

A person wearing a straw hat, a light blue long-sleeved shirt, a tan backpack, and blue shorts stands on a sandy beach with their arms outstretched. They are facing away from the camera towards a sunset over the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. In the background, there are dark, rocky cliffs. The person's shadow is cast on the sand, and their footprints are visible in the foreground. A large, textured blue brushstroke is positioned behind the person's torso, serving as a background for the title text.

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE

31-DAY DEVOTIONAL

CONTENTS

The Bible is Life

DAY 1	Neels Janse van Rensburg	4
DAY 2	Keith Newman	5

The Bible is Life Giving

DAY 3	Allan Davidson	7
DAY 4	Martyn Day	8
DAY 5	Sylvia Yuan	9
DAY 6	Clare Knowles	10
DAY 7	Ollie O'Leary	11
DAY 8	Dr Jonathan Robinson	12
DAY 9	Jonathan Dove	13

The Bible is Life-Long

DAY 10	Sonia Munro	15
DAY 11	Esther McDowall	16
DAY 12	James Williamson	17
DAY 13	Paul Monahan	18
DAY 14	Clare Knowles	19
DAY 15	Abraham Suryantyo	20
DAY 16	Lyn Davis	21

The Bible is Life Renewing

DAY 17	Pastor Raj Kumar	23
DAY 18	Pastor Andrew Robertson	24
DAY 19	Dave Marshall	25
DAY 20	N. Buckingham	26
DAY 21	Tina Hall	27
DAY 22	Pastor Mark Pierson	28
DAY 23	Phil Brown	29

The Bible is Live Saving

DAY 24	Pastor Paul de Jong	31
DAY 25	Jaques van Wyk	32
DAY 26	Dave Mann	33
DAY 27	Steve McRobie	34
DAY 28	Pastor Craig Munro	35
DAY 29	Diane	36
DAY 30	Abraham Suryantyo	37
DAY 31	James Williamson	38



**THE
BIBLE
IS
LIFE**

DAY 1



*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.*
- Hebrews 4:12 (NIV emphasis added)

If you're reading this reflection, it means that you're alive and that your life has purpose. God has planned every day, step, thought and action of your life and if we are to be in step with Him, we will see Him fulfil His purpose through us. In reading our text, Paul not only emphasises that the Word of God is alive and never passive, but that it's always at work and active in every area of our lives.

The Word penetrates the parts of our being that are both seen and unseen, known and unknown to us. It helps us distinguish between selfless and/or selfish acts, and becomes the voice of truth, life and reason to help

direct our lives, and enables us to become people of power, praise, and purpose for His glory.

Therefore, be encouraged that every time we open God's Word, it gives life and meaning to our existence and reason for being. It helps us to forget the former things, propelling us forward into the new life He intended for us to live.

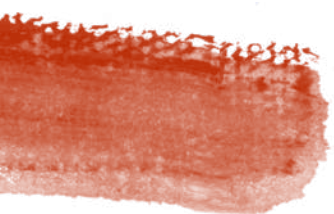
Prayer

Lord, help us to allow your Word to speak and cut through every part of our lives. Direct our path so that our thoughts, words, and actions glorify who you are and help point others to you. May we experience the Godly life you intended for us to have according to your will. Amen.

Neels Janse van Rensburg

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 2



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, - John 1:1 (ESV)

I te tīmatanga te Kupu, i te Atua te Kupu, ko te Atua anō te Kupu.

- Hoani 1:1

The LegoMaster's legacy

The Heavenly Father, the Spirit, the Word exist in joyful unity, a cosmic dance of perpetual motion, continually expressing love and delighting in divine creativity.

The 'Word' is Logos, from the Greek roots lego, to gather, assemble, put in order, implying 'divine intelligence', wisdom or the mind of God.

Our God-breathed primal parents were formed in an earthly garden to carry the image of the Creator and invited to participate in the Trinity dance with access to divine mysteries and a heritage even the angels were not privy to.

In a moment of temptation, they breached the one health and safety rule, opting for endless knowledge over spiritual relationship and in their fall from grace were exiled to a life of human effort toiling in the soil.

A broken history of repeating cycles unfolded over generations. The Divine design was overshadowed by greed, murder, lust for power, wars over borders and resources, and worshipping creation rather than the Creator.

Divinity would assume humanity. The Word, the light of all creation, would manifest through Jesus the Christ, the long-promised Messiah as God with us.

However, the liberating idea of a Heavenly Kingdom serving one

another in love and humility was not appreciated by those building their own earthly religious and political kingdoms.

In condemning Jesus to the horrors of the cross, they failed to see the irony of a seed falling to the ground and bearing much fruit. The "spiritual Adam" had come, and the long overdue good news of the Living Word went viral.

Not only is Christ 'with us' as the Word made flesh, through the agency of the Holy Spirit his nature is being formed 'in us' (Col 1:27; Eph 3:16-17).

If Christ is the Word, then he's the original LegoMaster restoring divine order because he knows how all the building blocks of this great mystery are supposed to fit together.

I have come to see the Bible as the book that reads us, literally renewing our minds, inspiring and encouraging us with fresh revelation and restoring a heritage of hope as we read, hear and share the words of Scripture.


The Word that was in the beginning is still transforming hearts and nations today.

Prayer

Living Word, source of all life, renew our hearts, transform our minds, touch our lips so we can speak hope to those who have lost theirs, bringing light to shadowy places and love to renew the spark where the embers are fading. May the Word become flesh in us.

Keith Newman

AUTHOR OF BIBLE & TREATY

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small green seedling. A single drop of water is suspended from the tip of the index finger, about to fall onto the plant. The seedling is growing out of dark, rich soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

**THE
BIBLE
IS
LIFE
GIVING**

DAY 3



Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
- Genesis 1:26 (NRSV)

The Mona Lisa is probably the world's most famous – and expensive – painting. It's valued somewhere between NZ\$1.3 billion and priceless. The painting is believed to be of Lisa del Giocondo, wife of a wealthy Italian silk merchant. Of course, we don't really know if the painting is a good likeness, since no one is left alive who knew Lisa del Giocondo. And the painting gives us very limited information about Lisa del Giocondo. It doesn't tell us what she was like as a citizen, wife, mother, or friend.

The first readers of Genesis 1:26 had a similar problem. They were told they were the image of someone they couldn't see and didn't know a whole lot about. Maybe that's why they turned out to be not so good at image bearing. To be fair we haven't done such a great job either, especially when it comes to treating each other or creation as things that delight God!

It's not until the gospel writers introduce us to Jesus that we get

real insight into what it means to be the image of God. In Jesus we see 'the person behind the painting.' And the 'person' turns out to be full of grace, love, service, and sacrifice. We discover that to be God's image is not to have dominion but to have compassion. I think God in Jesus would have surprised the first readers of Genesis!

