

THE GRAPEVINE

Monthly Magazine of Botley Baptist Church



"Social distance
lads!
KEEP social
distance!"



AUGUST 2020

**This parable isn't first about seed or soil.
It is first about the lavish,
extravagant nature of God.**



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(C) COMMUNION

PASTORAL MUSING

Three and a half months after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, the World Health Organisation (WHO) now carries a lengthy page of “myth-busters” on its website, under the section Advice for the Public.

As I write, Twitter has banned the US president's eldest son, DT Jr from tweeting for 12 hours, after he posted a video on Twitter discussing the benefits of *hydroxychloroquine*, the anti-malaria drug, as a preventive measure against coronavirus, despite medical studies to the contrary.

There is so much being said, not said, contested, attested, verified etc. at this time, it is difficult what and whom to believe!

Ever since my early teen years when I was deposited in the dormitory of a boarding school by loving parents (not as Dickensian as it sounds!), I have been intrigued by the role of misinformation in creating myths (larger than life accounts). A report in the morning news, for example, stating, “*the possibility of rain in the late afternoon*”, is by noon, circulating as, “*thunder showers with hail and lightning through the night*”! We have accepted “myth” as a traditional story of heroic people portrayed as supernatural beings, but layers of misinformation drip-fed into myths, makes it more believable, pushing it closer to factual accuracy!

Myths are colourful. They make us fall out of our daily 9-5 routine on the hamster wheel, to imagine aliens and abductions, than to listen to a scientist drone on about the shoddy nature of supporting evidence.

Watching the daily briefing from Number 10, there were instances when a noted scientist said they did not have sufficient evidence to affirm a course of action, and the visual and print media cast

aspersions on the credibility of the scientist, making it difficult for the public to distinguish scientific fact from fiction. Remember when a mountain of data tried to dispel the fraudulent study that linked the MMR vaccine to autism? That wasn't as interesting as a mother explaining how her son developed autism after getting a vaccine (then miraculously cured through dietary intervention), a narrative which is endlessly fascinating. Once reported and retweeted with grains of misinformation embedded into myths, it appears strong and sound in the realm of truth.

There are continuing sound bytes about the relationship between God and a destructive and debilitating virus. Many learned preachers posing as theologians, strongly suggest, COVID-19 is the judgement of God upon a faithless people; when it is finally tamed, it is due to the mercy and kindness of God. They did the same thing with HIV/AIDS being the judgement of God over a people who had lost their moral compass. It is not for us to speculate the reasons for God's action.

We are a fickle lot, we humans! On the one hand we heed the counsel of investment advisors: past performance is not an indication of future outcomes, but we are happy to presume, God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin, is doing the same with the Coronavirus, acting in judgement - His past performance is an indication of (present and) future outcome!



We have dedicated this issue to narrate and chronicle God at work among us today not killing and destroying a wayward people,

individuals and families as many have suggested, rather God at work among us restoring us back into a loving relationship with Him.

It is very poignant that a month into lock-down when we were beginning to count the cost of human life through death, we celebrated Easter, reviving our understanding of God whose love for us is so strong, He wants us to walk straight into a New Restored Life with Him, as if death did not exist, which Jesus made possible by breaking the chains of death, by entering death and His resurrection three days later!

We in Britain are a part of a Christian revival all over the world. Here is one report from an area we know well. In the past few months, over one about that one fact for a moment. It wasn't that long ago that major news outlets such as the BBC reported both on the flight of Christians from some countries in the region and the dwindling church sizes in others. Yet, in one of the most challenging situations in the world, ministry is flourishing. Those who listen, their encounter is life-changing, as they meet Christ for the first time and understand the message of the Cross. The hope they encounter, and the joy they find, is a joy that is echoed in heaven and will endure into eternity. We can all celebrate that.



Hope and joy travel together; when we are conscious of and understand the hope given us by Jesus, and we see in small things around us, this hope bearing fruit, joy follows!

Imagine the angst of Kate and Gerry McCann as the spectre of hope rises again. Listening to confusing and contradictory news

reports is unsettling and distracting. How many times over the past 13 years, speculation, “hot new trails” to follow and new evidence raises hope, yet for them, joy remains so elusive?

