENGTH OF FORGIVENESS

Mandi Berghorst

*I grew up in a very close family. We all went to church but didn't have solid relationship with Christ. **When I was 13 my dad was shot outside my high school.** He was a magistrate. The men who killed him were going to appear in his courtroom. The sudden loss of my dad made me angry with God and those men. **My life was full of sin as I held onto hatred and rebelled against everything.***

*In grade 9 I heard the gospel presented so clearly at a camp and was filled with Christ's love and Holy Spirit. I accepted Him and have never looked back. **Jesus took the despondent, angry, unforgiving person I was and gave me life to the full.** He gave me hope, joy and a passion for His name, His people and for the lost. God released me from the anger and hurt, and He is continually working with me. In scripture God says He sets the captives free and He really did that in my life.*

God revealed to me that He is the perfect Father, that he forgives us so we forgive others. I truly forgave the men that killed my father. Because I had now received grace I could show grace. I also stopped being afraid. God spoke to me clearly through Romans 8v37-38: We are more than conquerors. No matter where we are at, how unloved we feel, how little purpose we have left, we matter to God and He will reach out His loving hands and show us grace and mercy.

DAY 26

SERVING. THE GREAT REVERSAL.

Imagine you are at the front of a long queue waiting your turn, when suddenly the queue turns around and the people at the back go first. That is just what Jesus does in his Kingdom. He makes the first last and the last first. In this world, the greatest person is the one who is most served by others, but in God's Kingdom the greatest person is the one who serves others most (Mark 10:42-45). We will never reflect God in this world like we should unless we learn how to have a servant-heart toward the people around us.

 **READ** John 13:1-17

 **CONSIDER**

Why should we serve others? It is love in action (v1). In God's kingdom we exist for the benefit of others (v10). Jesus modelled it and told us to do it (v15). If we serve others, we will be blessed by God (v17). Jesus said that it is more of a blessing to give than it is to receive (Acts 20:35).

How should we serve people? We should serve people because we love them (v1). We must remember who we are in God, and who God is in us (v3). This knowledge enables us and makes us feel secure, which in turn empowers us to humble ourselves before others. We should find practical ways of serving others (v5). Serving is not the way to greatness. It is greatness.

 **APPLY**

How do you feel about serving others? What holds you back? In what ways can you serve the people in your Life Group, and the needs of the larger church?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Mark 10:42-25 and Philipians 2:1-4 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

DAY 27

SOCIAL ACTION. ORPHANS AND WIDOWS.

One of the tragic errors in the church in the last century is the teaching that the New Testament mainly concerns itself with getting people into heaven. That's not true. Just think of Jesus' declaration: *"The Kingdom of God is here."* And think of the prayer we are meant to pray: *"Let your Kingdom come."* It's as clear as day that Jesus didn't come just to get people into heaven, but heaven into people. First we ourselves start to enjoy the wholeness of God at work in our broken lives. Then we become conduits of that wholeness into other people, especially the people who are most broken in society.

 **READ** Luke 10:25-37

 **CONSIDER**

Following Jesus means that we learn to love the people around us (v27), especially people who are hurting (v37). In this story the religious people (the priest and Levite) were too busy or uncaring to help, while a person of low class in society (the Samaritan) lovingly did what he could. God wants us to rise to the occasion and care for the needy, doing what we can and encouraging others to join in (v35). Being a Christian is not just about loving God but also loving people. The kind of faith *"that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress"* (James 1:27). Don't forget Mother Teresa's warning: *"The poor don't need us as much as we need the poor."* That's because serving broken people draws us closer to the God who loves them.

 **APPLY**

How do you feel about being more compassionate towards hurting people? What holds you back? How can you wisely start helping others?

 **FURTHER READING**

See Matthew 25:31-40 and 1 John 3:11-18.

DAY 28

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. SHINE!

If someone plays an unplugged electric guitar in a big hall you can hardly hear it. But if you plug it into a big amp and turn up the volume, it can entertain thousands. God wants to take our little lives and to plug them into the power of his Spirit. That way, our impact in this world will be so much bigger than if we tried to do it in our own strength.

