

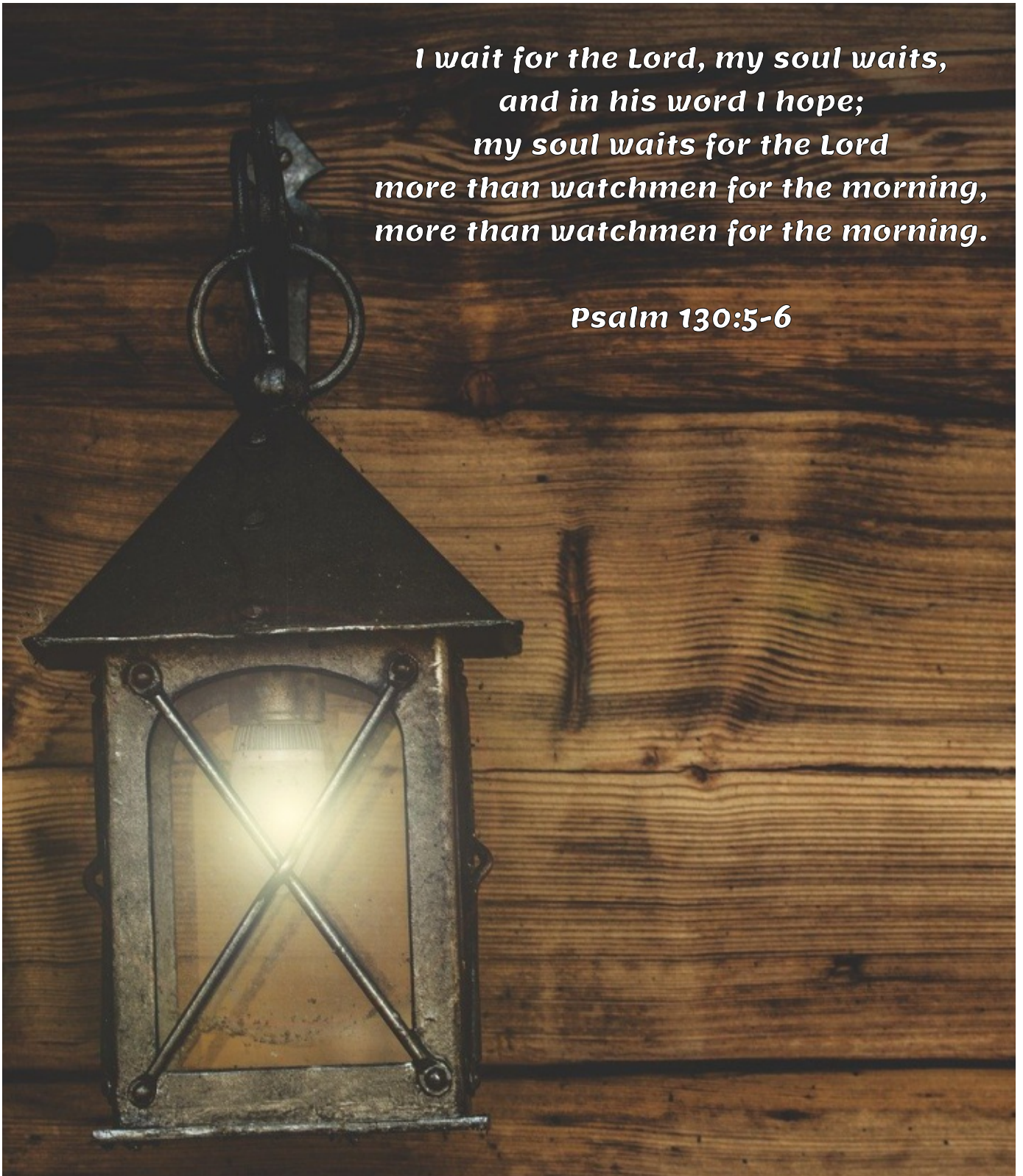
LIFE@central

July 2021

Central Baptist Church, Pretoria

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.*

Psalm 130:5-6





PASTOR'S CORNER

by Charles de Kiewit (Senior Pastor)

Unchanging truth

Dear Friends

I envisaged the advent of Covid to be a 3 or 4 week interruption of normal ministry and everyday life. Like many other people I was wrong. More than 14 months have now passed and the end is not yet in sight.

In some measure technology has been a useful tool that we have been able to use to continue some crucial aspects of ministry. We have worked hard at staying in touch with you as members and adherents of the church. We have also sought to continue the ministry of the Word in live streamed and recorded messages on YouTube and Facebook.

These efforts have been helpful but have not replaced the organic functioning of the church in personally gathering together. This may have resulted in spiritual struggles and discouragement for many of us in the congregation.

Let us not lose hope in this uncertain season of our personal lives and in our lives together at the Central Baptist Church.

It will be helpful as we go forward in our current context to lean on and remind each other of the unchanging truth God has revealed to us in Scripture. Much can be said but for your consideration as we navigate this challenging season two passages of Scripture.

The one speaks of God's keeping power of His sheep.