Paul blessed the citizens of Rome, I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit (15:13). What a wonderful blessing to confer on each other. If you can memorise this, greet people with these words as often as you can. If not, write it in your own words and bless people as you meet them. It is also a great birthday and anniversary blessing! Receive the blessing of blessing others, in Jesus’ Name!

Yours in the mood for blessing...

Kalyan

Corona Tales!

My friend came home from work, poured himself a glass of wine and sat down for dinner. After biting into the first morsel, he complained to his wife, “This food is tasteless!”

His wife got up from the table, went into the kitchen and phoned the NHS. To the kind Doctor who answered her call, she said, “My husband has lost his taste”.

It took 7 minutes for the ambulance to arrive. Today is day 8 into his 14 days quarantine!

MORAL: Careful what you complain about!

A Sense of Belonging

To “belong” is one of the greatest desires of the human soul. To belong is in our DNA from birth; the sense of smell draws us to our mother, the sound of our parents’ voice comforts us, and when our eyesight sharpens, we smile at the person to whom we “belong”.

We also desire belonging in a group, which is the human emotional need to be accepted and made to feel welcome by a social, professional or ethnic group.

At creation, God said, “It is not good for the sole human to be alone... I will make a helper who is just right for him”, so He created a companion for him. The first human immediately recognised that they belonged together!

Also built into our DNA is the need to feel closely connected with others, with whom we feel safe, cared for and loved. God made us to live in community with Himself and with others around us.

Belonging is deeply rooted in God’s story It is expressed as:

ownership of one’s possessions (a possessive belonging);

belonging to a fixed social group, like the priests in the Levite division (Luke 1:5), Joseph in the house and lineage of David (Luke 2:4), and the early Christians to the Church (Acts 9:2; 12:1);

belonging to God and His family, which is the most profound sense of belonging described in Scripture.

Problems arise when we treat someone who belongs to God and His family as we would treat one’s possessions, or treating someone as a personal possession instead of celebrating the person’s belonging in a fixed social group, be it professional, ethnic or institutional.

The idea of belonging to God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit is the exclusive message of the New Testament. Jesus comes as the Christ to claim that which belongs to God, lost at creation through deception.

The Church belongs to Jesus the Christ (He has taken ownership of it to provide leadership), as a bride belongs in the company of the bridegroom [note: not belong to the bridegroom] (John 3:29).

This belonging carries privileges and blessings.

Whoever “belongs” to God, hears and obeys His voice (John 8:47). All who belong to the Son, belong also to the Father (John 16:15). Without the Holy Spirit, no one belongs to God (Rom. 8:9). Whether we live or die, we belong to God (Rom. 14:8). When Christ returns, all who belong to Him will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:23). When we belong to God in these ways, we are fulfilled, at peace and feel secure.

Jesus told the Pharisees, You do not believe (in Me), because you do not belong to My sheep. My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me [because they belong to Me] (John 10:26–27).



Jesus gave us this promise: If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. You do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you out of the world (John 15:19). Do you not know, your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own (1 Cor. 6:19).

In Christ, we find true belonging, being simultaneously fully known to Him and fully loved by Him. In Christ, we all belong to Him as one body, and every member is connected to all the others (Romans 12:5).

The ultimate expression of true belonging is the Church, but we have to let Jesus the Christ be its Leader. That’s when each of us is safe and comfortable attending, experiencing friendship, share life’s hopes and struggles, and where we can contribute the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Welcome to true belonging!

Contributed by Elisabeta Cretan

Wisdom Handed Down

Early during the lockdown, Marian discovered her mother's Bible from which she shared handwritten words of wisdom (see May issue)

Margaret found her Autograph Book (remember them?) and shares wisdom and anecdotes from therein. (More next month!!)

From my Auntie:

Flowers are little bits of joy
Dropped out of Heaven
So I would wish you as gay as a garden
And what gladder greeting could pass from Auntie to Niece!

From my mother Beatrice:

The Rabbit has a shiny nose
As nature had intended
Because his little powder puff
was at the other end!

Two of her favourites:

Life is double-sided; there's a wrong side and a right,
A sad side and a happy side, a black side and a bright.
So if things look dark to you, just change your thoughts!
Life will look quite different, if you turn it, best side out!

*Little puffs of powder
Little dabs of paint
Make a lady's complexion
Just look what it ain't*

Finally, a blessing:

May your joys be as deep as the ocean
And your sorrows as light as its spray!

