

REBOOT†

YOUR FAITH

Daily Devotions

R10



West View
Methodist Church

YOUR FAITH

MONDAY

John 17:3 NIV

³Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 14:7 The Message

⁷"If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him!"

Can we know anything at all about God? The bible says God wants us to know him & his Son, Jesus. What does the life of Jesus tell you about the nature of God? Can you read the gospel stories as God's love letter to you?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to show us the face of God & for living a life of love so that we could know how much the Father loves us. Amen

TUESDAY

Romans 5: 6-8 The Message

Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, & doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak & rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good & noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

Amazing love, spend a few moments considering this passage

".... while we were of no use whatever to him..." How does this make you feel? God takes the initiative while we are still far away from him – does this make you feel loved & valued?

PRAYER: God, open our hearts to this amazing love which opened the way for us to come into relationship with yourself. Amen

WEDNESDAY

Acts 17: 28 New Living Translation

²⁸For in him we live & move & exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

God is not a mystery, God is THE mystery & we are part of this mystery. As I gradually become aware of the closeness of the mystery we call God I come to recognise that God loves me as God's own. Love is an experience between two persons. How is your experience of knowing God personally? Are you able to share your deepest pain, greatest joy, your hopes & fears with him?

PRAYER: God of mystery, God of infinite love, help me to come into your presence honestly, to remove my 'mask' & to allow you to search me & create in me a clean heart. Amen

THURSDAY

1 John 3:1 The Message

¹What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are. But that's also why the world doesn't recognise us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he's up to.

When we recognise God as mystery our spontaneous response is wonder & awe. At the heart of Jesus' spirituality is the awareness of God as near, very near. He spoke of God's kingdom as close at hand. God is not far away!

How do we become aware of God's presence? Eugene Peterson says the following in "Living the Message". "When we are noisy & when we are hurried, we are incapable of intimacy – deep complex personal relationships. If God is the living centre of redemption, it is essential that we be in touch with & responsive to that personal will. If God has a will for this world & we want to be in on it, we must be still long enough to find out what it is." How difficult is it for you to find time to be still in God's presence?

PRAYER: Lord as I come to you today, help me to put aside those things which distract me & to simply be still in your presence.
Amen

FRIDAY

Psalm 91:15 New Living Translation

¹⁵When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue & honour them.

“God longs for our presence & he is inviting you - & me - to come home to that for which we were created. His arms are stretched out wide to receive us. His heart is enlarged to take us in.

For too long we have been in a far country; a country of noise & hurry & crowds, a country of climb & push & shove, a country of frustration & fear & intimidation. And he welcomes us home; home to serenity & peace & joy, home to friendship & fellowship & openness, home to intimacy & acceptance & affirmation.” *From Richard Foster “PRAYER”.*
God longs to spend time with you- how will you respond to his invitation?

PRAYER: Thank you God that you welcome us with open arms, thank you that in you we can find our true home. Amen

SATURDAY

Colossians 2:2 The Message

I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident & at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom & knowledge are embedded in that mystery & nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery!

The challenge is to grow in awareness of God's presence & closeness. In other words, to become more conscious of the presence of mystery in us & all around us. Jesus in his uniqueness identified himself with God. This was not an ego trip, but he showed us the image of God as a servant, humble & compassionate. The Psalmist puts this into words for us “Attention, all! See the marvels of GOD! He plants flowers & trees all over the earth, bans war from pole to pole, breaks all the weapons

across his knee. "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything." He says, "Be still, & know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress." Psalm 46

How will you explore the mystery who is our God? Are you ready to be woven into his tapestry of love?

PRAYER: Lord, kindle a new flame of love & commitment in my heart so that I may know you more clearly, love you more dearly, & follow you more nearly. Amen

HOME GROUP MATERIAL

Week One

How God restores our relationship with God himself

PRAYER Gracious God, as we begin this new year we look forward to all that you will do in & through our lives. We commit ourselves afresh to you, teach us, mould us & form us into community with you, with one another & with our environment. Help us to be aware of your presence in every aspect of our daily lives.