 **READ** Acts 1:4-9 and 2:1-4.

CONSIDER

God promises us a gift (1:5), the Holy Spirit. When we are saved we are born of the Spirit (John 3:5). But he also wants to baptise (1:5) and fill us (2:4) with the Spirit, where we experience his presence and power in a very real way (2:2-4). Why? So we'll have power to be his witnesses (1:8). He wants us to influence people with his power, not with our own cleverness and determination.

God wants us to share his passion for people. God wants to use us to begin impacting people where we are, and then send us to people in other places. We must be willing to go (1:8).

How does he fill us? Jesus, in John 7:37-39 tells us we need to come to him, thirsting for him, and asking him with simple trust, to be filled with his Spirit. Once we've been filled, we must keep on yielding control to the Spirit, staying plugged in day after day (Ephesians 5:18).

APPLY

Have you been filled with the Spirit? Have you sensed him using you in supernatural ways? Do you feel God's call to be part of his global mission? Are there any church apostolic trips you can join?

FURTHER READING

See John 7:37-39, Acts 2:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 for more.

THE TWO GREATEST GIFTS

Olivier Teddy

I'm from the DRC. My father is from Congo and my mother is from Liberia. My feelings of loneliness and having a father who wasn't there for me, made me leave home. I found my way to South Africa.

One thing I did get from my family was a really bad taste in my mouth for such things as God, Christianity and the church. *Despite my distaste for Christians, in SA I made friends with some Christians. They invited me to church. I suppose I was curious about the God I was rejecting. What was it that all these Christians seemed to be so thrilled about? So I took up their offer.*

The day I went to church, the preacher taught about healing. And right there, in the meeting, God healed me of something that I'd suffered from for 10 years. *No one prayed for me - God just touched me. This miracle opened me up to God. I kept going back to church, and even joined a Life Group.*

Despite the fact I never knew God, he reached out to me and revealed his love to me, accepting me as I was. I now count on him, and call on him.

And he forgave me, which gave me the strength to forgive my earthly father for the way he let me down. *The surprising thing is that because I've forgiven my earthly father, he and I are now getting closer. My prayer is that my father will discover God too.*

I have also discovered a new family of people in the church, people who share the same joy of being loved by the same Father in heaven.

DAY 29

SEXUALITY. LIKE A RIVER.

When you stick two pieces of tape together the bond is very strong. If you tear them apart and try to use the same tape again, it will be far less sticky. Sex is the bonding agent that God designed to bind a man and a woman together for life. That's why separating from a sexual partner is so painful. The more you have sex before marriage, the less power sex will have to "bind" you to your life-partner one day. So resist the pressures to have sex that come from the sex-crazed media and your own hormones.



READ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-9



CONSIDER

How can we have a God-pleasing sexuality? We must actively avoid all sexual immorality (v3). This includes sex and foreplay before marriage, adultery, homosexual sex, and looking at pornography. We must learn how to control our bodies (v4). Our sex-drive is very strong. We must learn how to control it rather than be controlled by it. We should not take advantage of anyone sexually (v6). That includes sexually harassing people, rape and sexual abuse. We should link sex with real love (v9). Sex that's selfish or hurtful isn't based on real love.

Why please God with our sexuality? Jesus commanded it (v2). God wants us to be holy and honourable (v4). We need to be different to people who don't know God (v5). We'll be disciplined by God if we disobey him in this area (v6). Let's please God and benefit ourselves and others by avoiding all sexual sin! Sex is like a river. When it stays in the banks of God's instructions, it brings great blessing. When it overflows and floods the banks of God's instructions, it brings destruction to our lives and to society.



APPLY

Have you given in to sexual sin? How can you go about controlling your sexual urges and dealing with pressure from media, your emotions, and your body in a way that pleases God? Put your trust in Jesus to help you.



FURTHER READING

See 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Proverbs 5 and 2 Timothy 2:22.

DAY 30

MAKING PEACE. THE PATHMAKER.