Healing the Weary

Andrew Lloyd Webber's play, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, presents an unorthodox re-telling of the life of Jesus. While there is much in the play to decry, it has nevertheless been a favourite of mine because of its intriguing focus on the humanity of Jesus. One of the most poignant scenes occurs after Jesus drives the moneylenders and vendors from the temple. Perhaps already wearied from this event, new crowds of people emerge from all over the stage begging for Jesus to heal them from their infirmities. As Jesus begins to heal them, we see his weariness and feel his agony at the weight of human suffering. More and more people crowd him:

*See my eyes, I can hardly see
See me stand, I can hardly walk
I believe you can make me whole
See my tongue, I can hardly talk
See my skin, I'm a mass of blood
See my legs, I can hardly stand
I believe you can make me well
See my purse, I'm a poor, poor, man
Will you touch, will you mend me, Christ?
Won't you touch, will you heal me, Christ?*

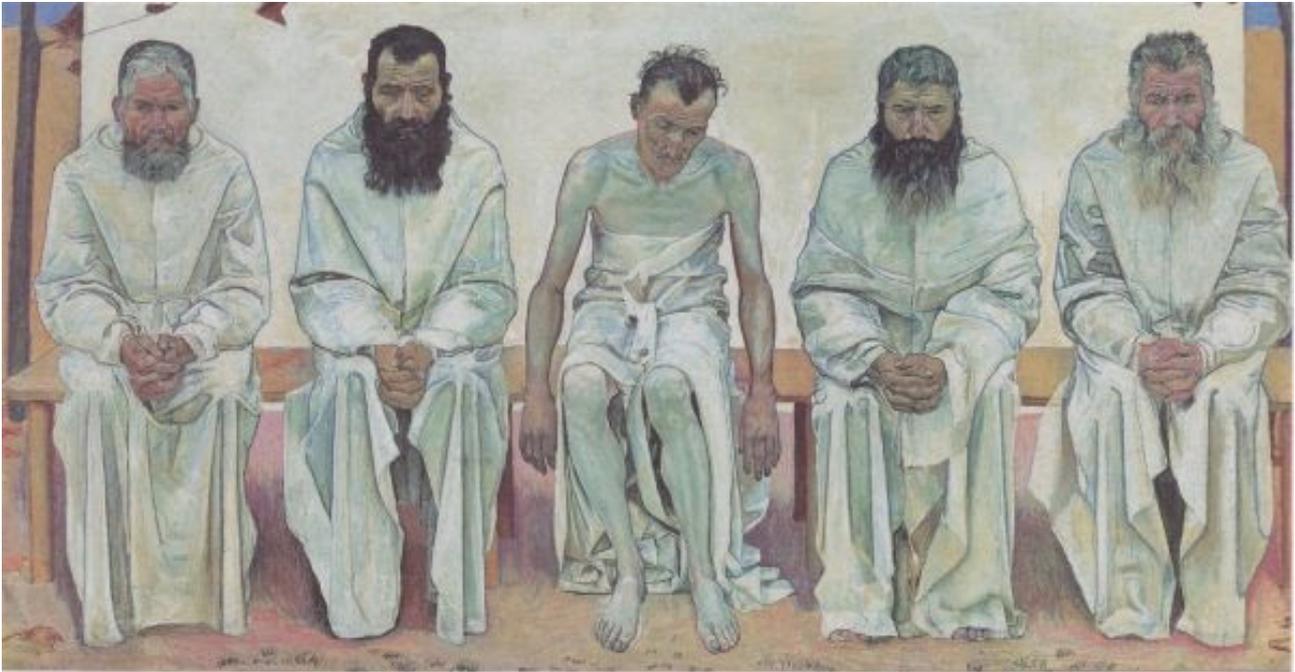


In this scene, Jesus begins to wane under the weight of endless sufferers coming to him for healing. In the staging of the play, they physically overwhelm him and in desperation he cries out:

*There's too many of you; don't push me
There's too little of me; don't crowd me
Heal yourselves!*

This scene from Webber's play often comes to mind whenever I read articles about burnout in the helping professions. Anyone involved in public ministry, the healing professions, or relief work understands the weight of responsibility to care and laments the limited resources to do so. Limited human resources and the constancy of human need often produce mental, spiritual, and physical exhaustion. Recent statistics suggest that "burnout" accounts for an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion in healthcare spending each year. Burnout may also contribute to type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, gastrointestinal

issues, high cholesterol and sometimes even death for those under age 45.(1) Members of the clergy frequently report symptoms of depression.(2) Somehow, those whose vocations place them in service to others sometimes believe that this service comes at the expense of themselves and their own well-being.



