

Only JESUS

January 2017



Who is Jesus ? In infancy he startled a king; in boyhood he puzzled the doctors; in manhood he ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows, hushed the sea to sleep, and healed the multitudes without medicine.

He never wrote a book, yet not all the libraries of the world could hold the books written about him. He never wrote a song, but he has furnished the theme of more songs than all songwriters combined. He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier or fired a gun yet no leader ever made so many volunteers. He is the star of astronomy, the rock of geology, and the lion and the lamb of zoology. Great men have come and gone, yet he lives on. Herod could not kill him, Satan could not seduce him, death could not destroy him and grave could not hold him. That's my Jesus !!!!

January 1, Sunday 2017

READ : JOHN 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

REFLECT : We begin our new year with the simple staggering truth found in the above mentioned scripture: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Without doubt this one is the most amazing statements made in Scripture. William Barclay, the Bible commentator said, " It might well be held that this is the greatest verse in the New Testament.

‘The Word became flesh’ phrase separates Christianity from every other religion on earth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not merely an exhortation(telling us to do something) but an exhibition(showing us what God has done for us)

Let this truth astonish us today : The one who is infinite became finite. God became man and dwelt with us. Jesus is the link between heaven and earth(like the vision that Jacob saw in Genesis 28:12 of a stairway resting on earth and its top reaching to heaven)

ACT: Share with someone about Jesus coming to earth

January 2, Monday

READ: MATTHEW 9:14-17

14 Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”

15 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

16 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. 17 Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

REFLECT: One of the amazing facts we find when we read the New Testament is the way in which language had to bear a whole new weight of meaning with the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. When Paul says, “ we are conquerors through Him who loved us” in Romans 8:37 and then adds we are more than conquerors, is it an exaggerated statement. No - it’s a fact.

The new wine of God's amazing salvation had to be put into new wineskins of ministry and facts. Facts that are new to us. To be a conqueror is one thing; to be more than a conqueror is another. The word 'more' allows us to see the unlimited nature of our resources and growth that lies before us. In Christ we do more than survive. We thrive (flourish).

ACT: Let us fast today to understand the unlimited power of Jesus and what we can do in and for Him.

January 3, Tuesday

READ : 1 JOHN 1:8-10

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

REFLECT: Being 'more than a conqueror' does not guarantee freedom from making mistakes or sins. The key words are "if we confess our sins" - we receive forgiveness and get purified. Though we must be totally committed to living for God, we must not forget there's a provision for us when we sin. We may lose a fight with Satan but not lose the battle. We may even lose a battle but not lose the war.

There's a difference between a sheep and a pig when they fall into a mud hole. The sheep will bleat and bleat till it's pulled out. But when the pig falls into the mud hole, he loves it and wallows in it forever. When we fall into sin, do we sink deeper into the mud by not confessing or are we crying out to the shepherd.

ACT: Find a friend to confess any darkness (sins) that may have come over you recently so that Jesus can bring you back to light.

January 4, Wednesday

READ: 1 JOHN 5:1-5

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

REFLECT: Many of us allow Christ to function in certain areas of our lives while other areas are withheld. This introduces the principle of duality in our lives that causes inner division.

Between 1921-1937 the British devised a system of government whereby power was shared between the British and the Indians. That kind of government is called a 'diarchy'. The system failed and any kind of spiritual diarchy will fail too. The answer is in verse 5 if we believe in Jesus as the son of God we will overcome the world. We can't serve two masters. No one can be truly happy when there's an inner division. There must be unity within or else we will spiritually collapse. If we do not allow Christ to enter the core of our being and take control of our lives then we live in a state of tension.

We are naturally self-centred and we can think we are doing things for Christ's glory, when, in reality are doing it for our own glory.

ACT: Recommit yourself to making Jesus the Lord of your life. Pray and make Jesus king and get rid of all half-gods from your heart.

January 5, Thursday

READ: ROMANS 7:7-25

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”[a] **8** But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. **9** Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. **10** I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. **11** For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. **12** So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognised as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. **15** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. **16** And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. **17** As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. **18** For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[b] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **19** For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. **20** Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22** For in my inner being I delight in God’s

law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

REFLECT: Why do we resist surrendering every area of our lives to Jesus ? It's because we like things to be under our control. The sin that Adam and Eve committed in Eden was a declaration of independence.

We all like to be in control of our lives and when Jesus stands before us asking for complete control of our lives , a feeling of total helplessness arises within us. Our nature dislikes this feeling and so we arrive at some kind of compromise. A life of true peace involves total surrender to Jesus, where we stop living a self-centred life and start living a Christ-centred one. We are fools if we believe He isn't enough.