Now here is another question. If the Mona Lisa was damaged, or someone graffitied it, or ripped it, or tore it down and stomped on it, would it still be a painting of Lisa del Giocondo? The answer, as long as there was something left that was recognisable, is 'yes.' Jesuit priest Greg Boyle has said 'The wrong idea has taken root in the world. And the idea is this: there just might be some lives out there that matter less than other lives.' There might also be the wrong idea that there are some lives out there that are lesser images of God than other lives. Nowhere does the Bible say that! I work for a mission that works with homeless, broken, lonely, and often addicted people. Our guiding principle is 'no us and them.' We are all in this together – all marred images of a perfect God.

Allan Davidson

DAY 4



'Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.'

- Revelation 22:1-2 (NRSV)

The closing vision of the Bible is bursting with life-affirming imagery as it looks forward to the experience of God's people in the New Creation. Combining allusions from Genesis and Ezekiel, the vision features both a river of life and the tree of life.

Both river and tree radiate life-giving potential to show that God's provision in the New Creation will be unswerving and endless. Whereas some rivers in a hot Mediterranean climate only flow in winter, the river of life flows continually. In a first-century Roman city, if there was a river flowing down the centre of a street, it would be the local open sewer! In stark contrast, the river in the Holy City has a purity like crystal, as it flows from the very throne of God. No wonder they call it the river of life.

The tree in the Holy City doesn't just produce one kind of fruit; it yields twelve! And, whilst most trees

produce fruit only seasonally, this one can be harvested all year round. And the tree of life is a biblical metaphor for the life-giving character of God's wisdom and word (Proverbs 3:18). No wonder they call it the tree of life.

Are your tastebuds tingling from the two verses of today's reading? Why not savour the flavour of the whole chapter!

What a hopeful, life-giving vision to complete God's Word! Such a vision shapes our current life as Word and Spirit people who, with hope, anticipate God's final victory. We are called as God's people to keep his Word (see Revelation 22:7, 9). And, empowered by the Spirit, we are all life-giving channels for God right here, right now, as the grand story of God moves to its life-giving crescendo.

Prayer

Lord God, I praise you for your everlasting reign that brings life to everyone. May your Spirit within me well up and overflow so that your River of Life brings blessing through me in every place I go. Amen.

Martyn Day

PASTOR, SOUTH HARBOUR VINEYARD
CHURCH, AUCKLAND

DAY 5



But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- Matthew 4:4 (NLT)

In the life of first century Palestine, bread was an important part of the daily diet. Wages were paid daily so workers could buy bread to feed their family on the same day. In addition to the broad background of this verse, the immediate context of what Jesus said was part of a series of dialogue with the tempter in the desert, a setting that resembles the natural environment in which the same message was first announced. In fact, Jesus was quoting an Old Testament verse from Deuteronomy 8:3. The book of Deuteronomy, by definition, was a reiteration of what had been said before. Apparently, God wants to remind us of a very important message.

By saying 'people do not live by bread alone' (NLT), Jesus was validating human physical needs. The triune God had provided foods to His people throughout history. At the same time, Jesus was pointing

out that there is spiritual food that is more important than natural food. God sometimes humbles us, causing us to hunger and then feeds us with manna (Deut 8:3), just like He did with the exodus nation and His son. Ironically, when natural food is no longer the focus of our survival, it doesn't free our energy up to crave for spiritual food. Such a dilemma was well captured in Proverbs 30:9, in times of wants, scarcity leads people to steal or misuse God-appointed power for our own benefits; in times of abundance, we start boasting about our own ability to generate resources. Even the heavenly descended manna couldn't prevent the Israelites growing tired of it due to its very nature of consistency over the years, a reflection of God' faithfulness.

During both seasons of scarcity and plenty, eras of recession and booming, this message has its timeless lesson for us to hold on to. May we crave for the Word as we crave for the essentials at all times.

Sylvia Yuan

BIBLE SOCIETY NEW ZEALAND

DAY 6



*A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever
- Isaiah 40:6-8 (NRSV)*

When the prophet responds to the heavenly voice, "What shall I cry out?"; he's not asking for the words he should proclaim. Rather, he objects to the voice's charge, as if to say, "What on earth do you expect me to say?" Then follows a defeated expression of the frailty and impermanence of humanity, comparing humans to grass and flowers withering under the breath of the LORD. He may be alluding to the suffering of his people at the hands of the Babylonians, who some years earlier conquered Jerusalem, committed unspeakable acts of violence against Judahites, and exiled the upper classes to Babylon. He might also be expressing fear for his own wellbeing – perhaps he will be overcome by the breath of the LORD.

The "voice" responds with the prophet's own words: Yes, it's true that "the grass withers, the flower fades.

But the word of our God will stand forever." In the face of the prophet's own and indeed all of humanity's weakness and impermanence, God's word will endure. The voice reminds the prophet that the present situation of his people will not be permanent. The Babylonians are only human after all; their empire will fail too. But God's word, the promises he previously made to his people, will ultimately prevail. This prophet, reluctant at first, therefore takes up the commission to proclaim comfort to the people of the Lord (v. 1).

Like me, you might sometimes ask what life-giving words God could possibly speak into today's world. This passage invites us to consider the big picture of the Bible, that God is both powerful and faithful, and that his good intentions for the world he loves will come to fruition. Our lives may be short and at times painful, but we can be assured that God's word is eternal.

Prayer

Loving God, help us to trust in your eternal Word, Jesus, and to know that you will have the final say in our lives and in the world that you created and love. Show us how to join in the good work that you are doing among us. Amen.

Clare Knowles

BIBLE SOCIETY NEW ZEALAND

DAY 7



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)

Recently my wife and I bought a new house. With a growing family we required a house and section with more space than we previously had. The house we finally settled on was a real doer-upper. Luckily, my wife's father owns a building company and in the space of 6 weeks they were able to completely renovate the interior before we moved in.

However, there is still much to do on the outside! The exterior needs a sand and a paint, a front fence would be nice for privacy, the deck needs finishing off and there's a garden to plant and tend to, not to mention I would like to level out and resow the lawn.

A month after we moved in, we celebrated the birth of our second child. As you could imagine, being a parent to a toddler and a newborn leaves little time for other 'projects.'

It is at times such as these that today's verse reminds me that there is indeed a time and place for every activity under the sun.

After initially planning to paint the exterior soon after moving in, I quickly came to recognise it wasn't the season for this activity. My efforts

to do so were creating a conflict between being present to family needs and trying to make time to sand and paint the exterior.

By heeding the wisdom from Eccl 3:1, it enabled me to identify the problem with my approach. I was not fully appreciating and honouring the season I was currently in as a father of two young girls. Additionally, I was not trusting that there would be a season in the future for the required work – that there was no rush to get the paint job done. By relinquishing this pressure, it enabled me to become more present to my wife and girls during this special time, which is the greatest gift we can give to our loved ones.