Amen

CONNECT Where or when do you feel most at one with yourself? Is it a place, a time, a season? Is it when you are alone & quiet or busy with something that fulfils you? Share briefly with the group.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & STUDY

John 17:3; John 14:7; Ephesians 1:17

- The bible says God wants us to know him. Can we know anything at all about God? Mystics speak of God as unknowable. Thomas Aquinas says that we do not know what God is; we only know what God is not. What is your response to this statement?
- A quote by Meister Eckhart says the following "God is closer to me than I am to myself; my being depends on God's being near to me & present to me ...God is near us, but we are far from God. In your experience how much of this statement is true of your relationship with God.
- If God is THE mystery, how do we experience his presence in the here & now?
- What do you think is the key to truly knowing God?
- What is your plan to grow closer to God this year? How can you deepen your commitment to him?

APPLICATION This week make time to explore & be aware of God's love & grace in your life. Next week share with the group what you have noticed.

CLOSURE Pray for one another that each may come into a closer knowledge of God's love, compassion, forgiveness & kindness this coming week.

YOUR FAITH

Rebooting ourselves! What an awesome idea. Just hit the restart button! But that is exactly what Jesus enables us to do!

MONDAY - The Conflict Within Us

Romans 7: 15 – 25

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

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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

No matter where we are in our Christian journey, there exists conflict between the person we are & the person God intends us to be. Examine each of these aspects of your life: your family; your job; where you live; your achievements & your physical appearance. Do you have any inner conflicts regarding any of these areas? Are you at peace with these areas? Are you taking care of yourself? In what way can you close the gap between who we are & who Jesus wants you to be?

PRAYER: Lord at the start of this New Year, begin to reveal to me the person you intend me to be. Awaken in me a desire to be moulded by you & the courage to undertake the change that needs to happen.

TUESDAY - God's Acceptance

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Timothy 4: 4-5

⁴ For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

In order to be reconciled with ourselves & be at peace with who we are, we need to embrace the truth that we are the beloved of God. Our starting point is God's complete acceptance of us. The challenge then is to love & accept ourselves unconditionally.

Acceptance does not necessarily mean everything is "OK". John Ortberg writes in *The Me I Want To Be*: "[God] creates, & then if there is a problem, he rescues (And redeems)".

- Agree or disagree: If we accept that God loves us, we have to accept that we are lovable.
- What failures, guilt, insecurities or fears do you need to give to God so that you can experience this redemption in your life?

PRAYER: Lord may I open my heart & mind to Your restoring power. Grant me insight into areas where I need to change & a willingness to work on these with You.

WEDNESDAY

- Who then is our true self?
- The person we were created to be?

Psalms 139: 14 – 16

*¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

*¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

Ephesians 2: 8 – 10

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Every so often you may do something that surprises you, & you feel good. This is a glimpse at the person you were made to be. Your true self will become evident when you find yourself experiencing compassion, acting with sincerity, speaking out in truth, doing random acts of kindness.....

In the book *29 Gifts* by Cami Walker we see this principle in action. Soon after her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis a friend gave Cami an “uncommon prescription” – Give a gift every day for 29 days. It could be a smile, a telephone call or chocolates. The gifts didn’t have to be large but they had to be authentic & mindful. At the end of the month her outlook on her condition & the world had dramatically changed. Looking outward towards others is who God wants you to be.

“God made you to receive life from outside yourself, creating vitality within yourself & producing blessings beyond yourself.” John Ortberg.

- Do you think you are the version you were created to be? OR have you stopped dreaming of fulfilling your God-given potential?
- What situations or reasons contributed to this? Think again about those dreams.

PRAYER: Lord help me today look outward & beyond myself. There are so many needs around me. What would you have me do?

THURSDAY - Your uniqueness

Romans 12: 6 – 8 NIV

⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith;⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,^[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Peter 4: 10 & 11 NIV

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

If we are to Reboot ourselves we need to also recognise that we are UNIQUE. This does not mean superior or better than anyone else but DIFFERENT. God loves diversity – His creation is testimony to that! If left to our own devices, this uniqueness could become egotistical & self-righteous, but Jesus comes to bridge this gap.

Is it time for you to stop trying to be like, or better than everyone else & time to CELEBRATE the fact that you are uniquely different? How do you think God can use your unique qualities?

- If we are each a unique creation of God, we need to recognise that everyone else is also different & unique. Are you able to accept that those you interact with are also made different by God? How many people have you labelled "odd" because they do not fit into what you consider the norm? Can you see them as God's unique creation regardless of what you might think?

It is because of our differences that when we are working together everyone has a part to play (as Paul teaches us in the Romans reading). Your unique qualities = a need in your world = God's timing.