Ferdinand Hodler, The life of Weary, oil and tempera on canvas, 1892, Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany.

While the gospel writers never depict the kind of reaction we see portrayed by Jesus in Jesus Christ Superstar, they make a point to mention that Jesus often sought rest from the crowds that followed him. The Gospel of Luke reports: “[N]ews about him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But he himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:15-16). And in the Gospel of Mark we learn that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas because they were coming to him from everywhere. Indeed, following this statement, Mark tells the story of the paralytic who had to be lowered through the roof due to the crowds of people who had gathered to hear Jesus teach. In John’s gospel, we are told that Jesus “being wearied from his journey” was sitting by the well before asking the Samaritan woman to help him by giving him something to drink. As New Testament scholar Ken Bailey notes on this passage: “As a poor man, Jesus walked with his disciples and grew weary. John's gospel has a high view of the person of Jesus, the divine Word that became flesh and dwelled among us. But in that same gospel Jesus is very

human. He gets tired and thirsty. He weeps and falls asleep. His humanity is as unmistakable as his divinity.”(3)

How helpful it is, therefore, to see a Jesus who though empowered with the Spirit of God, often withdrew from ministering because he knew he needed to rest. What Jesus understood was that in order to care for others in a sustained manner, time away in rest, prayer, and reflection was a part of that ministry of caring. Without intentional withdrawal, focus, strength, and the heart to do good are lost. Like the Jesus depicted by Andrew Lloyd Webber, without rest and self-care, all that is left is the despairing cry for others to “heal themselves.” Isaiah promises that “those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength,” but unless a posture of waiting is assumed, strength cannot be renewed.

A colleague recently shared with me her own thoughts about caring and burnout. She noted that caring work is uniquely challenging because burnout seasons are inevitable. In those seasons, she pays attention to how she might discover new things about herself, including what may be lacking in terms of rest, reflection, and self-care. She seeks to understand what can be changed and what must be accepted in the care of others. She shared that the cultivation of joy, curiosity, and passion in ministering to others is a kind of labor all of its own—a labor that requires the intentional diligence to one’s own needs and concerns in the same way that one would act intentionally to serve the needs and concerns of others.

In his own life and ministry, Jesus provides an example of one who withdrew to lonely places, who rested when he was weary, and who often received care and nurture from others. His example invites us to consider what it means to be human. His periods of intentional withdrawal and rest were as crucial to his ministry of healing as laying his hands on those who were sick. This is what the Father called him to do; it was part of being who he was and is. For those who seek to heal, minister, and care for others directing that same care back towards themselves is a posture that sustains in more ways than one.

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(1) "Companies are facing an employee burnout crisis," CNBC, 14 August 2018. Accessed 13 February 2019.

(2) Paul Vitello, "Taking a Break from the Lord's Work," The New York Times, Aug. 1, 2010. Accessed 13 February 2019.

(3) Ken Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 201

A Dying Wish

98-year-old Mother Superior lay dying in the Convent in Ireland that was her home for more than 60 years. The nuns gathered around her bed to make her last journey comfortable. They tried giving her warm milk to drink, but she refused.

One of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen, where she recalled the gift of a bottle of Irish Whiskey the previous Christmas. She opened it and poured a generous amount into the warm milk.

Back at Mother Superior's bed, they held the glass to her lips. The frail nun drank a little, then a little more and before they knew it, she had finished the whole glass down to the last drop.

As her eyes brightened, the nuns thought it would be a good opportunity to have one last talk with their spiritual leader.

"Mother," the nuns asked earnestly in whispered tones, "Please give us some of your wisdom before you leave us."

She raised herself up in bed on one elbow, looked at them and said:

"DON'T SELL THAT COW."

What is your vision for the future?

What would you like to accomplish?

More to the point, what would you like to see God accomplish through you?

There will likely be someone around you ready to tell you *"it can't be done"*, or *"we've tried that before with no success"*, or *"it's too much trouble"*.

There will likely be those around you who will say, don't bother to change; its a fad and it will go away. Stay with what you like and are used to!