If you are currently feeling overwhelmed by the activities of your life or if there are conflicts due to competing interests, then I'd invite you take a moment to explore in prayer if any of those activities are as urgent as they seem to be. After doing this quick audit, give yourself the freedom to defer the non-urgent tasks or projects to a future season, trusting that they will be fulfilled when the time is right.

Ollie O'Leary

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 8



*'So shall my word be that goes out
from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I
purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for
which I sent it.'*
- Isaiah 55:11 (ESV)

Isaiah 55 begins with human need and desire. The thirsty, the hungry, the poor, the dissatisfied are all called to find life in God. 'Incline your ear,' says God, 'listen' (v. 3). And what do they hear? A promise to a broken-hearted people in exile, a promise of an everlasting covenant, of glory instead of shame (vv. 3-5).

Then a second group of people are called, the wicked and the unrighteous (v. 7). God is near, and if they will call upon him and turn, God will pardon them. Who is this LORD that has mercy, and abundantly pardons the wicked?

In a sense, we cannot know this LORD, because his ways and his thoughts are much, much higher than ours (vv. 8-9). But when he speaks, we can hear his voice and come to him. We see here that God is sovereign, he calls out to us – we could not know him at all otherwise. But we also see the need for human response. Will we come to him, listen to him, seek him, turn to him?

I believe that God calls us all, but so few seem to respond. What then are we to make of the claim in verses 10-11 that God's Word never returns to him empty? I think the answer is that verses 10-11 refer to a specific word, God's covenant with David (v. 3) recorded in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. It is

this word that the people of God are in danger of forgetting. The poor and downtrodden who have lost hope of restoration AND the wicked who are selfishly exploiting others, both need to be called back to God and to faith in his promises.

For Christians, God's promise to David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of David who inherits an eternal throne (2 Sam 7:13; Luke 1:32-33). Yet Isaiah's appeal still offers life to us, whether we need to renew our hope and faith for restoration, or whether we need to repent of our wickedness and unrighteousness (or maybe both!). We are all called to "come", to listen that we might live, and to put our trust in God's unfailing word - fulfilled and revealed most fully in Jesus, the son of David, our everlasting king.

Prayer

Holy One of Israel, LORD our God,
We hear you calling, help us to listen.

Your ways and thoughts are high above ours

Yet you call us to respond to your word.

May we know again your forgiveness and mercy;

May we know afresh what it is to be satisfied and delighted in you;

And may we grasp again the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ, our king,
In whose name we pray, Amen.

Dr Jonathan Robinson

LECTURER IN NEW TESTAMENT,
CAREY BAPTIST COLLEGE,
AUCKLAND

DAY 9



Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
- Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV)

If someone were to ask you, 'are your best days ahead of you or behind you?', what would your answer be? For most of us this question would cause us some pause. There are many variables that might flash through our minds.

Our answer might depend on the stage of life we are in. We may be looking forward to having a family of our own, or if we have a young family, we may be looking forward to them being a bit older!

We might think about the state of our health, or that of those we love. Do we see health declining, or do we see a hope for a stronger, more pain-free future?

Maybe we would contemplate our relationships; our intimate ones, and our friendships. Do we have strong bonds to look forward to or just warm memories of those we have been close to?

Have we accomplished all that we set out to do in the world, or is there a task before us that challenges and inspires us? Do we have a drive, or a calling, that we still hope to fulfill?

For many of us our thoughts about the future are a mixed bag with differing emotions including hope, worry, anticipation.

Colossians provides us with an answer to all of our musings about

our 'best days.' It gives us a beautiful picture of our great future hope. It teaches us that our life is found in Christ.

When our homes are threatened with events such as floods and cyclones some of us put our treasures in a 'safe place' to protect them, no matter what happens to our homes. This is somewhat analogous to the idea that we are 'hidden with Christ.' We are being kept secure and safe, as the most precious of possessions. So, no matter what storm arises in our lives or in this world, we are found safe with Him.

The best days are truly still ahead for each of us. As we wait for the glory that is to come when Christ appears, we can wait with the certainty that we are totally secure in Him. We are His most guarded possession. His life is our life. While we wait, we also have the opportunity to come to know and worship Him more and more as each day passes. The best days are truly still to come.

Prayer

Father, thank you that you have hidden us securely with Christ and that you will bring us into a glorious future. Thank you that you have guaranteed our joy and glory in the days yet to come. May your Spirit enable each of us to grow in our knowledge and intimacy with you even as we grow in years. We ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

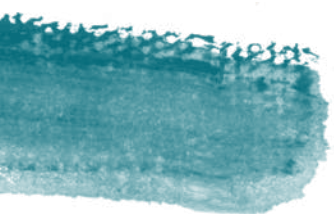
Jonathan Dove

PASTOR GRACECITY CHURCH

An elderly woman with white hair is seated in a wicker chair, intently reading an open book. She is positioned in front of a large, weathered wooden door with peeling blue paint. To her right, a red upholstered chair and a small round table are visible. She is wearing a patterned blouse, dark polka-dot trousers, and red floral-patterned shoes. The scene is set in a rustic, possibly rural, environment.

**THE
BIBLE
IS
LIFE-
LONG**

DAY 10



But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
- Jude 1:20-21 (NIV)

The Bible has been given to us so we can know God and live a life that pleases Him. They are our "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth."

Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, wrote this letter sometime between 67 – 80 A.D., and he was concerned about the false teachers seducing believers from their faith with their deceptive lies. In our time, we must remain vigilant, and alert to the devil's schemes, so we don't forfeit the 'prize of the high calling of Christ!'

To survive the apostasy, Jude exhorts his friends to:

- Build up their faith;
- Pray with the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- Remain in the keeping power of God's love;
- Wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude's instructions could be considered a heavenly "G.P.S" for believers - "God's Providence Standard" for believers to practise as they wait for the promise of eternal life. "Providence" speaks of God's divine guidance or care, to safeguard our destiny!

Paul also expressed concerns about deception and false teachers causing arguments and division amongst the believers in the church when he wrote, "in the last days,

some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim 4:1).

G.P.S. of Jude exhorts believers to strengthen their faith through the hearing of God's Word (Romans 10:17). He emphasises the need to yield to the Holy Spirit who shows us what to pray and guides us into all truth and discernment of spirits (John 16:13). Praying for others strengthens the relationships within the Body of Christ, and compassion for others, so our minds and heart are directed heavenward (Hebrews 10:24 – 25).

Abiding in God's presence keep us from sin and safe from the enemy's clutches. God protects those who love Him and obey His commands (Song of Solomon 2:4; Romans 7:23).

Waiting demonstrates our trust in God's promises. God is merciful and He extends mercy to us because of Jesus.

Take a moment to reflect on Jude's advice.

Are there are obstacles that are blocking G.P.S. from being effective in your life?

Perhaps the treadmill of life, or the tyranny of the urgent, your G.P.S. is out of date?