ACT: Decide to give up something for Jesus today

January 6, Friday

READ: GENESIS 3:1-19

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust

all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity

between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

16 To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband,

and he will rule over you.”

17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

REFLECT: All of us have our fears. The roots of our fear is an inner division. The remedy of our fear lies in a unified self- a self made whole by Christ. Perfect love drives out fear and imperfect love draws fear into our heart.

Before Adam sinned, he was a whole person who enjoyed the full measure of God’s love. By disobeying, he put up a barrier to that love and the first thing that swept into his life was fear. Notice his words: ‘I was afraid’. When love flows in fear flows out; when fear flows in, love flows out.

The way to get rid of fear, we need love. It narrows love down to one man - Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:14 says ‘For Christ’s love compels us’ meaning ‘the love of Christ narrows us’. We must become single-minded, with one consuming passion that eats up the lesser passions of life. That does not mean we will have no love for others, but our love for others become secondary to our love for Christ. We will love others better when we love Him better.

ACT: Follow-up on five people and remind them to come to church.

January 7, Saturday

READ: MATTHEW 17:1-13

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

4 Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

10 The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

11 Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

REFLECT: We see here the transfiguration of Jesus. The heart of Peter was divided in its loyalty - wanting to keep Moses representing the law, Elijah representing the prophets and Jesus representing the new revelation. He wanted to put them all in the same level. In Verse 4 he says I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.

Peter lacked the full understanding of Jesus's supremacy. As Peter was uttering these words, a cloud overshadowed them and God's voice announces, " This is my son, whom I love..... listen to him !" God was not letting them get away thinking Jesus was at the same level as Moses and Elijah.

Their response: fell face down to the ground, terrified. The fear arose because they heard the voice of God and didn't understand the fullness of Jesus's deity.

ACT: Do something that Jesus would do(preach, visit the sick, encourage someone , share the gospel) LISTEN TO HIM

January 8, Sunday

READ: COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. [b] 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

REFLECT: We have to understand what amazing power we possess because of Christ. When our circumstances and surroundings are favourable, and life is going according to plan, we can carry on. But life is not always like that. We face disappointments, challenges and we are let down. And that is when we are tested to the very core of our being.

There are three types of Christians: rowing boat type, sail boat type and the engine driven type. The rowing boat type looks like a Christian but, under test, prefers to rely on his power and starts rowing. The sail boat type depends on the winds. If the wind is there he moves else he stays. Direction of the wind also determines his direction. The engine driven type will move whether the wind is favourable or not. They are not self-dependant like the first, or circumstance-dependant like the second but Christ-dependant.

What type of a Christian are you ?

ACT: Share a scripture with someone to teach them to be Christ - dependant.

January 9, Monday

READ: MATTHEW 3:1-17

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

**“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”**

4 John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptising, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 “I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. 14 But John tried to

deter him, saying, “I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?”

15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.” Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

REFLECT: Very often we try too hard to live a good life. It seems like we are leading a strained Christian life. When we live like that it’s not very inviting to others who want to follow Christ.

One of the processes that take place while making tin sheets is to subject them to intense heat. After this process the molecules are so harmonised that, when the tin plates are bent, they would not break. Our text tells us today that Christ would baptise not with water, but with fire.

Isn’t that what we need? A fiery baptism that will purify and melt us and, in a sense, set the molecules of our souls in right relation to each other so that when the pressures come upon us, we won’t break. When we have Christ in our hearts, all the inner strain is taken away and we are left with only peace.

ACT: Share your faith with someone so that they can experience the peace of Christ

January 10, Tuesday

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58

35 But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has deter-

mined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?”

Where, O death, is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

REFLECT: If there is a formula for victorious living in one sentence it would be: To be a conqueror in Christ we must first be conquered by Christ. To be victorious we have to allow our will, emotion and mind to be captured by Jesus. We are like wild, untamed horses and should be ready to hand over the reins of our lives to Jesus.

Among some African tribes there is a belief that when one man conquers another, the strength of the one conquered passes into the conqueror. I don't believe in that concept but something like that happens to us spiritually. By allowing Jesus to conquer us his power comes into us making us stronger and to enable us to fight the next battle. Secondly, we are able to pass the victory on to others.

ACT: Share about your victory over some weakness with someone and encourage them to trust Jesus.