John 10:28-30: *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*

It is of great encouragement to know that there is no possibility that Covid or any other challenge will result in you as a believer being snatched from the safety of God's hand. Believer – you can be sure that God will keep you safe through this storm.

Where John focuses on the sovereignty of God in keeping His sheep, Paul places an emphasis on your day to day responsibility.

2 Timothy 2:12: *if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;*

While we rest in the wonderful grace of the sovereign hand of God we must not become lethargic or presumptive. Be responsible in your walk of faith not neglecting the spiritual disciplines of the Word, prayer and fellowship. As Paul reminds the **Colossians in chapter 2:6:** *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,*

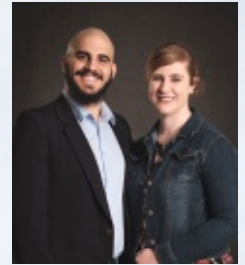
Nothing is wasted in God's economy and we can be sure that even this season will be used in bringing about His redemptive purposes.

May God richly bless and keep you,

Charles

The **God** designed family

— by Issac Pinto (Assistant Pastor) —



Since the birth of my son, Levi, last year, the family topic has unavoidably been on my mind. Wanting to be a good father, according to the Scriptures, has made me do more reading and re-evaluating on how to be a good Father and husband according to Biblical standards.

I have found that the influence of culture around us has hugely influenced the way people think of families. Today, movies and series portray homosexual relationships as completely normal and the Biblical picture of marriage between a man and a woman is seen more and more as archaic and undesirable, almost 'outdated'. Not only that but the moment we speak of different gender roles in the home, we may appear regressive and chauvinistic.

So what is God's design for the family? What should a family look like and how should it operate? Ephesians 5 is one of the clearest passages, showing us the design and mode of operation of the family. We see from Eph 5:22 to Eph 6:4, and this portion of Scripture could be summarized as follows:

- Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.
- Wives submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ who is the Head.
- Children obey your parents, that you may live for long.
- Father's do not provoke your children but instead disciple them.

Though I cannot cover all the richness that this portion of Scripture has to offer, I do want to point out a few things regarding the design of the family and how it should operate.

Firstly, marriage is the foundation of the family. Contrary to modern belief, children don't come

first, the spouse does. Husbands and wives fulfilling their biblical role is the start of the family.

Secondly, we see that Husbands and wives have different God given roles. Husbands ought to love and lead their wives. The standard is very high, they ought to lead and love their wives as Christ leads and loves the church. Now as a husband I know this is not always easy. Loving my wife as Christ loves the church is not easy, as both my wife and the church are not perfect and have their flaws. But that is what God has called husbands to do, and in doing so both them and their wives are being sanctified. In the same way wives ought to submit and respect their husbands as the church submits to Christ. Now, I know that is not easy either for the wives. I know this is not easy for my wife, especially because I am far from perfect. However, that is the God-given role for wives.

Thirdly, children ought to obey their parents, who God has given authority over them. God gives this commandment with the promise that those who obey their parents will live long and it will go well with them.

Lastly, Fathers ought not to provoke their children and be unnecessarily harsh with them. Instead, they ought to train them up in the ways of the Lord. It is the primary responsibility of fathers to disciple their children, not the church, school, or the government. Parents are responsible for the spiritual growth of their children.

The roles given to us by God are not always easy to fulfill, however if we do fulfill them as God intends it, our families will flourish. May God strengthen our families at Central.

Isaac

Devotions or quiet time and a recommended book

by Esther du Preez

How do you read the Bible when you have a quiet time? Some may prefer to read the Bible using a devotional book, for example, *Our Daily Bread*, others may read a few verses and ask themselves questions for application and respond in prayer to God. For example, the **SPACEPETS** method which is briefly, where you ask yourself questions on the Bible passage, starting with, is there **Sin** to forsake, **Promise** to claim, **Attitude** to change, **Command** to obey, **Example** to follow, **Prayer** to pray for, **Error** to avoid, **Truth** to believe, or **Something** to praise God for. Over time one may find some devotional books unsatisfactory or want to have input from another to help one dig a bit deeper in the Word.