Perhaps there are components of G.P.S. that need upgrading?

Jude's advice to his friends is relevant to us today. Ensure that you adopt G.P.S and maintain the programme so your eternal destination is assured.

Sonia Munro

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 11



"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

- Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV)

I remember our CEO Neels giving a devotional about this passage a couple of years ago. He talked about the power of purpose and appointment, and how many youths feel directionless and suicidal because they see no greater reason for their lives. However, God has a plan for all of us, as he did with Jeremiah, the youth God is speaking to here.

I was feeling without purpose at the time, and a few days beforehand I had written in my diary that I was 'a lone satellite, still faithfully in orbit, but forgotten by my God.'

But I was not forgotten. Sitting in that stuffy room one Thursday morning, the passage from Jeremiah seemed to literally glow off the page of my Bible. How could black text glow?? Was this what people meant by 'The Living Word'? In fact, I was so fascinated by this phenomenon, that during the rest of the day I would quickly open my Bible to see if the sheen still existed! The closest visual equivalent I can give you is called 'chromatic aberration', where light is

dispersed, and a rainbow effect is created around even black. That's what it looked like. Incredible.

Since then, my life has taken on new meaning, every moment gaining a prophetic edge as I looked past the surface of things. I hadn't been forgotten. I had been rejecting His call, as Jonah did, curled up and depressed in the depths of a ship to Somewhere Else. This realisation of purpose cut through the soupiness of my secularised world. Nihilism is trendy. Conviction is not.

This is obviously an important verse for me personally, but it carries a potent message for everyone. Jeremiah was called to: "be a prophet to the nations," yes, an extreme role, but the first part of the passage applies to us all:

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart;' (NIV)

Each person has been made with a purpose. Like any good father, God wants the best for his children, and has ambitions for us. They may be complex and multifaceted, but still loaded with loving intentionality. No one, absolutely no one, is a mistake.

Esther McDowall

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 12



This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
- Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

We become what we behold.

A new study of DNA is the science of 'epigenetics', which is the study of how your behaviours and environment can cause changes that affect the way your genes work. There is a reason why God has given us this instruction in Joshua 1 to keep His Word in our mind. In Deuteronomy 6 we see the Israelites being given the instruction to bind the words to their hands, in front of their eyes and write them on the doorposts of their homes. The purpose of this is to keep the Word of God in our daily lives. Today we might place a Scripture on the wall of our home or on a welcome mat at the door, but nothing like what the early Israelites did. When I look around at people today the small phylactery that they have placed in front of their eyes is in the form of a mobile phone. It would be nice to think that they are using their YouVersion app, but I don't think so.

The instruction to Joshua is what he was used to doing as he was Moses's assistant who was probably

in the Tent of Meeting inscribing what was being said into the 'Book of the Law' (Torah). For Joshua to meditate on the Word day and night was nothing new, but for many of us we have lost the art of meditating on the Word. The promise in Joshua is that if we do this and observe what it says we will have success. Read the rest of the Book of Joshua and look at his success, he walked into and conquered the land that had been promised to his people.

My challenge for this year is to meditate more and deeper into the Word of God. Why don't you join me and let's all go deeper and see how our lives change as our DNA gets modified for the better.

Prayer

Lord thank you for your Word. I pray that your Scriptures will become alive in my life and that as I meditate on your Words an understanding and hunger for more will develop in my daily walk. Help me keep your Words on my lips and in my mind daily. With your Word change me into the person you created me to be. Amen.

James Williamson

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 13



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.
- John 10:10 (NIV)

I find it interesting that Scripture written two millennia ago can be as relevant in a different context today. When this passage was recorded, Jesus was talking to and talking about the teaching and practices of the Pharisees. Pointing out that the Pharisees' teaching, and rituals were bringing bondage and false hope to the people while bringing financial advantage and prestige to them. Jesus declared his words would bring life in abundance, not temporal life as with the Pharisees but Zoe life. Zoe life refers to an active, authentic spiritual life focussed on God. The life that following Jesus wholeheartedly would bring.

When this was written there were far less influences on the culture of the times. In Jewish life in that region there were the Romans, the Jewish religious leaders, Jewish culture, and the odd political radical. That is not the case now, so what could this mean today?

For me a clue came when I was doing a little research on the passage and looked up the word

thief on my Yahoo web browser. I was then informed that there were around 164 MILLION references to the word thief. You see, with the original Jewish context there were basically two choices as outlined in the text. However, we don't have just two choices; we have access to information on any belief system, any cultural reference at the touch of a button.

This diversity is probably not the major problem. The major problem is we are distracted very easily because of a plethora of entertainment and information available to us. It is so easy to lose our focus on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. We can then be lied to, have our time and focus stolen away in the guise of points of interest, research and entertainment. This is a more subtle and heavily disguised ploy of the enemy but no less effective.

The question becomes how do we keep the main thing, the main thing? Our focus must remain on our Lord and His activity in our lives. When was the last time you heard from God?

Paul Monahan

MINISTRY SUPERVISOR AND LIFE COACH

DAY 14



Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NLT)

Unlike some of Paul's other letters (see Galatians!), 1 Thessalonians is positive and encouraging. Paul is proud of the believers in Thessalonica, grateful to receive such a good report from Timothy. They are experiencing considerable persecution for their faith in Jesus, yet they remain steadfast. Paul takes this as evidence that they really did receive the message he preached, not as a "human word" but as the word of God himself.

They received the message with joy, and it has proven to be the very word of God by the fruit in their lives, their faith and love and hope (1:3). They withstand persecution and suffering, they love one another and believers elsewhere, they lead holy lives, they encourage one another. Paul's letter is meant to encourage them to continue to do all these things, and even more so. All these things are proof that the word has taken root in them, and that God's Spirit is alive in them, that "this word

continues to work in [those] who believe."

What exactly is the word that Paul preached to the Thessalonians? Of course, Paul doesn't mean "the Bible" like what we have today. Neither does he mean only the essential gospel message, that Jesus died to save us and rose again. Acts 17 describes Paul's approach in Thessalonica. As he usually did, Paul began by preaching to Jews and God-fearing non-Jews in the synagogue, showing how Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew scriptures (our Old Testament), that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer, die, and rise again (Acts 17:2-3). Paul was telling Jesus' story within the big story of the Jewish scriptures. This is the story preserved for us in the Bible.

Let this be an encouragement to all of us to soak ourselves in the "living and active" word of God and allow God's Spirit to work in us.

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful. (1 Thess 5:23-25, NLT)

Clare Knowles

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 15



Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.
- Psalm 119:105 (CSB)

Have you ever questioned yourself on what would have happened if the lightbulb was never invented? Light is something that is easy to take for granted in our day and age, but it is very easy to see its importance once the electricity stops working in our homes. Suddenly, we need to use a candle or a flashlight to get things done without the added risk of bumping into things. We need light in our lives.