January 11, Wednesday

READ: JOHN 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will

come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

REFLECT: Even though words are a powerful medium of communication, we cannot express fully what God is like. We can’t understand God’s wisdom, his power, his humility etc. But God wants us to understand him. His desire for us to understand him is so great that he sent ‘A life’, someone divine, so that we could get a better understanding of God at a deeper level.

Two thousand years ago a life came down to us from heaven and lived among us. We then could understand what

love is when people saw him saying ‘Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’ (Luke 23:34). Now when we reflect on the word ‘God’ we need not rely on our imagination. The nature of God has been uncovered in human terms through Jesus. As Jesus reveals in v9 ‘anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’. The way to God is ‘only Jesus’.

ACT: Thank God for Jesus and the special place he has for all the faithful ones in heaven

January 12, Thursday

READ: LUKE 1:67-80

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

**68 “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.**

**69 He has raised up a horn[a] of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David**

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

**71 salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—**

**72 to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,**

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

**74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear**

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,**

**77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,**

78 because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
79 to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived
in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

REFLECT: Verse 68 says Jesus came to redeem his people. In John 1:14 it says Jesus made a dwelling among us. The thought behind these words are someone tabernacling with us or pitching a tent in our midst.

Jesus could have passed us in a cloud and revealed himself and thrown a line to fish those he wanted. But he chose to be born on earth, amidst poverty, temptations, problems, disappointments. Jesus spent 33 years on this earth, from manger to the grave. It was not long by earthly standards, but life depends not on the hours you put in but what you put into the hours.

He revealed the character of God in the same sort of surroundings where your character and mine is developed. The only difference between us and him is that he displayed total dependence on God at all times. He lived among us and showed us how to live - by living.

ACT: Get involved in a bible study with someone to share with them about Jesus and what he has done for us.

January 13, Friday

READ: HEBREWS 4:1-16

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to

them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.
3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” 5 And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

6 Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, 7 God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the

faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

REFLECT: Jesus was tempted by the devil in Matthew 4. The first temptation was to not live *apart* from us(eat as we eat). The second was to live *above* us(throw yourself down and angels will carry you to safety). The third was to live *as* we live(worship him, adopt his ways and gain the kingdoms of the world)

Jesus rejected all the temptations and challenged it by using scriptures. A soldier during the war saw a little girl who was starving and offered her a bite of his sandwich. ‘No’, she said, ‘it might be poisoned.’ The soldier said, ‘I’ll take a bite, then you take a bite.’ She agreed. The bible says in Hebrews 2:9 that Jesus tasted death for every one of us. But it’s also true that he tasted life for every one of us.

Truly Jesus tasted life for every one of us. He asks us to do nothing that He has not done. He was tempted in every way as we are - yet without sin.

ACT: Have a time of prayer with someone where you talk about your temptations and your plans to overcome it.

January 14, Saturday

READ: HEBREWS 12:14-29

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal

sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.

18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” 27 The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our “God is a consuming fire.”

REFLECT: A good question to ask ourselves is - what are the anchors in my life ? What are some deep convictions and disci-

plines that hold me firm ? If we belong to an unshakeable kingdom then why do we get shaken so easily ? All around us we see men and women building their lives on power, pride and position but these are shakeable.

Throughout time we have seen governments and empires built on earthly ideologies and values which they thought would last for thousands of years. But where are these empires now ? Are we building our lives on the rock of Godly convictions or on the sands of worldly ideas which will crash ?

ACT: Make a list of things that we believe in and find scriptures to support them.

January 15, Sunday

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good, 22 reject every kind of evil.

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us. 26 Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

REFLECT: An area that can make us all feel guilty is when we are asked about our prayer life. We all feel bad about our inconsistencies in our quiet times. We sink lower when we hear Paul saying in verse 17 'pray continually'.

It's important that we develop our own prayer life.

Of course we can learn from others too. But the joy of connecting with our maker is and should be unique to each individual. When we were new in our faith we were taught how to pray in the ACTS format? But as we mature in our faith, we should develop our own prayer life that is personal and satisfying. The gospel of Mark records Jesus getting up early when it was still dark and going to a solitary place to pray. Luke says 'Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray'.

We sometimes read a book and get inspired by someone's prayer life. But we feel guilty because we can't match up to their standards. Remember no one can pray your prayers better than you.

ACT: Make a plan of how you want to improve your prayer life. Maybe more time, a prayer list, praise God more etc.