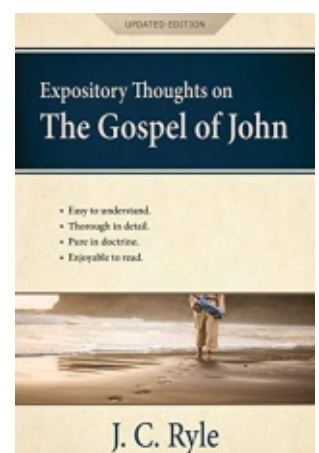
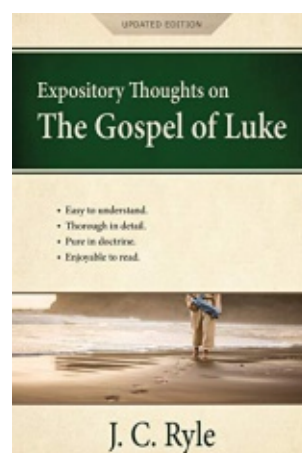
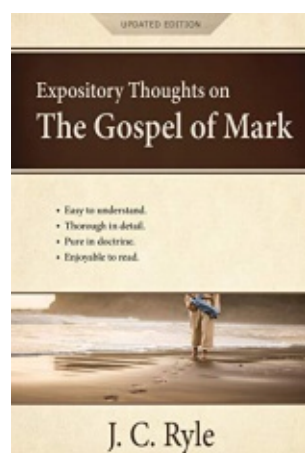
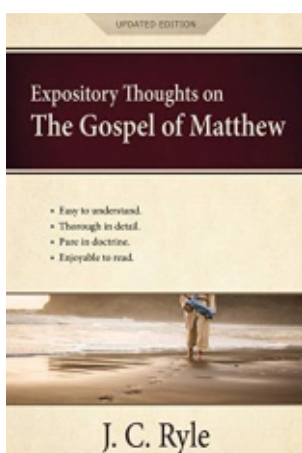
If you are at a stage where you would like to read the input of a writer, I would recommend this series: *Expository thoughts on the gospels* by J. C. Ryle. It consists of one book each on the books Matthew and Mark, two volumes on Luke and three volumes on John. I have worked through the book on Matthew and am part way through the one on Mark. I appreciate what I've read so far as I found the books to be encouraging, challenged my heart and meaty - substantial in helping one work through a Bible passage in depth. Although comment is given, only the very essential is given in terms of keeping to the gospel rather than

focusing on secondary issues. To quote J.C. Ryle in the preface, "... my chief desire in this and all my writings, is to lead my readers to Christ and faith in him, to repentance and holiness, to the Bible and to prayer."

I was introduced to this series through a book called *You must read: Books that have shaped our lives*. This book mentioned two of the three intended audiences of the series - to be used in family devotions, to be read during visiting the sick and poor and "for private reading as a companion to the gospels". The latter purpose is what interested me and I have not been disappointed.

Where you can get this series: They can be obtained electronically from the Kindle app, for free. The titles on Kindle are, *Expository thoughts on the gospel of Matthew*, *Expository thoughts on the gospel of Mark*, *Expository thoughts on the gospel of Luke* and *Expository thoughts on the gospel of John*. The individual books are available in hard copy, at R88 or R170 depending on the edition, from the Augustine Bookroom, or as a seven book set (*Expository series 7 vol set*) for R1170.

I trust that this series will be a blessing to fellow brothers and sisters at Central Baptist.



More about Jesus

More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show;
More of His saving fulness see,
More of His love who died for me.

More, more about Jesus,
More, more about Jesus;
More of His saving fulness see,
More of His love who died for me.

More about Jesus let me learn,
More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God my teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me.

More about Jesus; in His Word,
Holding communion with my Lord;
Hearing His voice in every line,
Making each faithful saying mine.

More about Jesus; on His throne,
Riches in glory all His own;
More of His kingdom's sure increase;
More of His coming, Prince of Peace.

Lyrics by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt (1851-1920)
Music by John Robson Sweney (1837-1899)

Women's Value

Written by Carol de Kiewit, compiled by Marlize de Kiewit



Dear Friends,

It has been over a year since the global pandemic of COVID-19 began. Sadly, it has affected many people's lives and we continue to pray for God's hand of mercy on our church's families.

Sadly, due to COVID-19, the ladies of King's Rubies were unable to physically meet together last year. We are thankful for technology that enabled our King's Rubies ladies to fellowship together and connect as daughters of Christ while we were unable to meet in person. In April, we had our first physical meeting and we pray that we would be able to continue meeting this way.

We have such a wonderful agenda planned for King's Rubies for 2021. This year at King's Rubies we will be considering themes that tap into our five senses. God has blessed us with five senses to enjoy the world around us that He created. We are going to learn to value God and worship Him through our five senses. Our first meeting involved the sense of **sight** – *Psalm 119:18 "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things of your law"*.

Our second meeting focused on **touch** – *Psalm 24:3-4 "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart..."*.

Our upcoming programme will be involving our sense of **smell** where we will be exploring the sweet fragrance of God's love for us. I urge you to join our upcoming King's Rubies meetings where we will learn about our wonderful Saviour and His precious love for us.

My beautiful daughter, Jamie, wrote a song about trusting in God when things are hard. Our family is going through a season of waiting on the Lord and trusting in His sovereign grace. This song

speaks about Jamie's experience of trusting the Lord through this journey. I pray that this song touches each of you and encourages you to stand before Jehovah just as you are. He is our Saviour and our Provider in times of need.

*"I'm standing here, Jehovah
Confused and so unsure
I can't seem to find the answers
Of life and all its wars
But I will keep on trusting
I will keep on hoping
I will keep on searching for you
I'm standing here, Lord Jesus
Broken and distraught
But then I am reminded
Of your work on the cross
I know your ways are not my ways
I know your thoughts are not my thoughts
I know your plans are not my plans
So I will trust you, Lord
I'm standing here, my Saviour
In awe and wonder, Lord
Your providence surrounds me
And I can trust your words."*



*17 April – The Lord's Touch, Psalm 24:3-4
The ladies of Central enjoying their first in-person gathering with each other at The Hill.*



We are thankful to our Father to be able to receive biblical teaching at our King's Rubies meetings. Speaker: Ros Robinson



We are richly blessed with servant-hearted women who put so much effort into catering and decorating the venue for our ladies meetings.