The Bible likens God's Word to a lamp and a light. I believe we can learn from where the light shines to in today's passage of Scripture. In the first part, the source of light (the lamp) is for the psalmist's feet. The light illuminates something that is closer to the psalmist. In the second part, the light is for the psalmist's path. The light illuminates something that is further than the psalmist.

I believe this shows the relevancy of the Bible in terms of what we face now and what we face later. The Bible shows us not only our current condition, but the right decisions to

make moving forward. Ultimately, the Bible should point us to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the light of the world that we should follow. John 8:12 (CSB) says, 'Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."'

In life, we need guidance both for the short and the long term and this is what the Bible provides for us. The Bible provides clarity and guidance through our lives (just like light does). My encouragement to you is for you to read the Bible every day to gain direction and clarity for what you face in life both for the present and for the future.

Prayer

Our heavenly Father, thank you for the guidance you have given to me through the Bible for my life. Please show yourself to me through its pages and help me to know and follow you better. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Abraham Suryantyo

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 16



*...and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. **They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.***
- Isaiah 61:3 NIV

Some years ago, I was living and working in a city in Asia. We had been approached by a Buddhist woman who requested that she practice her English with us. Teaching English was not really my thing, but I asked if she would consider finding a few friends and we could do an Alpha course – in English, and this might help her improve her English and also introduce her to part of my life. She readily agreed. The first evening came and to break the ice I invited each person to share a book that had had an impact on their lives. My new friend was the first to speak up and her reply was, “I have just started reading the Bible and it is the most amazing book I have ever read.”

Fast forward to this morning – 10 or 15 years later. Sitting in my office with me were two beautiful, fierce, loving and God-fearing wahine. They have endured some incredible challenges in their lives, but they have found a firm foundation to build their lives on – the Bible. They shared how the Bible has sustained them,

convicted them, challenged them and helped them overcome. Their faces shine when they talk about how God is growing them, how he is speaking to them, how much he loves them. Some time ago they began reading the Bible together each morning – today they tell me that there are seven more wahine joining them.


When I see these two amazing women, I am humbled as I have seen this verse come to life before my eyes. They indeed will be called ‘oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour.’ They have not just read the ‘amazing book,’ but it has taken hold of them, it has taken root and they have been and are in the process of being, transformed by it. What a challenge that is to me! May I too continue to display His splendour as I humble myself and let my life be transformed by the power of His Word.

Prayer

God of creation, you are so holy and yet you come to us in all walks of life, from all races and nations, ages and places and you work your transforming power. Help us never to take your Word for granted but to treasure it and allow it to give us the life you intended. Amen.

Lyn Davis

CHAPLAIN
ARWCF



**THE
BIBLE
IS
LIFE
RENEWING**

DAY 17



*"...Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- John 8:32 (NIV)*

In 2017, I managed a three-week criminal trial at Auckland District Court. Due to the nature and the seriousness of the offending, the trial was very intense and emotionally charged.

The Crown presented many witnesses and so did the Defence. As the officer in-charge, I sat at the back of the court room and listened to the witnesses testifying under oath.

When cross-examined, the victim was called a liar, a cheat, and a fabricator. She was humiliated and ashamed and broke down on the stand many times in tears.

The Crown sought adjournments and I used this time to pray for her, and I encouraged her to press on, and not give up. After continuously being called a liar, she became very hostile and walked out of the courtroom.

After several days of deliberating, the Jury found the Defendant not guilty, despite the Crown presenting DNA evidence to support the woman's argument. The victim was bitter, broken, and suicidal. She had lost faith in everyone.

She felt that there was no honour and respect for the truth, and that she would never receive justice for herself.

About 6 months later, that same defendant was arrested for

committing a similar offence. The case went to trial and the female victim for my case was called to testify under propensity. After another lengthy fought-out court battle, the jury unanimously found the defendant guilty, much to the relief of the female victims involved.

Today, if you have been betrayed, denied justice, or hurting and aggrieved by the wrongs of others, remember that the King of Righteousness is a God of Justice. He sees everything and knows everything. Those wrong doers who have told lies will face the consequence of their words and actions. In Hebrews 4:12 (NIV): it says "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."

The world may not give you the justice you deserve but remember that the Word will never return null or void. The Judge that sits on the heavenly throne honours the truth and will declare you righteous.

So the word for you today is to speak the truth and let the truth set you free!

Pastor Raj Kumar

KING OF KINGS CHURCH

DAY 18



Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

- Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

There are three things that this Scripture tells us to do. Firstly, to trust in the Lord with all of our heart, this is a place of surrender. There is no room for anxiety or worry. Your trust in God moves it out of the way so you can live in a place of faith with dependence on a God who cares for you.

Secondly, we are not to rely on our own limited understanding. But we look to God to lead and guide us in our decisions. When we do, we get access to the mind of Christ where his ways are higher than our ways.

Thirdly, we are to acknowledge God in everything we are doing. People around us should know that our life is centred around Christ, and he is the source of our born-again experience that has changed our lives so much.

If we are able to do all three of these things, God has promised to direct our paths,

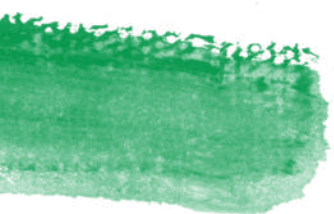
In my life I have found this to be true. His guidance has been awesome at every major junction of my life as I have trusted the Lord, acknowledged him, and laid down my agenda. I have experienced clear direction from the Scriptures or some type of leading from the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures say, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.' Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

Access into these works is by putting the three principles of Proverbs 3:5 into place and watch as God directs our steps into the plan that he has prepared for us. We will emerge to bless the world around us, with the knowledge of God and the reality of the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Andrew Robertson

WORLD HARVEST CHURCH,
AUCKLAND

DAY 19



*This is my comfort in my affliction,
For Your word has given me life
- Psalm 119:50 (NKJV)*

When your daily experience, your minute-by-minute battle, is living with a chronic illness or facing a health issue with a grim long-term prognosis, it is fair to say that feeling God's presence when you are suffering is not always a given. Knowing God's nearness and feeling comforted by his Word can be elusive when you are depressed, grieving, experiencing physical or emotional pain, or distressed by the relentlessness of a bully. Some who are reading this will know these scenarios as excruciatingly real.

Today, as I write a reflection on this verse, I am feeling physically slammed by a long-term health condition which in turn affects emotions and mental well-being. When suffering comes our way, and it will for all of us at some time or other, we can find ourselves wondering whether God has abandoned us.

Fully aware of this, the writer of this Psalm points us to God's Word which is a lifeline in times of despair, doubt, and suffering. In verse 92 he says, "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." (NIV)

This entire Psalm, the longest single chapter in the Bible, is about God's Word and the writer's relationship to it. God's attributes are described throughout - He is **righteous** (vs 7), **trustworthy** (vs 42), **truthful** (vs 43), **faithful** (vs 86), **unchangeable** (vs 89), **eternal** (vs

152), **light** (vs 105), **pure** (vs 140). No wonder the writer says God's Word brings comfort. Knowledge of God's character regardless of our limited understanding is lifegiving.