Are you REALLY going to miss the opportunity to let God work through you and see what He can REALLY do?

Looking Afresh at the Stories

I enjoy reading stories and narratives in the Bible; the danger lies when repeated reading results in familiarity and we miss hidden details. Parables were Jesus' unique way of introducing us to God the Father, using everyday life examples as illustrations.

I don't know how many times I have read Luke 15, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son", until several years ago I came to realise that it took Jesus four chapters (14-17) to introduce us to the Father's Character.

Recently, I read again the Parable of the Sower, you know the one about the sower casting seed, some fell on the pathway, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, finally some on good fertile soil? (three Gospel accounts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:1-15)

In my early life, I struggled to make my Christian life relevant in my world. I journeyed through the sequence of familiar pathways being broken up, rocks of resistance being blasted, through which thorns and briars grew, the cycle of breaking up, preparing, redirecting repeated itself. I realised the Holy Spirit was at work preparing my heart and mind until the ground was fertile for the seed of God's Word to take root.

Reading this parable recently, my eyes were opened to the fact, while the parable is indeed about my preparedness, my willingness to let the Holy Spirit break and discard all that impedes the word of God to take root in me, the heart of the story is neither about the Seed nor the soil. At the centre of this parable is the intent and character of the Sower.

An experienced Sower knows well the preciousness of each seed, which bears fruit for many more to feed on and grow. No Sower in his right mind would, if he could avoid it, waste seed falling on pathways, thorns and stones. The question lingering in my mind was, what about those "wasted" seeds? Why is Jesus so casual about it? The seed fell on ... and no one made the effort to collect at least a portion of these "wasted" seeds and cast them into the wind to fall on good soil?

Seeds grow and produce "fruit" which together contributes to the harvest. Each of the Sower accounts in the synoptic gospels ends with, the seeds produced a huge harvest, some suggesting huge multiples of each seed! If Matthew, Mark and Luke thought the parable is about the seed which falls on "good" prepared

soil in order to produce the magnitude of the harvest, then this must be a significant element in the parable!

I was still restless because of the casual nature of the report that seed which fell outside of fertile soil could be left to die or feed the birds!

UNTIL!... Could it be, the Sower is s-o-o-o-o magnanimous in heart, to sow lavishly knowing, somehow, even the seeds that fall into bad places would have a chance to sprout to feed the birds, [Who] don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. (Matthew 6:26).

This parable is first and foremost about the lavish, extravagant nature of God, AND the work of the Holy Spirit who makes available His Word to everyone, even the most hard-hearted and cynical!

Our God's abundance in everything is immeasurable, and He will lavish it all on anyone and everyone who is prepared to accept it, and let it grow to harvest to produce much, much, much more than the seed planted. He is after all, the Lord of the Harvest [Matthew 9:38].



Farmers threshing wheat in Ethiopia. (©2004 World Vision/photo by Jon Warren)

This title, The Lord of the Harvest jumped out at me, a title for God

I had nether appreciated nor taken time to understand!

You see, if we allow the Holy Spirit to break the impediments in our lives that prevent the Word of God from taking root, we contribute to the fruitfulness of God's harvest!

The symbolic meaning of harvest in Scripture encompasses two main areas: God's provision for us, and God's blessing for others, both blessings for the SAME harvest! Farmers may celebrate harvest once or twice a year, the spirit of harvest can be experienced by all, all the time.

In Matthew's account of the parable of the lost sheep, he quotes Jesus saying, it is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these little ones should perish. [Matthew 18:14]. John quotes Jesus teaching, This is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day [John 6:39]. To follow the Father's will, we are responsible for the fruitfulness the Father desires, that none should perish.

The only way to know God is through His word. God's economy works like this: the Sower casts seed in abundance. They fall in many places, even wasted on soil that isn't even all that productive – or at least that's what it looks like. This is what upset me: it seems wrong, offensive and scandalous. Now I know!

Well, that's how magnanimous God's love is for each of us, that we should get to know him through His word, freely given!

The Holy Spirit is still sowing. The miracle is, you only need to invite the Holy Spirit to break through the impediments which hold back your life from being the "good soil" in which each seed produces huge multiples of harvest. The magnanimous heart of God will lavish seeds and He sees that those seeds are redeemed, regardless of the soil. Every. Last. One.