MAKING MASKS

A LOCKDOWN TESTIMONY

The Covid 19 virus hit the world in ways we could not have imagined before. The whole world was affected with lockdown, and especially so the elderly and those who are considered vulnerable. As other countries made it mandatory to wear masks soon after the start of the pandemic, it seemed that South Africa would soon follow suit.

Ruth Hendey, a very industrious sewer and knitter and resident at Haven Village, had what she believes to be a “God-given vision” to sew cloth masks and sell them, with the proceeds to be given to the Hidden Treasure charity shop, as they too had to close their business and would not be making any money.

With the help of YouTube she researched the best pattern, had some material in her cupboard, bought some elastic and began. So, with 15m of elastic she started sewing on the 21st of March 2020, wondering how many masks would be made, where they would be distributed and just how much money would be collected for Hidden Treasure.



Soon after sewing commenced came South Africa's lockdown and with that the shutdown of the shops. It soon became apparent that many masks would be needed, and that help was needed to get them sewn. Diana Coleman

and Lana Pelser (residents of Haven Village) were

(willingly) soon roped in. By the grace of God, and in ways we did not anticipate, donations of polycotton fabric and a big roll of elastic were given for the project. It started small, with masks being required by the 7 or 8 staff members at Haven Village and a few extra made for the more vulnerable residents. Other residents then saw



the masks and also ordered for themselves. They showed their children, who ordered for themselves and then came back for more for their friends, and so the orders started pouring in. Other helpers were roped in - Lammie and Heather Fourie (also residents at Haven Village) worked “from home”, cutting elastic, cutting the garden twist

wire and threading it through the masks, and then counting the money as it was received. The masks sold for R20 each.

When it became compulsory for all to wear masks, some fabric shops were considered “essential services” and opened for the necessary fabric and elastic. We eventually needed more elastic and this became one of our biggest problems to obtain as there was a high demand for it and it quickly sold out. Once we had to stand in an hour-long queue to buy elastic – first 100m, and then later buying 150m at a time!

We seemed to have a lot of competition – anyone with a sewing machine was making masks! That however did not put us off. We had a working “production line” going - cutting, sewing, folding,

ironing, threading elastic, etc. Donations of material kept coming in – anything from small pieces of offcuts, to unused duvet covers and pillowslips, to bed sheets, to frills from curtains, to long lengths of beautiful cotton dress material not wanted anymore. We were amazed at how the Lord had opened the hearts of people to give to His project. We have said all along that “as long as we have the fabric and the elastic, we will continue making masks”.

And we had our clients, which among others were:

- Glenhaven staff (at reduced prices)
- Glenhaven residents, family and friends
- Haven Village residents, family and friends
- A local hospital (free to some healthcare workers)
- Bethesda for workers and children (at reduced prices)
- A local petrol service station – they bought several hundred to resell in their shop
- Hidden Treasure – 80 to sell in their shop
- People from church, workers at Hidden Treasure and some strangers also supported us, as word of mouth worked its magic.



When we passed the 1000th mark on the 8th of May 2020, we celebrated with a prayer, thanking the Lord that we could give Hidden Treasure enough money to cover their rent and for all the donations and for helping us make these masks.

Diane Coleman, Lana Pelser and Ruth Hendey.

Soli Deo Gloria

A Teacher's Blessing

You started on this journey, so many years ago,
and now it's time to leave behind dear friends you've come to know.
It seems to me that this is more than just a job to you,
the passion and the love you have for teaching shines right through.
You taught that there is more to life than being at the top,
it's in how you choose to get there, that the blessing never stops.
You encouraged them to do their best and never mind their peers,
to choose the straight and narrow, and to overcome their fears.
I have often thought how powerful your influence must be,
you turned each student's world of dreams into possibilities!
Now I pray God keeps you safe and well, wherever you may turn,
surrounded by your loved ones, living out the dreams you have earned.
So never waste time wishing that you could have done much more ...
time to watch those seeds you planted grow and trust God for what's in store.

***This poem was presented to Linda Eagle at her farewell on 30 April 2021
after retiring from a career of teaching.***



Considering the many changes over the last 12 -14 months, the unchanging nature of God's love is an anchor in difficult times and one that we have clung to at Bethesda. Having endured many varying degrees of the pandemic lockdowns, several staff losses, and many other difficulties, we look back and praise God that His love carried us through.

In the midst of these hard times, God has opened the floodgates of heaven and abundantly blessed Bethesda through your generosity, allowing us to raise the funds we need to construct 5 more classrooms this year. His



We have already finished our first term break and are well into Term 2. We all say it, but time really does fly sometimes!

On a sad note, one of our Grade 3 students passed away a few weeks ago from heart surgery complications. This has been a challenging time for his family, teachers and classmates. We would ask you to pray for everyone as they deal with this difficult event in their lives.