And we see it here in Psalm 119 - this same majestic and trustworthy God is invited to be present in our suffering. "My earthly life clings to the dust; Revive and refresh me according to your word." (v. 25 AMP)

I find it so reassuring that right through Scripture pain and suffering are not glossed over or sanitised - they are part of the story.

This verse, this Psalm points us to Jesus, God in the flesh who also knows pain and suffering. When we feel alone in our affliction, we know that Jesus not only experienced physical agony but also the mental anguish of feeling isolated and forsaken. As we rest in Him, He is the greatest comforter we will ever know.

Prayer

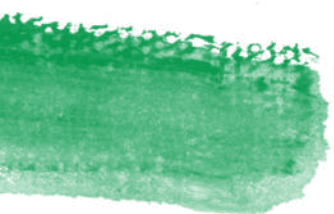
Lord, as I breathe in - I look to you. As I breathe out - I ask for your mercy. I invite you to be present in discomfort and pain. Your Word revives me and brings comfort.

I pray for those who face persecution and suffering - may they know your nearness. Today, may I and all those who suffer know your tender love and may we experience the rest of God. Amen.

Dave Marshall

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
TIRA TŪHĀHĀ PRISON CHAPLAINCY
AOTEAROA

DAY 20



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

When I consider the Scripture above, what immediately comes to mind is the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem. But what does this mean on a personal level?

When I found myself remanded in prison for the first time at the age of 60, in my mind my life had ended. For the first week I was on 'suicide watch.' I couldn't eat or drink. I had a knowledge of Jesus but had never managed to get close to Him because I was full of fear.

Yes, I had been saved and baptised but did not have the courage to share with anyone.

A small voice said, 'Talk to Me and I will raise you up.' I borrowed a Bible and started reading John.

But how could Jesus raise me up? I was a failure. I had failed Him, my family, my employer, myself. How could He fix that?

"Trust Me"

Acceptance of guilt started an incredible journey of faith and love. While waiting to be sentenced I was in a cell quietly praying when a feeling of total peace and love swept through me.

Right now, I am still incarcerated, but things are so much different. When Jesus says He will make all things new, He means ALL things, including us, if we let Him. God has a

plan and to fit His plan we must die to all things that hold us back, both present and past. When we die to these things, we are then made new.

Renewal in Christ is an ongoing process. Our life is never fully complete until we join Christ. There are times that I wonder where He is taking me, but He has a plan and my faith and trust in Him is absolute.

Jesus is my Saviour, my brother and my friend. He has raised me from the gates of hell and given me a new life in return for my trusting in Him and giving myself over to Him completely. Today, He calls the shots and I follow Him.

He has raised me up into a new life in preparation for His return, whenever that may be. The peace and joy that I now feel is there for all of us if we let him give us life. I feel so blessed and love Him completely.

Prayer

Father, I thank you, that you sent your Son, Jesus, to redeem me. I thank you that You give my life complete renewal through the Holy Spirit, that you will in your own time give us a new home and a new body.

The blessings that we receive through your mercy are more than we deserve and are given through your love for us.

As you bless us, we bless you.
Amen.

N. Buckingham

FRIEND OF BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 21



Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

- 1 John 5:12 (NLT)

John writes about the Word of Life and fellowship with God. John helps us to deepen our relationship with Jesus.

John speaks from first-hand experience. He heard, he saw, he looked, he touched the "Word of Life" – Jesus. John was so overjoyed in his relationship with his Lord, that he wanted to share his joy with others so that we might also experience the same assurance. God desires us to experience meaningful, intimate life and fellowship with Him. John aims to encourage, strengthen and assure those who have come to faith in Christ. His letter helps us to know what to believe and how to behave. Not only must we believe like Christians, but we must also act like Christians.

Every day I drive past a church that uses a billboard to convey a message. Often it will say;

Know Jesus – Know Life!

No Jesus – No Life!

Jesus gives us life! Jesus is also the source and creator of life. Jesus declared of himself 'I am the resurrection and the life' John 11:25 (NLT), and 'I am the way, the truth,

and the life.' John 14:6 (NLT). With Jesus in your life, you have hope, a reason, a purpose for living. Our best life is in Christ. God's good is best for us. We were created to be in relationship with Him, now and into eternity.

John urges us to live by the Word of God with the Son of God. The alternative is life that is dead - life without the son of God. This is the truth of the gospel; we have life in and through Jesus or we don't! I'm sure like me your heart aches for loved ones whose lives are not in the Son. Keep on praying. God knows how to bring salvation to your family, friends and communities.

Those who believe in Jesus can know for certain that they have eternal life. Keep turning your thoughts towards God. Desire to want what God wants. Live your life that brings others good and God glory. Trust God to help you.

Rejoice in the life that God has given you. As believers we have the privilege to testify to what Christ has done in each of our lives.

I'll leave you with this thought. God can choose anywhere to live, but God chooses to live in you! Whoever has the Son has life!

Tina Hall

MANNA CHRISTIAN STORE -
HAMILTON

DAY 22



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.

- Colossians 3:16 (NIV, emphasis added)

This piece of Scripture is often used to talk about what our individual or corporate worship should look like. I don't think that was its intention.

The writer is telling us that the message about and from Jesus, that is, the gospel, should have free reign in our lives. "Let... it have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives" is how the Message Bible (MSG) puts it here.

And we demonstrate this new-found life-with-God by teaching and encouraging each other 'using good common sense' (MSG), and by singing our grateful hearts out about our life now centred in Christ.

This is the life-changing rich message of Christ to we who follow him, and it's sustained and demonstrated to others by we who are part of the community of faith looking out for each other and singing praises together to God – in whatever format we choose.

This is life-transforming living. This is the only way we will overcome racial and ethnic prejudice, get creation back on track, change the

unhelpful life-denying habits of our past and present, flourish in the midst of wars and floods, and know that "Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:1-20) deeply enough for it to make a difference in how we think and live.

This isn't a Scripture about how to worship. It's about how we relate to others in the community of faith. It's part of a life-renewing admonition to take seriously what Jesus achieved on the cross and in the resurrection and to make a difference in and to our world: and to sing about that.

Prayer

God our creator, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ

and the only one who can sustain us as the flourishing human beings we were created to be;

in our gratitude for what you have made possible for us,

and in our struggle to do what is right,

cause us to take seriously the transforming and confronting work of the gospel within us

so that we might engage in transformative relationships and together sing our praises to you as we encourage one another. Amen.