A man once built a fence between himself and his neighbour, whom he didn't like. Then God told him to make peace. With tears in his eyes he broke the fence down and, using the same wood, made a path from his door to his neighbour's door. Our world is hurting because of the fences of hostility, prejudice and superiority. All around us, God calls us to convert fences into paths.



READ Colossians 3:8-15



CONSIDER

Why overcome division and hostility between people? When we follow Jesus we are no longer mainly identified by our class, culture, race or gender, but by our new identity in God (v10) as God's loved and chosen people. That means that a Christian in Nigeria has more in common with a Christian in the USA or China than they do with their non-Christian Nigerian friend! We are united by our common relationship with God. That's why our race, culture, class, gender, level of education and level of wealth are not enough to divide us. Christ is all and is in all (v11).

How do we seek peace? Be set free from anger and hate (v8). Be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and loving (v12-13). Trust Jesus to form these within you. Most importantly, allow God's love to bind us together in unity and peace (v14-15). Change must start with the church (v12). If God's people don't know how to make peace, then there's no hope. Become a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). The Holy Spirit will guide and strengthen you.



APPLY

How have you experienced prejudice or hostility in your family, community or place of work? What changes must happen in your heart? Do you need to forgive anyone or ask forgiveness? What practical steps can you take to become a peacemaker?



FURTHER READING

See Ephesians 2:14-22 for more.

DAY 31

COMMITMENT. UNBREAKABLE GRIP.

Bind your arms together by holding onto your wrists. This is a picture of the Christian life. The one hand represents Christ's committed grip on you once you have been saved. The other hand represents your grip on Christ in response to his unbreakable grip on you.

 **READ** Philippians 3:1-14

CONSIDER

We should rejoice in Christ's grip on us. Amazingly, "*Christ Jesus took hold of me*" (v12). This speaks of Christ's grip on us. It is a strong, gracious grip of salvation. It is God's perfect, unflinching commitment to never let go of those he has saved (see John 10:28). His grip on us should motivate and energise our tightening grip on him (v12).

We can tighten our grip on him in several ways: Admit the futility of trying to impress God with our religious performance and good works (v1-6). Be less excited about all of our life's accomplishments (v7). Be ecstatic about the undeserved prize of having a personal relationship with Jesus (v8). Remind yourself that your being warmly accepted by God (called 'righteousness' in the Bible) is not based on anything you did, but on the grace that comes from Christ (v9). Seek a deeper and closer walk with Christ (v10). See your relationship with Christ like a race in which you enduringly and single-mindedly forget what is behind and press on toward what is ahead (v13)! Keep heaven in your sight, and obey the call of God in your heart (v14).

APPLY

Reflect on your New Life journey: Have you been saved yet? Have you put your faith in Jesus? What has changed in your life? What have you learnt that you don't want to forget? What questions remain unanswered? What changes do you still need to make?

FURTHER READING

The Bible consists of 66 books. Try read them all, one at a time, starting from the New Testament and then moving to the Old Testament, or doing one from the New Testament, followed by one from the Old Testament, and so on. It's wise not to start from Genesis, though, but rather from Matthew - the Old Testament can be very tricky, and we use the New Testament to make sense of the Old. Purchase a study Bible, like the ESV Study Bible, to help you understand some of the more difficult parts.

Enjoy the adventure...

BREAKING BREAD

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Unlike baptism, which is a one-time event, breaking bread (a.k.a. The Lord's Supper, or Communion) is a practice that is observed over and over in a church - whether in informal small group settings, at home with your family, or in big-group Sunday meetings. We break bread and drink wine or grape juice together. The bread and wine are symbolic of a far greater reality - the death and resurrection of Jesus and the salvation he opened up for us. The mood of this time varies - at times reflective, and at other times celebrative.

WHY DO WE BREAK BREAD?

- Jesus told us to (see Matthew 26:26-28). The bread represents his body and the wine / grape juice represents his blood.
- It celebrates all that Christ has won for us and done for us on the cross (see 1 Corinthians 11:24).
- It allows us to regularly humble ourselves before God, and receive fresh supplies of His grace and forgiveness (see 1 Corinthians 11:28).
- It affirms that in Christ, we, despite our differences, have been made one (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).
- It anticipates a life of everlasting fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26).