A few weeks ago our JCA kids had a Soapbox Derby and had an amazing day! JCA has tried to have this derby for over a year and what a fun day it was!

blessing certainly rested on our Christmas project as we not only reached our goal of \$200K, but we exceeded it! Praise God for His faithfulness!

We continue to praise God for the way in which He directs the paths of so many to bless us in unexpected ways. As we're reminded in Psalm 24:1 – *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein"*

Thank you for taking the time to read through our update this month and for praying for the children and staff of Bethesda Outreach.

-Rudi



The BETHESDA FAMILIES

Being a houseparent is more than a job - it's a calling. It is a ministry that is often motivated by love and care for children in need but it can also be very challenging.

Loving and caring for children who may not always return or appreciate that love, care and discipline can be discouraging. Thankfully, we have a loving heavenly Father who helps and encourages!

Recently some of our older boys along with housedad, Jack Msiza, and Training Facilitator, Pastor Christian Rustoff all went on a hike in the Drakensburg Mountains - it was a great time of spiritual and physical challenges. God used their time together and in the mountains to draw them closer to Him.

God always gives strength and wisdom for each day and we praise Him for that! I would encourage you to pray for our houseparents regularly as they are on the front lines of loving, teaching, feeding, caring, and helping their children to love and follow Christ.

CLASSROOM PROJECT HAS BEGUN!

We have hired an excellent contractor and they have moved their equipment on to the property. In the last few weeks, they have cleared the brush leaving as many trees as possible, dug out the area where the large classroom building will be, compacted the ground and now dug out the foundation outlines of the building and rooms.

They have also started to dig the sewer lines and the stormwater drainage areas. We have some deep trenches around our property along with many piles of dirt. We are still getting some of the background reports and plans finished but we are excited to see the start of this project! As with any project, pray for the safety of the workers and for the security of all the equipment while it is being used over the next few months.



Dear Parents with Young Children in Church

— by Sharon Harding —



*Today I want to express my gratitude to *that Mom* for giving me permission to reprint her blog post “Dear Parents With Young Children in Church.” *That Mom* is a stay at home mama to two little boys and a pastor’s wife. Her blog is well worth exploring.*

This particular post really touched my heart. I would encourage you to read it carefully and prayerfully consider the questions afterwards.

Dear Parents with Young Children in Church,

You are doing something really, really important. I know it’s not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring.

I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

And I see you with your toddler and your preschooler. I watch you cringe when your little girl asks an innocent question in a voice that might not be an inside voice let alone a church whisper. I hear the exasperation in your voice as you beg your child to just sit, to be quiet as you feel everyone’s eyes on you. Not everyone is looking, but I know it feels that way.



I know you’re wondering, is this worth it? Why do I bother? I know you often leave church more exhausted than fulfilled. But what you are doing is so important.

When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn’t about Bible Study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome, where we share in the Word and Sacrament together. When you are here, I have hope that these pews won’t be empty in ten years when your kids are old enough to sit quietly and behave in worship. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it’s too late. They are learning that worship is important.

I see them learning. In the midst of the cries, whines, and giggles, in the midst of the crinkling of pretzel bags and the growing pile of crumbs I see a little girl who insists on going two pews up to share peace with someone she’s never met. I hear a little boy slurping (quite loudly) every last drop of his communion wine out of the cup determined not to miss a drop of Jesus. I watch a child excitedly color a cross and point to the one in the front of the sanctuary. I hear the echos of Amens just a few seconds after the rest of the community

says it together. I watch a boy just learning to read try to sound out the words in the worship book or count his way to Hymn 672. Even on weeks when I can't see my own children learning because, well, it's one of those mornings, I can see your children learning.



I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know, it matters. It matters to me. It matters to my children to not be alone in the pew. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people...

and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children.

It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that their worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are enough right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their badly (or perfectly timed depending on who you ask) cries and whines are a joyful noise because it means they are present.

I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family – with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy – are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of the community gathered in worship.

Questions

- 1. How often do you express your appreciation to parents who struggle to church with their young children?***
- 2. Do you make a point of telling these parents that they and their children fill the church with joyful noise?***
- 3. Do you tell the parents what you see the children learning week by week?***
- 4. What actions could you take to demonstrate to these families that they are vital members of the community?***



About Sharon Harding

I was born in England and immigrated to Canada almost 30 years ago. A graduate of Gloucestershire University (B.Ed.), I have been involved in children's ministry since I was 16. Over the past 12 years I have written for a variety of Christian Education curriculum resources. I also write a blog at rediscoveredfamilies.com encouraging parents to build strong connections with their children. When I am not working I enjoy painting, reading, and pottering around the Internet.

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<http://thecommunity.anglican.ca/children/7424/guest-post-dear-parents-with-young-children-in-church/>

The Two Great "IF's" in the Bible

by
Alan
Sylvester

Background:

King Solomon had completed the building of the Temple, and in his dedicatory prayer recorded in **2 Chronicles 6** he lists all the things that would anger God causing God to remove His blessings from the people of Israel.