PRAYER: Pray now for God to use your uniqueness & to open your heart & mind to the differences in people.

FRIDAY - Embracing your death

John 14: 1 – 3

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God^[a]; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

1 Corinthians 15: 22

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

When we accept we are a beloved of Christ & uniquely made by Him, we need then to also accept that our God-given life on earth is finite, as designed by Him.

Albert Nolan in his book *Jesus Today – a Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, says "Death is part of life. My death is part of who & what I am. When we embrace our uniqueness, we embrace, among other things, our death."

- This acceptance gives us the freedom to live life to the full. It eradicates the fear of dying. At the beginning of this New Year, where the future is always unknown, are you able to accept that death is also part of God's plan for you? AND are you able to celebrate this fact with your family? How important is it to then make each day count?

PRAYER: Lord I thank you for the life you have given me. Grant me joy & peace to accept that my death is part of your design. Help me live each day serving You & others.

During a memorial service, the Rev. Allan Learmonth started a sermon by saying:

"I believe in death because it is inevitable, it is part of the divine cycle & it is the penultimate goal of life, the last but one thing I & all others have to achieve without which I cannot inherit the life & experience prepared for me by God".

SATURDAY

Take this song as a prayer to end this week & dedicate yourself anew to God.

Thrive Casting Crowns

Here in this worn & weary land
Where many a dream has died
Like a tree planted by the water
We never will run dry
So living water flowing through
God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts & flood our souls
With one desire
Just to know You & to make You known
We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run & hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

2 Corinthians 5: 17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

HOME GROUP MATERIAL

Week Two

How God restores our relationship with ourselves

PRAYER At the beginning of this year may our desire to change & grow be so strong that we eagerly embrace your forgiving & renewing love. We pray that we begin the year restored & empowered to do your will. The personal & national challenges that we face are daunting. Grant us faith, wisdom & hope to meet them by being firmly rooted in you.

CONNECT Spend a few minutes sharing with each other your hopes & dreams for this New Year. And where are you in relation to life? Setting out on new paths, facing adversity or simply that you don't know?

REFLECTION STUDY

Read Genesis 3: 7 – 10

The question put to Adam is "Where are you?" Whether we see Adam as a historical figure or a symbol of man does not matter. The question remains powerful. Adam was hiding from God because he chose to do what he wanted. When he realised the consequences of his actions, he hid. It is the same with us – when we are out of line with God we try to hide.

- In what ways do we hide from God?
- Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the snake. Who or what do we blame?
- What are the consequences for individuals, families & the nation when we hide from God?
- Does God call us to judge us or redeem us?
- Where are you in relation to God? Is it your name He is calling?

APPLICATION If we are reconciled with ourselves & we are loved unconditionally by God, there is no need to hide. In order to REBOOT yourself – what is the next step you need to take?

PRAYER Lord grant us the courage to stop hiding & stand before You in our nakedness, brokenness & weakness. May our answer this January be "here I am Lord" We want to claim Your redemptive, restoring power & be the people You made us each to be.

MONDAY - God's example

1 John 4: 7,8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Ephesians 1: 11- 12 The Message

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

This week we will be looking at living in peace and community with those around us– easier said than done?

Perhaps we can learn from the example that God has given us “God gets down on his knees among us; gets on our level and shares himself with us. He does not reside afar off and send diplomatic messages, he kneels among us. That posture is characteristic of God. The discovery of this is what defines what we know of God as good news – God shares himself generously and graciously.” Eugene Peterson “Living the Message.”

- How can you learn from this gracious God to love those around you?
- Are you willing to take steps this week to repair, renew and form strengthened relationships with others?

PRAYER: Lord help me to understand your love more fully so that I am able to offer love and compassion to all people.

TUESDAY - Acceptance

Romans 14:13

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

We are all unique, created by God and precious in his sight and yet we forget this so often when we meet people whose beliefs and convictions are different to ours. Atticus Finch a lawyer, in Harper Lee's novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" has this to say "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" Are you able to see things from a different perspective? How does it feel to 'put yourself in another's shoes'?

PRAYER: Lord help me to be willing to understand different people's perspective and to respect their right to differ from my way of thinking.

WEDNESDAY - Listening

Proverbs 18:13 The Message

"Answering before listening is both stupid and rude."

Proverbs 18:15 The Message

"Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights."