January 16, Monday

READ: EXODUS 33:11-23

11 The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

12 Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have

found favour with me.’ 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”

14 The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

15 Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

17 And the Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”

18 Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

19 And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

21 Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

REFLECT: Prayer is a conversation with God. Conversation is an informal exchange of ideas by spoken words. If prayer is a conversation then it involves both talking and listening. Our progress in prayer can be marked by increasing our desire to hear God than speak ourselves.

The scripture is such a beautiful picture of a divine-human conversation where we are told that God spoke to Moses

‘ as a man speaks to his friend’. When we talk to God we need to express ourselves in the same language we use when we are talking to our closest friends. Be bold, be honest and be real. Lets also remember to revere him. And God, like all good fathers ,delights in the natural and uninhibited approach of His children.

ACT: Enjoy a conversation with God today !

January 17, Tuesday

READ:

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

**“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.”**

6 And he says in another place,

**“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”**

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was

designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

REFLECT: Verse 7 talks about Jesus offering prayers and petitions. There are several reasons for why we need to present our petitions to God.

- 1) God's purposes are accomplished through our prayers
- 2) God has asked us to make requests, we obey and benefit
- 3) It keeps us dependent on God and helps us realise who's in charge

God always answers all our prayers. His answer is, 'Yes', 'No', 'Wait' or 'I'll give you something better'.

If the request isn't right He answers 'No'

If the timing isn't right His answer is 'Slow'

If you aren't ready yet His answer is 'Grow'

When everything is ready and right His answer is 'Go'

ACT: Thank God for his perfect timing

January 18, Wednesday

READ: JOHN 14:1-14

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will

come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

REFLECT: Why do we end our prayers with the words, ‘In Jesus’ name’. By praying in Jesus’ name , we mean praying in harmony with His will. Are we certain that when we ask in the saviour’s name we are in line with Jesus’s course of action. Don’t we ask for things that we are certain God may not want us to have ? At such times its wise to admit that uncertainty and say, as Jesus did: ‘ yet not my will, but yours be done’(Luke 22:42)

C.S.Lewis - Prayer is request. The essence of request, as distinct from compulsion, is that it may or may not be granted. And if an infinitely wise being listens to the requests of finite and foolish creatures, of course He will sometimes grant and sometimes refuse them.

ACT: Pray that our prayers will be in accordance to His will

January 19, Thursday

READ: HEBREWS 4:12-16

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

REFLECT: The words that God has spoken through the biblical authors are not dead. His words are alive and active and sharper than a double-edged sword. Reading the bible and prayer completes the conversation with God.

John Stott - 'If we are cut off during a telephone conversation we do not jump to the conclusion that the person on the other end has died.' We need to adopt the attitude of Samuel, who said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening' (1 Samuel 3:10)

We can either read the Bible first and then pray or pray first and then read the Word. The order is not important. What's important is to complete both speaking and listening to Him. - Sometimes we confuse reading the Bible with listening to God. We should not only read scripture but listen to it too. We should turn our eyes into ears. Jesus said in John 10:27 - ' My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me'.

ACT: Decide to read the Bible daily and consistently and practise what you read

January 20, Friday

READ: MATTHEW 19:16-30

16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." 18 "Which ones?" he inquired.

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'" 20 "All these I have kept," the young man said.

"What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at

them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”²⁷ Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

REFLECT: In the passage above we see Jesus giving three challenges to a young man who wanted eternal life: ‘Go, sell.... and give’. Today, maybe Jesus has similar challenges for us.

Go - be willing to identify the things that are preventing us from being the man/woman God wants us to be. What’s stopping you from being spiritual ? Where is God calling you and you are not heeding that call ?

Sell - get rid of whatever is preventing Jesus from being the Lord of your life. Eg throwing out books/magazines or websites or social media that is drawing you away from God. Make time to invest in His word, prayer, investing time with disciples and non-disciples.

Give - change the orientation of your life so that you no longer are at the centre. God designed us to be other-centred not self-centred. You will function best when you are more concerned about others than you are about yourself.

Sometimes we get discouraged that we can’t change the world and let go of the smaller things that are before us. ‘You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things’ (Matthew 25:21)

ACT: Go and do something that you have been wanting to do but not done. Stop doing something that you have been wanting to stop but not stopped.

January 21, Saturday

READ: JOB 1:6-22

6 One day the angels [a] came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan [b] also came with them. **7** The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.” **8** Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

9 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. **10** “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. **11** But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” **12** The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

13 One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, **14** a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, **15** and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” **16** While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept

down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”¹⁸ While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, ¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

²⁰ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ²¹ and said:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”

²² In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

REFLECT: Believing in God is not easy and maintaining that belief is sometimes hard. It’s easy to believe when life is good but what happens when tragedy strikes. We sing God is good, all the time. But can we believe it at a difficult time.