Now for the nation of Israel, being an agricultural people, good seasons and good crops were a blessing from God. If the Israelites departed from worshipping Jehovah and worshipped idols, God would punish them by way of blight, mildew, drought, locusts, and pestilence. **The land would become unproductive.**



Following the dedication ceremony, God appears to Solomon a second time, and says "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, **if My people** who are called by My Name **will** humble themselves, and **pray** and **seek my face** and **turn from their wicked ways**, **then** I will hear

from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" – that is, I will bless them.

Please note the order in which the conditions are set out for the "healing of their land" - for God's blessings upon the people.

IF His people, who are called by His Name will:

1. Humble themselves: Pride was the downfall of Satan, of Adam and Eve, and of every human being ever since! We so easily slip into the trap of pride – pride in our family, our achievements, our possessions, etc. It takes some re-evaluation of one's priorities and lifestyle to humble oneself – and it costs!

2. Pray: One cannot pray if one is proud, arrogant, self-confident and self-sufficient - thus humility comes first, THEN in all humility, pray, repent, confess, seek God's gracious forgiveness and cleansing from sin.

3. And seek My face: We can only SEEK God's face when we are humble and have come acknowledging our desperate lost estate; when in all humility, repenting and confessing our need, and in faith placing our trust in God's provision through Jesus, then

when we in all seriousness seek God's face, as we look at Him and begin to understand that He is **Holy** and will not overlook our sin, it is then that we **begin** to discover just how sinful, proud and needy we really are!

4. And turn from their wicked ways: As God reveals to us our true state, our prayers will be meaningless unless in genuine repentance we TURN – change direction, change our behaviour and lifestyle, etc. To seek God's face implies not only humility, prayer, and turning from our wicked ways, but also **willingly obeying** His commandments, having learned to love, worship and honour Him.

So God told King Solomon that **IF** the Israelites did these things, He would heal their land – that is, He would bless them.



Now we turn to the New Testament, and the scene changes:

Under the new covenant God's people in the New Testament era are the Christians – not just those who go under the generic name of "Christian", but the true disciples of Jesus - **these** are the ones who are "called by His Name."

God says "They are "My people" – not the worldly, compromising members of a church, not the "religious", not the "good living" self-righteous people. It is those who, through repentance, confession and faith in the salvation and new birth provided by Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross, and who follow Him, those who have been born again - they are "His people", and to receive His blessings, the requirements are still the same!

During His last hours with His disciples Jesus was giving them His final instructions and words of encouragement. We find these in John's Gospel chapters 14 – 17.

In John 14:15-17 we read: "If you **love** Me, you **will** keep My commandments. (Again it takes a deliberate decision of the will.) And I **will** ask the Father, and He **will** give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and **will** be in you.

So what does it mean to LOVE Jesus?

Here we find that if we **will** – that is, if we determine and undertake to obey His commandments, then Jesus promises two things that God **will** do: He **will** give us another Comforter (the Holy Spirit) who **will** be in us! The directions so far are clear, even if they make us uncomfortable, **but what ARE His commandments?**



Another change of scene:

A lawyer asked Jesus the very same

question. Now Jesus used the "story-telling" method to convey the truths that He wanted to print indelibly on the people's minds and memories, but often, because Jesus was speaking to people of that time and culture, He did not need to go to great lengths explaining the situation in great detail, so we need to look very closely and analyse it carefully in order to appreciate the full impact of what Jesus said.



In Luke 10:25 – 37 we read the following: And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

We note that this was no uneducated fisherman, but a lawyer – well-educated and trained to look into the finer details of a case.

Jesus said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" – or "How do you interpret it?" or "How do you understand what it says?"

And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself." The lawyer quotes the exact words from the Old Testament - **see Deut 6 vs 5 (love God) and Levit 19 vs 18 (love your neighbour as yourself).**

It is interesting that the lawyer did not quote all the law of Moses or the Ten Commandments. Instead he goes right to the very core of what the Scriptures teach, for if we obey this we will not want to engage in all the sins listed in Exodus 20!

Up to this point the lawyer felt that he was on safe ground. To put it into today's context, he was doubtless a good-living man, well qualified, religious, went to synagogue (or church) regularly, gave tithes, made donations to charities to help the poor, etc. But here was the shocker: Jesus said that there were two laws – and the first one was major, but apparently to the lawyer's mind, was not a problem, for he was self-righteous and confident that he was okay in his relationship with God, keeping all the rules as best he could!

And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus had just said that he must love his neighbour as himself. What do you mean, Lord? Love my neighbour as **myself?**

Actually, the lawyer had two problems here - WHO must he regard as his neighbour? But even more problematic was the question of this injunction to love his neighbour **as himself!**

How does one 'love oneself'? Well, if we are honest, we love ourselves by always placing our own interests FIRST. We do all we can to pamper and protect ourselves and our interests - our

family, our money and investments, our house, our car – all the idols in our lives that we “worship” because they pander to our comfort, pleasure and security.

Ouch! That is a tough one. Even **sharing** is difficult, but treating the other party the way you treat yourself, by placing **their** interests above as your own? (But isn’t that exactly what Jesus did for us?)