If you would like more info, check out our **DEVOTE: Breaking Bread** booklet on the website at:
www.cornerstonechurch.co.za/devote-breaking-bread/

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- ① We recommend that you attend our DNA course, where you can learn more about Cornerstone and decide if you would like to join us in our mission to the city of Johannesburg.
- ② If you've done DNA, we recommend you attend our *Christ-Centred Life* course which consists of the foundational teachings of Christianity and will answer many of the questions you no doubt have. The course takes place on Wednesday evenings at a Cornerstone site. See cornerstonechurch.co.za/books-and-equipping-courses/ for more details.
- ③ If you've done DNA and our Christ-Centred Life course, we recommend you join us at Love Joburg, where you can learn how to effectively and naturally share your faith with others. For more info, see www.cornerstonechurch.co.za/books-and-equipping-courses/

GET BAPTISED

We believe that all believers should be water baptised. If you haven't yet been baptised, let us know. See Matthew 28:19; John 4:1; Acts 2:38; and Acts 8:16. We believe that even if you have been christened as a child, you should still be baptised when you come to believe in Jesus as an adult.

KEEP READING

Keep yourself immersed in the scriptures. Try and finish the New Testament first before attending to the Old Testament. You might also enjoy the Chronological Bible Plan. See <http://cornerstonechurch.co.za/bibleinayear/>

GET INVOLVED - JOIN A LIFE GROUP

While we meet in larger gatherings at our various sites across Johannesburg we also meet in smaller gatherings in homes during the week. These two ways of meeting are integral to a healthy church life and we value both formats of meeting.

Life Groups are usually led by a deacon in Cornerstone and can take several different formats. Sometimes groups may have a specific age focus or interest focus, but most of our groups are fairly mixed as relationships develop naturally.

When groups meet can be dependant on the site you are a part of. We have Life Group pamphlets at the sites, you can call 011 616 4073 or email info@cornerstonechurch.co.za for more information, or speak to any of the elders and / or deacons.

FUNCTION

There are many areas of ministry which you can get involved in at Cornerstone. See our website (cornerstonechurch.co.za) for details, chat to your Life Group leader, and also chat to an elder.

WORDS

Some words or phrases commonly used in Cornerstone Church that you may not understand ...

Amen: This word means “so be it” (it is originally derived from Hebrew). We use it at the end of prayers to signal an agreement with the prayer, and also just so we know that someone is finished praying!

Anointed: Someone is anointed when they are spiritually empowered by God for a special task.

Apostolic: The word ‘apostle’ essentially means ‘sent one’. To be ‘apostolic’ means to be sent, or to ‘go’. See also ‘Mission’.

Atonement: The action of making amends for a wrong or injury. Jesus Christ makes ‘atonement’ (amends / reconciliation) for our sins. See also “propitiation”.

Breaking Bread: Also called Communion or the Lord’s Supper. This is when Christians break bread and drink wine (or juice) together as a symbol of celebrating God’s gifts of salvation through the cross, and oneness in the church. It can be done whenever Christians gather.

Deacons: The tried and tested leaders appointed by the elders to lead certain aspects of the church, like ministries and Life Groups.

Devotional times: The daily times alone with God where Christians seek to grow closer to Christ through Bible reading and prayer. Some may call this a ‘quiet time’.

Disciple: 1) A person committed to spiritual growth and obedience to Christ. 2) Discipleship describes the efforts that Christians make to help less experienced Christians grow in their walk with Christ.

Elders/Eldership team: The team of people who lead and care for Cornerstone Church; they are also called the pastors.

Evangelism: The efforts that Christians make to introduce other people to Jesus. Also known as ‘sharing your faith’ or ‘outreach’.

Gentiles: Non-Jews.

Glory: 1) To glorify God means to revel in and worship his awesomeness. 2) To experience his glory means to be overwhelmed by his awesome qualities and presence.