Listening is in short supply in the world, everyone seems to live in a hurry but to spend time in listening to someone is a gift we can offer. How difficult is it for you to listen without interrupting? When did you last take the time to give your undivided attention to a family member, a friend or even a stranger?

PRAYER: Help me Lord, in this world of busyness to take time for the lost, the lonely and those who simply need to talk. Help me to listen quietly without judging or becoming impatient and to see beyond the words and understand the need.

THURSDAY - Community

Philippians 2: 1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philip Yancy in his book "Vanishing Grace" says the following "I'm convinced that human beings instinctively seek two things. We long for meaning, a sense that our life matters to the world around us. And we long for a sense of community, a sense of being loved."

A sense of belonging is vital to our well-being. How good are you at including others to your circle of friends or helping strangers to feel that they belong? How can you help someone to recognise that their life matters this week?

PRAYER: Lord, when I meet new people, or those who are marginalised this week, help me to remember that you are an inclusive God and that ALL people are precious in your sight.

FRIDAY - Supporting

Galatians 6:2

"Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law."

Hebrews 13; 1,2

"Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

In the family of God
We need not pretend to be
What we know we are not.
In the family of God
Our acceptance is not based
Upon how superbly we perform.

Our material possessions
Or lack of them
Are of little consequence.
Our personal failures
Do not shatter our relationships.
In the family of God
We are free to express
Our longing desires
Our loneliness, our fears
Our deep-seated frustrations.
In the family of God
We can freely acknowledge our needs
And expect the loving response
Of family members.
In the family of God
There is forgiveness
There is faith, there is hope
There is joy, there is love.
At least, dear God
This is your desire
For the family You dearly love.

Acknowledgement : Ruth Harms Calkin

- How are we doing as God's family in sharing each other's burdens?
- Do we recognise the stranger as God's unique and loved creation?

PRAYER: Thank you Lord that we are all part of your family whether we acknowledge you or not. Teach us to love one another as you love us.

SATURDAY - Forgiving

Ephesians 4:31-32 The Message

"Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you."

I WAS FURIOUS!

This morning

A cantankerous neighbour said to me

“Not only do you drive as well

As your husband drives

But you can do it

On either side of the road!”

She laughed raucously as she said it.

But I was furious, just furious!

Not only do I drive a little better than my husband drives

But I *never* drive

On the wrong side of the road.

Lord, could we move?

Child, could you forgive?

How good are you at offering this same grace and forgiveness which you have received to others? This weekend, be aware of people who need grace and forgiveness.

PRAYER: God of grace fill me with your grace and compassion as I learn what it means to forgive those who may have wronged me.

HOME GROUP MATERIAL

Week Three

Making peace with our neighbour

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord your word reminds us that you long for us to live in harmony with one another, to care for the unlovely and unloved as well as those in whose company we feel comfortable. Teach us what it truly means to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'. Fill us with your love and compassion for all people.

Amen.

CONNECT

How has 2018 begun for you?

Did you find the Christmas season peaceful or stressful?

Why?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND STUDY

- *Read : Romans 2:1 and Matthew 7:12* In our reading on Tuesday we were challenged to 'put ourselves in another's shoes'. How comfortable was that? How do you relate to those who are radically different?
- *Read Proverbs 18:13* When did someone listen to you intently without asking questions of interrupting? How did that make you feel? Are you able to offer this same listening to someone else without becoming impatient?
- *Read 1 Corinthians 10:24 and Philippians 2:3* How would it change our relationships if we were to consider others, not only our fellow Christians, as more important than ourselves?
- *Read Colossians 3:13* We are so grateful for the grace shown to us – why then do we find it so difficult to extend that same grace to others? How can we change this attitude?

APPLICATION

This week look for opportunities to help someone to know that their life matters. You may need to set aside time to listen to someone lonely, or to speak with someone whose lifestyle or faith is radically different to your own.

Philip Yancy in "Vanishing Grace" adds a cautionary note to believers "If they have the slightest consciousness of themselves as the superior helping the inferior, or the faithful saving the unfaithful they immediately lose their Christian dignity."

CLOSURE

Pray for one another that our love may identify us as Christ followers.

YOUR FAITH

Monday

John 1:1-5

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

However we interpret creation the fundamental truth is: God created. And He declared it good. It really pleased Him. If we have a meaningful relationship with Him, it should please us too.

- In what ways does your love for Jesus prompt your conscience to appreciate what God has created?