So Jesus tells a story to illustrate the point. Knowing that this lawyer would be well aware of the social, religious, economic and political situation of the times, Jesus gave a very brief outline, but perhaps we need to be more aware of all that was involved here. Let us try to understand all the details that Jesus did **not** include.

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" - he was travelling a notoriously dangerous road, where you were at great risk of being attacked and robbed – “and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.” This poor man had been high-jacked, robbed, beaten up and left for dead. The lawyer must surely be wondering what on earth that has got to do with gaining eternal life!

Jesus continued: “Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.” Although Jesus did not specify that the man lying there was a Jew (an Israelite) it is implied. But the Priest, a fellow Jew, was a man called to serve his people, to care for their spiritual needs. He was already frightened by the dangers lurking along that

road, and unwilling to stop and help. Besides, he would get his hands dirty for by going to help the man he would be contaminated by touching blood and be “unclean”. What a bother to go through the rituals required for cleansing (or sanctification) before he could once again perform his religious duties! And what about his position in the community? His pride would not let him stoop to help! The cost would be too great. So instead he passed by on the other side.

Likewise a Levite, one of the tribe of Levi, one of those set apart to serve in the temple. He would be well-versed in the Scriptures and know that they require that we show mercy, but he also ignored the challenge, and passed by on the other side. It would be too much trouble and take up too much of his time. So he too, was unprepared to put himself out to help this poor man.



But a Samaritan stopped! A member of the group that were doctrinally in conflict with the Israelites over the correct place for worship – Jerusalem or Samaria. Therefore the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans. for they regarded them as heretics. (This was just like a church divided over non-essentials!)

And as he journeyed, he came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine - the alcohol as an antiseptic, and the oil to soothe. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Think of it – a Samaritan helping a Jew – ignoring the social and religious implications, for here was a man, made in God’s image, needing help.

Stopping to help would cost him time, and money (he used valuable olive oil and wine, and probably ripped up some of his spare clothing to use as bandages. It took effort, and using his own transport, he took him to the nearest inn, hired accommodation, made the man comfortable, ensuring that he had done all he could for the injured man. The Samaritan had not planned to stay there overnight, but he had lost much time, and besides, he wanted to be sure that the injured man was cared for, and so, not satisfied that all would be well, he stayed overnight, taking care of the man, perhaps wiping his face with a cool damp cloth, covering him to keep him warm, giving him water when he was thirsty, etc.

The next day he took out two denarii and he gave them to the innkeeper. In other words he paid for a two day stay, and as if that was not enough, and knowing that the man, having been robbed, would have no money to pay for himself to stay longer, he said to the inn keeper: “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.”

He went the extra mile, he was willing to make even more

sacrifices in terms of both money and time, to ensure that the man was well cared for and would have every chance of recovery from his ordeal. He did not give first priority to himself and his own interests, but to the needs of the injured man! **He denied himself** in order to benefit the needy man.

Jesus then asked the lawyer: "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?"

The lawyer said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

So what was Jesus saying here?

Well, if we really love God like that we will want to please Him and obey Him. One way to demonstrate our love for God is to love our neighbour as ourselves. We would hardly be likely to deliberately hurt ourselves, steal from ourselves, deny ourselves whatever comforts and pleasures we can afford. We do all we can to take very good care of ourselves, don't we?

When we love ourselves, we put ourselves FIRST, but Jesus is saying here that after giving **Him** first place in our affections, - in our lives - **our needy neighbour** must be our next priority.

We may say "But my neighbour has everything, and is in need of nothing!" But is your neighbour suffering from depression? Mourning a lost loved one? Battling with terminal cancer? Does he or she know the Lord Jesus as his/her Saviour and Lord of their life? Is he or she ignorantly heading for eternity in hell?

We all have neighbours all around us, not necessarily living in the house next door – people in need of salvation, of prayer, counselling, food, clothing, understanding, needing help of every kind and what about our domestic servant, gardener, the cashier at the supermarket. Are these not all our neighbours needing our love?

The man that the good Samaritan helped was a stranger, a Jew, a member of a group of people who had nothing in common with the Samaritans except that they despised each other, but the good Samaritan cut across all the cultural, social, doctrinal and political barriers and helped the man in need, even going the extra mile by generously providing for him to be cared for by the innkeeper for the next few days, until he was well enough to continue his journey.

So to put it into today's context, Loving our God and Saviour Jesus must be **more** than going to church on Sundays, teaching a Sunday School class or leading a Bible Study group.

Many Christians have never experienced the joy of having a close and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus, walking in daily communion and fellowship with Him through the ministry of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them - because they do not **really** love Jesus and are unwilling to **deny** themselves, and take up whatever cross the Lord may assign them, and follow Him.

I repeat here again the two great **"IF's"** of the Bible:

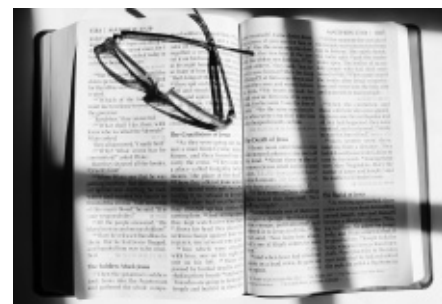
2 Chronicles 7: 14: If My people who are called by My Name (*by a deliberate decision of the will*) **will** humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I **will** hear from heaven and **will** forgive their sin and heal their land – I will bless them.