Job is a successful man with great wealth, father of a large and happy family. Then bad news hits him like a bolt of lightning. Suddenly his oxen and donkeys are gone, his sheep and camels are gone, his servants are gone, his sons and daughters are gone. And Job hearing this numbing news v²¹ says he falls to the ground to worship.

Does our worship fluctuate with the coming of good and bad news inner life ?

Job 2:9-10 - ⁹ His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!”

¹⁰ He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Can we worship God when times are challenging ? That can reflect the stability in our relationship with God

ACT: Commit your loyalty to Jesus, mane Him Lord again if he has lost ground in your life.

January 22, Sunday

READ: MATTHEW 15:29-39

29 Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. 30 Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. 31 The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

33 His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?”

34 “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.”

35 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. 36 Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. 37 They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 38 The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

REFLECT: One of the characteristics of those who possess deep spiritual strength is a thankful heart. Before Jesus took the loaves and fish and handed them to the disciples He gave thanks. Jesus made it a practice to thank God for His goodness in all things.

What's the first thing we do when we get up ? Do we check the phone for WhatsApp messages, reach for the newspaper which is anyway flooded with bad news ? We all seem to gravitate towards bad news.

Read Psalms and pray through it and you will have so much good news to praise God for.

ACT: Praise God for the good things he has blessed you with: good health, family, our salvation, the church etc

January 23, Monday

READ: 2 SAMUEL 23:8-17

8 These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. 9 Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, 10 but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. 11 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. 12 But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the Lord brought about a great victory.

13 During harvest time, three of the thirty chief warriors came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. **14** At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. **15** David longed for water and said, “Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!” **16** So the three mighty warriors broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the Lord. **17** “Far be it from me, Lord, to do this!” he said. “Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?” And David would not drink it.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty warriors.

REFLECT: Today’s passage records an incident that took place when David was repelling an attack by his old enemies the Philistines. David looks across the valley towards Bethlehem, the town where he grew up. He was thirsty and thought of the well at which he had often drunk. Verse 15 he loudly expressed his desire to drink from the well.

Without much thought three mighty men risked their lives drew water from the well and returned safely to David’s side. Stunned and amazed by their devotion, David accepts their costly gift and then pours it out on the ground in thanksgiving to God. I wonder how the three men must have reacted to this ! I think David’s action was not due to a lack of appreciation but of a deep desire to give something that was so precious to him back to God.

ACT: Give up something that you really likes an act of devotion to God.

January 24, Tuesday

READ:MARK 12:28-34

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” 29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

32 “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

REFLECT: Today we will focus on being strong inside by being generous and loving. There are close to 200 references in the old testament that talks about having a concern for your neighbour but it was Jesus who put the emphasis on loving your neighbour ‘as yourself’. Paul emphasises in Phil 2:4 that we should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. It’s almost like keeping an eye on the interests of others as well as your own.

Generally people interpret this as concentrate on loving yourself and then you will be able to love others better. But what Jesus is saying is that our concern for our own welfare is natural and should be matched by our concern for others. Whatever we want for ourselves, we should want it for others. Self-interest and other-interest are to be balanced.

ACT: Do for someone today that you would have done for self.

January 25, Wednesday

READ: MATTHEW 6:19-24

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

REFLECT: Let us focus on verse 22 which talks about the eye being good or healthy then your whole body is full of light. The original text means if the eye is generous then the whole body will be lit up. The eye is our outlook in life, our whole way of looking at things. So, when our eye is generous then our whole personality is illuminated (lit up).

Jesus is our example in everything. He was generous with his time and efforts towards everyone and because of that His whole personality was full of light.

In John 6 there’s a little boy who’s eye was generous enough to share his tiffin box containing bread and fish and 5000 people benefitted. The boy could have kept his food hidden but his generosity led to the crowds witnessing one of the most sensational miracles that Jesus initiated.

ACT: Be generous with someone today and feel the light of Jesus invading you.

January 26, Thursday

READ: JOHN 5:1-19

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralysed. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ”

12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defence Jesus

said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” 18 For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

REFLECT: We live strained spiritual lives because we don’t understand God’s ways. Jesus is the perfect example of someone who had the knowledge and understanding of the Father’s ways. Jesus was never in a hurry and adequate in every situation that confronted him.