Mark Pierson

LEAD PASTOR AND CURATOR,
RHYTHMS OF GRACE CHURCH,
PARNELL, AUCKLAND

DAY 23



When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- John 8:12 (NIV)

Here we have another amazing promise of God, that as Christians, we will always be in the Light. I am a keen cyclist and I have a group of cycling friends that find the best time to ride is early in the morning, often before the sun comes up. To do this we all have lights on our bikes. Bike lights illuminate the road so we can see. If we tried riding without lights, we would soon hit a pothole or run off the road and crash. The same goes when we try doing things in life without inviting in the Light of Life, Jesus. Jesus wants to be Lord over all of our lives. Is there an area of your life where He is not illuminating the way? Invite Him into that part of your life too. 'Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.' (Proverbs 16:3 NIV) The Light we carry is not just for ourselves.


Recently one of my friends' battery ran out early into the ride, but so long

as he stayed with the rest of us, he was fine as our lights illuminated the way for him. We all have people in our lives who have not yet accepted Christ for themselves. But the Light of Life living in you can help illuminate the way for them! As you pray for them and share the wisdom God has given you, they can also be guided by the Light of Life. As they are guided by your Light, they will be drawn closer to deciding to follow Jesus themselves.

Bike lights are not just for us to see, their other function is so that others can see us. As Christians we need to 'let your light shine before others' (Matt 5:16 NIV). The purpose in this is that they may see the goodness that comes from the Light of Life, and will also give glory to Him. I pray that the Light of Life living in each of you will shine brighter, in order that others will see and be guided by that Light, and choose to follow Jesus themselves.

Phil Brown

ZION CHURCH, TE AWAMUTU

A circular wreath made of dried, reddish-brown sticks and green fern fronds is the central focus. The background is a blurred landscape of green hills and a mountain range under a soft, hazy sky. The text "THE BIBLE IS LIFE SAVING" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered over the wreath.

**THE
BIBLE
IS
LIFE
SAVING**

DAY 24



*"Because he has set his love upon Me,
therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has
known My name.
He shall call upon Me, and I will
answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him."
- Psalm 91:14-15 (NKJV)*

Our foundation of truth

Planet Earth has been through some shaking in recent times, wouldn't you agree? Not only that, many of us will have come up against unexpected challenges in our personal journeys that have rocked the ground beneath our feet. For you, it might be financial difficulties, a relational breakdown, or the resurfacing of hurts from the past. Or maybe – like me – you're facing a significant health challenge, a prognosis you didn't see coming.

So often, our first reaction is: "What's going on?" And that's a very natural, human way to feel. But did you know that storms reveal your foundation? There is an enemy who'll try and use times of uncertainty to magnify anxiety into doubt and fear; twisting things that sound like they're true, seeking to divert us from the purposes of God. God's Word breeds faith, it doesn't breed fear. Anything that brings fear is not of Him. Faith in who God is and in the truth of His Word will anchor us on a firm foundation.

Psalm 91:4 tells us: "His truth shall be your shield." But did you realise that, unless there's personal alignment, truth remains disengaged? Just sitting in church and listening to a

message – even believing what we've heard – is not enough. We need to take the things we hear on a Sunday and personally activate them; to allow the truth of God to become our rock, to settle in our hearts that we know what we know, before the shaking comes.

During the past year I had to undergo a course of radiation for brain cancer. The doctors had to construct a mask that would stabilise my head during the treatment. It's basically a flat sheet of plastic which was heated, bent over my face, then bolted down onto the table to stop my head from moving. As with any procedure, there are risks involved, and the doctors were doing their job by explaining them to me. But I had to choose not to let that hold me under a restriction of fear, but rather to stabilise myself in the truth of God's Word: "Because he has set his love upon Me ... I will be with him in trouble ... With long life I will satisfy him" (verses 14-16 NKJV).

Prayer

Father God, when we find ourselves in a season of shaking, help us not to let the enemy use that to trip us up or dim our light. Remind us that we are under Your shadow, that Your truth is our shield against fear. As we take refuge in You, as we make Your Word our foundation, we know that You are a deliverer, a restorer, a healer. We put our trust in Your Almighty name and Your salvation. Amen.

Paul de Jong

FOUNDING PASTOR, LIFE
AUTHOR OF *NOW HOPE* AND *GOD
MONEY & ME*

DAY 25



But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

- Ephesians 2:4-6 (NIV)

The apostle Paul reminds us in this passage of the amazing love and grace that God has shown us through Jesus Christ. We were once dead in our sins and separated from God, but because of His great love for us, He made us alive in Christ and saved us by His grace.

Not only that, but He raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms. This is a powerful reminder of the new life that we have in Christ and the amazing blessings that come with it.

As we reflect on this passage, we are reminded of the incredible gift that God has given us through His son Jesus Christ. Because of His love and mercy, we have been saved and given new life in Him. We are no longer

slaves to sin and death, but have been raised up with Christ and given a new identity as His beloved children.

As we meditate on this passage, may we be reminded of the amazing love and grace that God has shown us through Jesus Christ, and may we be inspired to live each day in the power of this new life.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love and mercy that you have shown us through Jesus Christ. We are amazed at the incredible gift of salvation that you have given us and the new life that we have in Him. Help us to remember that we are no longer slaves to sin and death, but have been raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly realms.

May we live each day in the power of this new life and share your love and grace with those around us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jaques van Wyk

PASTOR DOXA DEO NZ

DAY 26

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

Galatians is a bit of a miserable book (to some). Paul is dealing with a faction in the church at Galatia, and his argument against their false teaching takes up the entire book. Some who claimed to follow Jesus were concurrently saying obedience to the Jewish law was needed as a means to salvation. Paul therefore begins the book (Galatians 1:6) by stating his astonishment that they were so quickly deserting the one who called them to live in the grace of Christ - to instead return 'to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all! They were trying to gain salvation through their works and efforts - but it doesn't work.

In this verse Paul paints a picture of the true calling. Our good works cannot save us. Only the grace of God through Christ can! We therefore die to our own efforts as a way of gaining God's approval - to instead embrace (receive) God's grace offered to us through Jesus' crucifixion.

The irony of the verse is of course that, once we 'die' we find ourselves to still be very much alive. To what

are we alive? We are to 'live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (NIV) - but what does this mean? Paul explains this beautifully when he later suggests we are now clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27) - the inference being that we choose to imitate Jesus' character and conduct. Having died to our attempts to gain God's approval through good efforts we now choose to do good because it is the right thing to do! We love God and want to please him and imitate his ways. And we take joy in doing good, never becoming weary in it, because we know eternity awaits and a reward with it (Galatians 6:9)!

What good can you do today simply because it's good to do good? In what area could you refine your character, to be more like Jesus, simply because you love God, and want to please him? Remember, a reward does await, if we do not give up!

Prayer

Dear Lord, I am so grateful for your love and grace. Help me to choose what is right this day, and in every way, from a heart that is filled with love and gratitude to you.

Amen.