John 14: 15-17: "If you love Me, you **will** keep My commandments. (*Again it takes a deliberate decision of the will which is then followed by the promise.*) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

How are we individually answering to these two great IF's?

Does He live in you – in me? Do we **know** Him and do we **deny ourselves**? I have to ask myself "Do I?" **Denying ourselves means making major sacrifices of time, money and many other things that we might otherwise have enjoyed!**

Matthew 16:24 records Jesus saying "If anyone would come after Me, he must **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and follow Me" and in Luke 14:27: "Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me **cannot** be My disciple."



HAPPENINGS @ CENTRAL



2020 CAROL SERVICES





LENAH'S FAREWELL



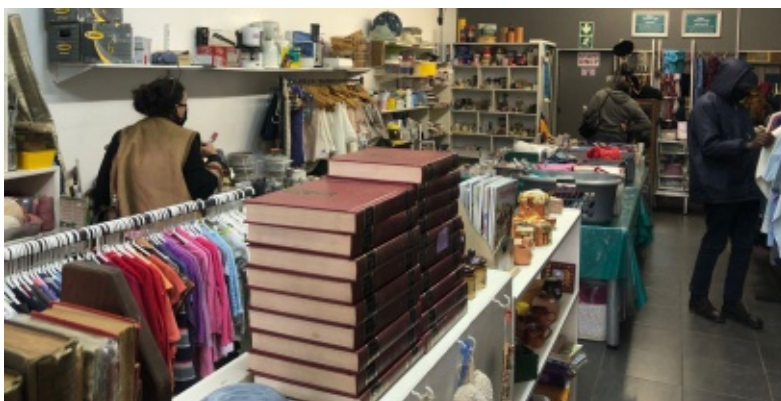
GUITAR LESSONS



SUNRISE SERVICE AT THE HILL CAMPUS



HIDDEN TREASURE



ANDY THE ANT



The "Andy the Ant" series of children's stories, written by Max Ansell, follows the adventures and experiences of Andy and his friends at a Mission school in Swaziland.

MARY THE MOSSIE

"... don't worry about the food and drink you need to stay alive ... look at the birds flying around ... Your Father in heaven takes care of them ... aren't you worth much more than the birds?"

Matthew 6:25 and 26

Winter was coming and all the ants were very busy collecting food for the winter months when food would be scarce and everything in the fields would be dry and dead. With the winter on his mind, Andy was rushing around very worried.

"Faster Archie, we must collect up as much food as we possibly can," said Andy to Archie, "it looks as though this winter is going to be a particularly long and tough one."

"Yes, we must stock our cupboards until they are full with things to eat." Archie agreed.

"Oh dear, oh dear." said Andy, his face

furrowed with worry and full of frowns. "I wonder if we'll ever get enough together in time. Oh dear, oh dear!"

"You're getting to be just like many of the humans around here Andy," said a chirpy voice from a branch above.

Andy paused from his rushing around and looked up to see Mrs. Mary Mossie sitting above him and looking as happy as could be.

"Why do you say I'm just like some humans?" Andy asked in a hurt voice. He stopped for a minute, although he felt that he couldn't really spare the time.

"Because, like some of them, you are not



trusting God to supply your needs. You cannot have any real peace and happiness if you're worrying about food and things like that all the time." Mary pointed out.

"But it looks like we are in for a long, cold winter" said Andy in his defence.

"True," Mrs. Mossie said. "But have you noticed that God has already made provision for us? He has seen to it that all the grasses in the fields are full of seeds and have you seen so many berries on the bushes as there are this year? I agree, it looks like a long, cold winter ahead, but God has already provided for it."

"Yes, but shouldn't we still collect as much as we need?" asked Andy. "What's wrong with that?"

"There's nothing wrong with collecting enough food." came Mrs. Mossie's reply. "What's wrong is your worrying about it all." she added wisely. "Have you ever known God to let you down?"

"No, of course not." replied Andy.

"Doesn't He say in the Bible that not one of us falls down without His knowing about it?" Mary Mossie persisted.

"Yes," said Andy rather shame-facedly.

"Well then, Andy," Mrs. Mossie concluded kindly, for she knew how easily we all fall into worrying, "Stop worrying and trust Him to look after you."

It was a trusting Andy who heard some of the students reading the words of Jesus in Chapel a few days later.

"I tell you," one student read, "do not be anxious and worried about things in your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not your life more than food or your body more than clothing?"

"Look at the birds of the air," another student replied, lifting his hands to the sky, "they neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns. Yet, your Father in heaven feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

"So don't be anxious and worried." the first student continued. "Saying 'What shall we eat? What shall we wear?' These are not thoughts that should crowd your mind because your heavenly Father knows what you need."

The second student finished the reading, "But, you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well."



The *Life at Central* Magazine

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