In today’s passage Jesus walks past the crowd of desperate people sitting by the pool of Bethesda and said to just one person: ‘Do you want to get well?’ Why didn’t he ask that question to all? Weren’t they all in need? Why focus on one? The answer is found in verse 17 & 19: My Father is always at his work... and I too am working.....the son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing....’

Jesus got his guidance not from what happened around Him, but what went on above Him. Jesus always looked up to heaven to see what God’s plan was to not heal all but one. Do we enquire of God before doing anything?

ACT: Share your faith with at least 5 people today to let them know they need spiritual healing.

January 27, Friday

READ: ISAIAH 55:1-13

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

3 Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendour.” 6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord’s renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever.”

REFLECT: God’s ways are so different from man’s that they sometimes appear to be completely opposite. We have a certain approach to life - but God has another. We may think leadership

is getting others to serve us. However, Jesus says ‘Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant’ (Matthew 20:26). The great are not those who have the greatest number of servants, but those who serve the greatest number. We may think to surrender our life to God is to lose it but Matthew 16:25 says you surrender to God and you find it. We hear the keys to good health are food, sleep, exercise. God says in 1 Timothy 4:8’ godliness has value for all things....’ Now a good diet, rest and exercise are important but not nearly as important as a godly lifestyle.

We hear a healthy diet is important. Media says ‘ you are what you eat’ It is not so much important what you eat but what is eating you that is important.

ACT: Do something opposite of what you would normally do to be in line with God’s ways

January 28, Saturday

READ: MARK 12:35-44

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: “The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”” 37 David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” The large crowd listened to him with delight.

38 As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. 40 They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.

44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

REFLECT: As disciples of Jesus we have to go through spiritual training. One of them is financial discipline. Verse 41 says Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put into the temple treasury and I believe he still watches today.

I believe giving is a heart issue not a money issue. Our purse strings and heart strings are connected. How are we faring in the money test ? Is it in proportion to our income ? When our salary increases does our giving increase ? Are we living within our means ? 10% to God, 10% to savings and live of the rest. Do we have a budget ? What changes do we need to make in our giving to pass the money test ? Remember Jesus is watching !!!

ACT: Modify our giving that will make Jesus smile !

January 29, Sunday

READ: COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

REFLECT: Another aspect of spiritual discipline is the time management. Jesus watches not only what we put in the treasury but also how we use our time. In the words of John Wesley, the master user of time: 'Never be unemployed and never be triflingly (unimportantly, trivially) employed.'

In photography, the quality of picture depends, not only on what you put into it, but what you leave out. Similarly, our capacity to 'No' determines our capacity to say 'Yes'. We have to say 'No' to lesser things in order to say 'Yes' to greater things. Can we pass the 'time' test? Can we give 10% of our time back to Jesus daily? He has give us 24 hours, can we give back 2.4 hours to him (prayer, bible study, time spent with disciples and non-disciples)

ACT: Make a list of things that you will start doing and by doing so we are not going to have the time to do certain things.

January 30, Monday

READ: JAMES 1:12-18

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

REFLECT: People often ask the question: why does God allow temptation? The original Greek word for temptation means to test, to try and to prove. Biblically speaking it means to put a person to test for the purpose of deepening his or her qualities of character. Oswald Chambers said, 'God can, in one single moment, make a heart pure, but not even God can in a single moment give a person character'.

Character would not be precious if it could be acquired without a struggle. D.L. Moody says 'Character is what we are the dark'. Reputation is what others think of us - character is what we are on the inside. Let us face our temptations head on and we grow. And as we grow we develop character.

ACT: Share your struggles and temptations with someone.

January 31, Tuesday

READ: MATTHEW 11:1-19

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see

A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

**“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’**

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, let them hear.

16 “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

17 “‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

REFLECT: Doubts are necessarily a bad thing. We can use it to ask questions that in turn will enable us to take firmer grip on Jesus. The disciples asked in our passage today - ‘are you the one who has to come, or should we expect someone else?’ Jesus didn’t reject Thomas because of his doubting attitude but invited him to put his finger in his hands and sides and challenged his doubts by saying stop doubting and believe (John 20:27).

John the baptist said ,’ look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world !’(John 1:29). But later entertained some doubts Jesus. How did Jesus respond to his

doubts? Jesus responded with love and sensitivity: ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk....’(Matthew 11:4-5). Those who doubt and use their doubts to ask deep questions of God and scripture, will find their faith getting stronger than ever before.

ACT: Re-dedicate yourself to Jesus today, renew your love for Him and make Him the Lord of your life again. Make plans to deepen your relation with Him.