God wants to trust you with His harvest. Will you let Him?

Contributed by Revd Kaye Dee

My holiday plan for 2020:

Expectation



Reality



Christians in the NEWS

KATE FORBES Appointed Scotland's first female Finance Minister. An outspoken 29-year old Christian who does not hold back on her faith!

REV CANON TRICIA HILLAS is the new Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

MARK WAHLBERG (Actor) sharing his faith on NBC's today program said, I will not hide the fact that I love the Lord, and revealed his daily prayer habits and his daily devotional Bible reading.

OLIVIER GIROUD (Chelsea footballer) described a recent Alpha course he completed with friends as a fantastic experience.

KATY PERRY (Singer) said, praying to God helped her cope with mental health challenges. Now she wakes up with the prayer, Thank you God for today!

ROWAN WILLIAMS "The Church is more than its quarrels and its politics. The Church is a GIFT." ... "If we come out of the lockdown with a keener sense of living differently, maybe we'll have grown"

PETER They are turning to God when everything else is stripped away (Peter is an outreach worker for Christian charity Junction 42 which works inside prisons and with offenders in the community)

RED PENDER I thought God was an angry person, judging everything I did. Through online Church, I feel welcome, and also able to switch off when my emotions get the better of me. I don't have panic attacks anymore. Now is the time to heal and you can be healed.

PHIL MOORE (leads Everyday Church, London) World history is not going to end with a deadly virus a nuclear holocaust. God's plan for humanity will not end with a funeral, but with a wedding.

(above taken and summarised from issues of Premier christianity)

OXFORD AS RARELY SEEN!!



The Gift of Our Weakness

Alexandra Hoover

There are times in my life when I sat on the floor asking God for just a sliver more strength to press on. Those moments remind me I had come to the end of my strength, my will and my power.

Recently, the Lord used one of those on-the-floor moments to breathe life over my weak and weary soul. I was coming out of a challenging season. Our family had endured many trials in the last year, putting an emphasis on wounds that were still healing.

I was finally finding my footing when everything changed. We were all overwhelmed with a pandemic, grief, loss, tension and confusion.

On the floor, I silently prayed, How on earth am I supposed to keep pressing in, Father? My heart is so tired, my mind weary, and everything feels so tender. I felt empty, tired and lost. The strength and power in me felt futile when trying to serve my family, job and friendships — all while tending to my own soul. Maybe you've felt the same, friend.

As I wrestled with the Father that day, I sensed an urgency to look at my belief system. How did I conclude I had to carry this on my own? Why was my soul almost bitter toward God, as if He'd withheld some sort of help from me?

Had I made an idol out of my strength and resilience? Had my pride become the foundation for what I thought my soul could carry?

The answer was yes.

I was believing the lie that in and of myself, I was strong enough to take on the hardships of life. Weakness was not welcome here.

God whispered words of hope there on the floor: Daughter, you are a broken vessel, made whole in Me. You are broken open to spill the power, hope and love of Christ into the lives of others. You were created to be an image-bearer of My glory. It is Me in you and through you. I am the source.

God was not withholding His power from me. He is an ever-present help! But I wanted Him to give me the power so I could do it on my own. All the while, He wanted to do it through me.

God's desire has always been for His family to be a people who reflect His power and love. We were not created to be the source of strength. We were

created to worship Him as our source of strength. All the power to overcome, press into life, love and experience abundance — it comes from the Father. Which means all the glory goes to Him too.

Our weakness is an opportunity for life, renewal and dependency to take place. God says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.” And Paul responds, “Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me.”