Hallelujah: An outburst of praise in response to the greatness and grace of God; the word stems from ‘hallel’ (to happily praise) and ‘yah’ (short for Yahweh, which is God’s Name).

Great Commission: This refers to Jesus’ mandate to the Church to “make disciples of all nations” in Matthew 28:18-20. “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

Holy: 1) With regard to God, it refers to his radiant beauty, uniqueness, perfection and purity. 2) With regard to God’s people, it refers to a commitment to purity and service to God.

Idol: Anything we look to as a God-alternative in the hope it will secure, save or satisfy us. Could be a wooden statue, or

something less tangible but just as real: sex, money, love, fame, success, power, control, comfort or children, for example.

Justification: Describes how we are accepted by God not on the basis of our works, but on the basis of Christ's works – his perfect life and his sacrificial death. We are 'justified' before God because of Jesus.

Kingdom of God: Since God is King, wherever his reign is embraced by people, or manifested by the Spirit's power, there is his Kingdom. In this sense God's Kingdom can advance.

Lead elder: Each team of pastors or elders is led by a lead elder who captains the team.

Life Group: Another name for a small group or home group. See also *page 32*.

Ministry: 1) Christ-honouring, Spirit-empowered service to others. 2) Each church has a variety of ministries, each providing opportunity to serve different needs either in the church or in the community.

Mission: Every Christian and every church is sent by God to make a difference in the world. In this sense they are on mission with God.

New Testament: The 27 books of the Bible that were written after Jesus came.

NCMI: New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI) is a team of people who have recognised gifts in God that we see in Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors). Those on the NCMI team help and encourage churches and church leaders who partner with them. The NCMI team keeps church leaders accountable and fosters healthy relationships between churches, so we can fulfil the mission of God together in our areas. Cornerstone partners with the NCMI team. For more info, check out the NCMI Gauteng website at ncmigauteng.co.za.

Old Testament: The 39 books of the Bible

that were written before Jesus came.

Original language: The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, the New Testament mainly in Greek, but partly in Aramaic. There are many translations into various languages. Our most used ones are NIV (New International Version) and ESV (English Standard Version).

Outpouring: An experience of the Spirit's presence and power. Also known as '*infilling*' or '*baptism of the Spirit*'.

Paul: Often in preaching we say, '*As Paul said*.' This refers to Paul the apostle who wrote one third of the New Testament.

Prophecy: To prophesy is a God-given ability to share a direct message from God with another person or a group of people. Also known as 'bringing a prophetic word'.

Propitiation: This refers to the '*turning away*' of wrath (judgement) due to an offering. Hence, Jesus Christ is the '*propitiation*' for our sins.

Repent: To admit and own our sinfulness and constant justifying of ourselves before God, and decide to trust in Jesus and walk in his ways.

Sanctification: God's commitment to develop Christ-like character in his children, with their participation.

Salvation: The way that God, through Jesus, has rescued us from the penalty and power of sin, into a transforming relationship with himself.

Site: Though Cornerstone is one church, it is also many sites with the same core vision and mission to our city.

Sovereign: We often speak of God's sovereignty; the fact that he is in total control. This helps us trust him, even when things seem out of control.

Spirit-filled: A person is filled with the Spirit when they open themselves to the

empowering and transforming influence of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual warfare: The experience of undergoing temptation, discouragement and confusion as a result of Satan's crafty resistance to our love for Christ. We overcome these attacks with persevering faith in Christ and his Word.

Testimony: Our testimony is our unique story of the difference Jesus has made in our life.

Tithing: The practice of regularly giving a portion of one's income to the church (usually 10%) so as to underwrite its vision and ventures. Though it must be remembered that Christ calls us to give all we have to him, not just our money or only 10%.

Trinity: The theological word that describes the three-ness of God, in that, although he is One God, he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit all at the same time.

Vision: 1) A preferred picture of the future that inspires passion. 2) An image that God directly places in our minds as way of communicating with or through us, as in 'God gave me a vision' (a.k.a. 'a picture').

Wrath: God's just antagonism towards evil in which he refuses to negotiate, and promises to judge if we fail to repent.



www.cornerstonechurch.co.za

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