Dave Mann

SHINING LIGHTS

DAY 27



Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

- John 14:6 (NKJV)

The words of Jesus are in response to a question that had been asked by one of his disciples earlier in the evening. Jesus had gathered with the disciples on what would be their last night together and during this time, he began to explain to those present, that very shortly he would be leaving them. He encourages the disciples to not be troubled, but to trust in God. He goes on to say, that he will return and in doing so, he will take them to the place where he himself is going to. And it is here, that Thomas asks the question, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' (NIV)

Several years ago, I remember hearing someone say, 'just as all roads supposedly lead to Rome, don't all religions lead to God?'. As Christians we know that this is not the case, and in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. It's true that we live in a world today, where this type of religious pluralistic thinking along with many other differing thoughts and ideas of how we can connect with God are not only becoming more

common, but they are also becoming more widely acceptable by many of those within the wider communities in which we live.

However, the Scripture reminds us, that there is only one way to God, and it is through the divine act of salvation, which has only been made possible through Jesus Christ. Jesus is not merely one way amongst the many supposed other ways to God, nor is He just another truth so to speak amid the myriad of so-called other truths that are being presented today.

In His response to Thomas, Jesus emphatically declares, that He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life and no one, no matter who you are, where you're from or what you've done, can come to the Father, unless you come through Him.

Jesus gave up His life that we might have life. He invites us to share in this life, and to share His life with those ones around us.

Prayer

I pray that you would come to know the reality of the risen life of Jesus in your own life... Āmine.

Steve McRobie

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 28



*When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's
delight,
for I bear your name, LORD God
Almighty.
- Jeremiah 15:16 (NIV)*

Everyone loves to eat! Jeremiah the prophet says he ate God's Word. He internalised the words so that they became part of him. The Geneva Bible translates it this way: "I received them with a great joy, as he that is famished eats meat!" Is your desire for God's Word like someone who is starving?

When Jesus was speaking to the woman at the well in Samaria, he made a similar claim to Jeremiah. The disciples had gone to get him some food and when they returned, they said, 'Rabbi, eat something' (John 4:31 NIV).

³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

³³Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

When we read and meditate on God's Word, it is not just for our

personal benefit, but for the benefit of others. We can delight in His words and his promises and make them our very own!

King Solomon discovered that the pursuit of earthly treasures was meaningless, but delighting in the Lord was a true treasure indeed (Ecclesiastes 1:2). To take this a little further by asking you to consider the foods that contain the word "delight" such as "Turkish Delights" or "Danish Delights!" Can I encourage you to delight in His Word today - like it is a special treat!

The Words of God, when received and eaten by faith, will produce spiritual joy and pleasure. The Psalmist, David, described God's Words as being sweeter than honey and the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10), and in Psalm 34:8 (NIV), he encourages us to "Taste and see that the Lord is good..."

Can I encourage you to view God's Word in a new way. Apply God's Word in your life today in a fresh way and remember that you bear the name of the Lord God Almighty!

Craig Munro

PASTOR KING OF KINGS CHURCH

DAY 29



It is the spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.

- John 6:63 (NKJV)

These words that HE speaks
words, words, words...
drip onto my skin
like oil
covers all of me...
Your Spirit finds my heart
softly, softly, softly..
YOU settle me quiet
deeper, deeper, deeper..
in this moment
my flesh is nothing
my heart is alive
Spirit..
jumping
joy
every word, YOUR Spirit Word
breathes, breathes, BREATHEs
real...
LIFE, LIFE, LIFE

Prayer

Oh Heavenly Father, the giver of life,
of Words, your precious Words.

Help us seek you daily, moment
by moment, through our reading, our
prayer and our quiet times. Thank you
for your constant encouragement and
direction. Fill us with your Spirit Words
so we can share with others. Empower
us to seek you deeper and deeper.
Quieten us to hear your voice.

I ask this in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Diane

DAY 30

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESVUK)

The context of 2 Timothy 3:16 shows that in the last days, there will come times of difficulty (3:1). Why? Verses 2-5a answer this question: 'For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.' 2 Timothy 3:2-5a (ESVUK)

I truly believe that we are living in the last days. As Christians, we should expect times of difficulties in our lives. As an example, from the list that Paul gave to Timothy, have you ever seen 'lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God'? You probably have.

As Christians, we are living as lights in the days of darkness and this world is not getting any better. Second Timothy 3:13 (ESVUK) says, 'evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.'

It sounds very depressing, doesn't it? But as Paul wrote to Timothy, there

is good news: Timothy had the Word of God with him! The sacred writings that Timothy has been acquainted with since childhood was able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (3:15). But not only is the Word of God that Timothy had useful for him in salvation, in verse 16 we learned that all Scripture is also profitable for four other things: teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

Like Timothy, we also have the Word of God with us today in the Bible. The Word of God still transforms people from death to life. It also profits us since it teaches, reproofs, corrects, and trains in righteousness. All of this helps us as God's messengers to be equipped for every good work (3:17). To God be the glory!

Prayer

Thank you God for your Word that is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. May you use your Word to change lives in these difficult days and may we glorify you through our lives as believers. Thank you for your Word that gives life. In Jesus' mighty name I pray. Amen.

Abraham Suryantyo

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

DAY 31



*The seed is the word of God.
- Luke 8:11 (ESV)*

A seed lies waiting, waiting for the right conditions, the right time. A seed goes from dormancy to life after being buried in good soil to emerge as a new identity, an identity that will grow and produce fruit and more seed. A seed can lie dormant for many years just sitting waiting for the right conditions – light, water, temperature, soil conditions.

In the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-8 ESV), Jesus is teaching us about a well-known concept of sowing a seed into good soil. Matthew 13:23 tells us that “As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Today sowing seed is a lost skill – how many of you have sown a seed recently? The knowledge of good soil, the right conditions or season have been forgotten. Before sowing a seed, we need to prepare the soil, this takes time. Many of us now don't know about preparation of good soil; we are just used to going to the supermarket and purchasing the bag of peas (hundreds of seeds).

In the parable the different soils represent the different hearts of people. How can we prepare the hearts (soil) of people? The soil needs to be prepared before we sow any seed. Good soil needs digging over whether by a spade or a plough and rotary hoe and even once the seed is sown the soil needs tilling to allow air into the roots and keep the weeds from spoiling the crop. This preparation is best achieved with LOVE. LOVE is the spade or hoe that turns the soil. It is the love for people that allows the heart (soil) become ready for the seed to be sown that will take root, grow and produce a harvest. So, before we share the Word of God (the seed) with someone, check the soil, have you prepared it with LOVE? Before you read the Word of God for yourself, check your soil (heart): is it prepared well with LOVE for Him and yourself?

Challenge

Till the soil of your heart and others with LOVE. Generously plough and hoe the soil with His Words of LOVE that have been written for you and about you. Share the word with LOVE.

James Williamson

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