Genesis 2: 15

"The Lord took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

God has placed incredible faith in man to take care of a creation that He loves and is so pleased with. What a privilege! But also... What a problem! It means that we can honour His faith in us or defy Him and follow man's inherent selfish ways. We are still faced with the original problem encountered in the Garden of Eden.

- How seriously are you taking the responsibility of caring for God's creation? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution?
- Do you need to REBOOT your attitude so as to take seriously the problems that the environment is facing and actively look for ways to make a difference?

PRAYER: Lord, open our eyes to the hurt and injustices of our changing world. Let us rejoice in a year of possibilities where we can commit anew to You. Give us the strength and wisdom to make a difference to your world in 2018.

Tuesday

Galatians 5: 16; 22 – 26

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Let us REBOOT our attitudes towards creation by grounding them in the fruits of the Spirit as they are the very essence of the Christian life and if this is how we live our lives we cannot help but care for all that He has made.

LOVE – 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 7

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The Oxford Dictionary defines LOVE as “a deep affection for”. In the fruits of the Spirit Paul talks about Agape and Philia love. Love between God and man and each other. When we concentrate on developing this kind of love in our lives, we will be transformed.

- Are there areas or situations in your life that need this transforming love?
- STOP and assess how you love God's environment and His people – is it selective or unconditional?

JOY – 1 Peter 1: 8 & 9

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The joy of the Holy Spirit comes when our life is right with God and each other. It gives an inner peace and stability when our lives are in turmoil. We can experience this joy when we walk in God's Creation.

- Think of a time when you were out in nature and you experienced the sheer joy of a mighty God. Or the beauty of a place enabled you to say "I can get through this!"
- How does this prompt you into wanting to preserve creation?

PRAYER: Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of the earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.

Wednesday

PEACE - **John 14: 27**

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

In a world and a country where there is so much strife, poverty, corruption and greed, peace is a difficult concept to embrace. It is easy to see the lack of peace and harmony in God's Creation today. Jesus knows all this yet He still offers His gift of peace. His own destination was the cross yet He had peace because He knew He was doing God's will. Similarly, if we have the faith and confidence that what we are doing what is right in God's sight – we will have peace.

- Do you have this assurance and peace? Pray for God to guide your life and decisions.
- Are your attitudes towards caring for the environment in line with God's?

PATIENCE – **James 5: 7 & 8**

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

We live in a society of instant gratification. So much can be instantly downloaded, Googled, ordered online and delivered to your door. This technology is great – it has improved our lives in so many ways.

However, this has made a generation of people who want it now. We are not used to waiting. The irony is: Jesus constantly calls us to WAIT. Everything in nature takes time to grow and blossom.

- Do you need take the time to appreciate all aspects God's Creation?

- Stop and assess what this impatience has done to your surroundings. Where can you invest time to help rejuvenate creation? e.g. Recycling.

PRAYER: Lord, may Your Holy Spirit speak to my mind and conscience about bringing peace and harmony to my small part of Your Creation. Help me to be patient. Help me to earnestly seek to be a peace-maker for you and rekindle the spirit of patience in me.

Thursday

GENTLENESS; KINDNESS; GOODNESS – **Colossians 3: 12 – 14**

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

Patience gives way to GENTLENESS. It develops in us a gentleness of spirit. It softens the soul (Dr J. Malherbe St. Juste, A Life Fulfilled with the Fruit of the Spirit.)

The English language makes the word 'GOODNESS' do a lot of work! It covers a wide range of expressions: good time; good game; good food; in good spirits etc. However, in the Biblical sense: it is a quality akin to the nature of God Himself (Luke 18: 19). Goodness is the expression of KINDNESS and kindness is the willingness to do good. William Barclay defines goodness: "virtue [behaviour showing high moral standards] equipped at every point."

- Have you developed a gentleness of spirit? Whereby a deep concern for all God's Creation and people is fostered?
- Do you display high moral standards and a willingness to conserve natural resources such as water and electricity; recycling; littering? On a scale of 1 – 10, where do you rate yourself?
- So much damage has already been done to the world. We can't change the world but we can change the way we live in it. List a few practical ways of how you and your family can do this.

PRAYER: God who is gentle, kind and good; help me to understand how I can change my behaviour to reflect these fruits in creation and your people. Help me to be willing to change the way I live in your world that will begin to REBOOT small part of creation that I live in.

Friday

FAITHFULNESS - 1 Corinthians 4: 1 & 2

¹ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Matthew 25: 21

²¹ *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

The characteristics of FAITHFULNESS could be described as: loyal, dependable, trustworthy and a high degree of integrity.

- What are you DOING? Are you ignoring these opportunities to serve God, burying them or faithfully doing all you can for Him with an integrity that you can be proud of?
- Would you consider yourself to be loyal and dependable in recycling? Not wasting food? Do you need to think twice about what you throw away?
- Or on the opposite end of the scale: are expensive organic foods, no GMO's and all things green seen as so important, that one forgets that nations need to be fed and millions are starving? How do Christians find a balance in this controversial topic?

SELF-CONTROL – 2 Peter 1: 5 – 9

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

This is the controlling of emotions and feelings; speech and actions. And perhaps the hardest quality to achieve! Society today would indicate that "it's all about me". Self-control is not doing exactly what we like but doing what is in our own and others best interest. And for Christians it is doing what GOD wants. It is a cognitive process. THINK about what you are doing and its consequences.

- List areas in your day to day life where you know self-control is lacking. Do you want to change this? List practical ways of doing this.
- God WANTS us to responsibly care for creation. THINK about what you can do. COMMIT to it this New Year and STICK with it.

PRAYER: Lord you have given me talents and gifts. Help me to use them to improve Your world and the people I interact with. Open my eyes to the needs around me and may I faithfully seek to do Your will each day. Help me to control my own selfish desires and develop in me the self-control that is guided and rooted in Your Holy Spirit.

Saturday

Let us use this hymn of praise by Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748) as a prayer to conclude the week on Rebooting God's Creation.

I sing the almighty power of God,
That made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at His command,
And all the stars obey.
I sing the goodness of the Lord,
That filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His word,
And then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed
Where'er I turn mine eye,
If I survey the ground I tread,
Or gaze upon the sky!

God's hand is my perpetual guard,
He guides me with His eye;
Why should I then forget the Lord,
Whose love is ever nigh.

PRAYER: Lord, we pray for the fruits of Your Spirit to grow ever more deeply in our lives. We offer ourselves anew to You this year; to commit wholeheartedly to taking care of Your Creation and to partake of its healing power to restore ourselves each day. When we stop to see You in the beauty around us, in every person and in every gift of nature, we cannot help but say: "Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee, How Great Though Art." AMEN

HOME GROUP MATERIAL

Week Four

Making peace with creation

PRAYER

Help us Lord to begin to understand that the fruits of the Spirit are indeed the very essence of You the Creator, Lord and Comforter. Fill us with your Spirit so that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control overflow in our lives and caring for your people and all Creation is the only way we know.

CONNECT

Share with each other an aspect of God's Creation that gives you joy – where it is food for the soul. How does this help you understand the nature of God?

REFLECTION AND STUDY

Read together: Genesis 2: 15 – 27 and Romans 8: 18 – 28

Philip Yancey in his book *The God Who Can't Be Tamed*, suggests that if we continue to destroy the environment, we are losing opportunities of seeing who God is.

- How are you able to see the nature and character of God through creation?

There is immense diversity in what God has created: from utter beauty to the violent forces of natural disasters.

- List the characteristics of God as seen through this.
- Discuss why God's people acknowledge this greatness yet feel they have the right to do as they please with His Creation.

Revitalising the environment is a spiritual issue. Selfishness and greed as well as a lack of concern for others directly impacts on natural resources and the environment.

- What is the connection between the care of creation and personal / congregational spiritual growth?
- How does developing the fruits of the Spirit in our lives better equip us to take seriously the task of stewardship of the environment?
- What are the challenges of putting across to a secular world, the Christian's viewpoint of caring for the environment?

The issues are enormous: global warming, unequal distribution of resources; CO2 emissions; water shortages; population explosion – to name a few. We cannot solve the problems on a world scale therefore we need to concentrate on ourselves and the circle over which we DO have influence.

- Discuss how you see the fruits of the Spirit making a difference in attitudes towards caring for the environment.
- Brainstorm ways in which you as individuals or your group can be better at environmental stewardship?

In conclusion, caring for God's Creation is after all a symbiotic relationship between us and nature. If we take care of creation, it will take care of us.

“You will go out in joy, and be led forth in peace: the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.” Isaiah 55: 12

CLOSE IN PRAYER