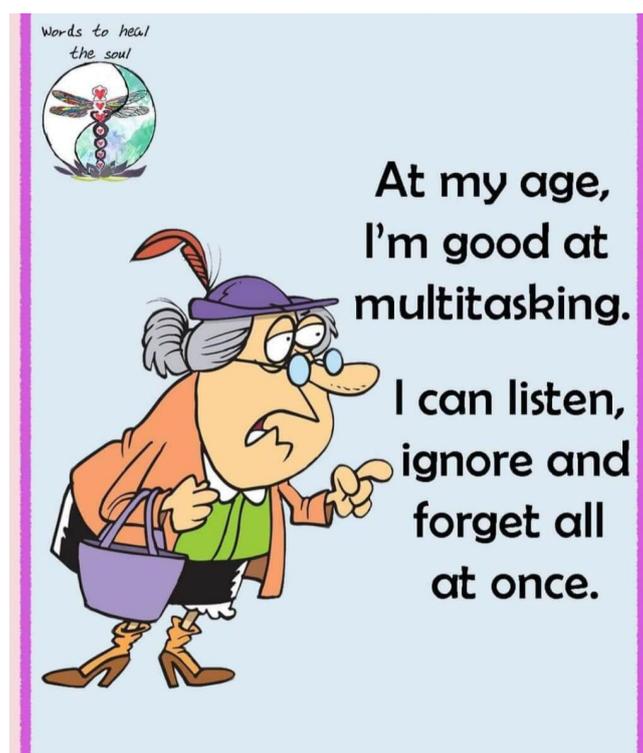
So, we boast about our good God who graciously offers us His grace. We rejoice in our weakness, as God meets us right where we are, to gift us His strength and power. Our weakness is a gift because it’s where His power is made perfect. In His presence, we find His power. His presence and power reside in me and in you.

Father, thank You that in You, we find and have all the power and strength we need. Help us to remember we are not the source, but You are — that in Your presence, we find Your power. We love You and thank You for Your sustaining grace. In Jesus’ Name, AMEN.

TRUTH FOR TODAY:

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.” [Isaiah 40:29]

*Contributed by Narola
taken from reading in Crosscards,
“The Gift of Our Weakness - Encouragement for Today” - July 31, 2020*



'I saw 600 men give their lives to Christ in prison'

Mo Timbo left a life of crime and violence to become a powerful evangelist for Jesus



I grew up with my mum and dad on Walworth Road in south-east London. I was the eldest son. Things got a bit shaky when my parents split up and my dad moved out. Dad had always been my role model, my inspiration, the person I went to for advice and guidance, so when he left I felt that I didn't have anyone to look up to. He would call and check up on me but, when he left the house, I lost a role model.

The nearest alternatives were the local drug dealers; the guys with big reputations, nice cars and nice watches. Not only did they become people I wanted to follow, they became people I idolised. The turning point for me came when I got arrested for possession of crack cocaine and heroin at the age of 19.

I looked at my life and thought: most of my friends are in jail for a long time, or dead; I've got to think of a different way to live. My girlfriend at the time was going to church and she would tell me about Christianity and I would tell her about Islam. My family had brought me up as a Muslim (my full name is Mohammed) so I had very little understanding of Christianity. I remember her saying that Jesus loved me, regardless of what I had done. Her words were so powerful that when I got arrested I thought: let me see whether what this girl says is true, so I prayed that day: "Jesus, if you're real, get me out of this police station and I'll give my life to you forever." A few hours later I was released on bail and the first place I went to was a church.

I'd never been to a church before, and as I listened to the preacher, I felt that his words were directed at me. The pastor was talking about people who were involved in drugs and crime and he explained that Jesus could save them. His words were so specific to my situation that I remember thinking my girlfriend must have spoken to the pastor and told him, I was coming. Then I realised that

God was speaking through this man. That was the point I decided to give my life to Christ.

After I'd been part of a church for nine months, I ended up going to prison for the crimes I committed before I gave my life to Christ. The amazing thing was that I went into prison not as a drug dealer, but as a Christian. I was surrounded by men who needed hope, so I started evangelising. They saw someone who was in the same predicament as them, but who had completely changed the way they behaved, the way we spoke. It led to more than 600 people giving their life to Christ in prison. We had baptisms, we had prayer meetings in my cell with loads of guys praying and reading the Bible. It was powerful to see so many souls saved.

Some time later, God called me to Hull where I started a church. It was one of the fastest-growing churches in the area at the time. We've seen lots of young people saved. One of the initiatives we started is a #NoMoreKnives campaign, where we go into schools and teach young people about the dangers of carrying weapons. We use testimonies and music and have been to more than 60 schools in our region. The government and police have supported our work and we'd like to roll it out across the entire nation.

I frequently look back on my life and think: God, you have been amazing to me. Everything I have today and everything I have done is simply because of God. I use the negative things from my past to help people move forward. That has allowed me to defeat any condemnation or guilt I might feel about things I did when I was younger.

MO TIMBO talking to Megan Cornwell, deputy editor, Premier Christianity magazine



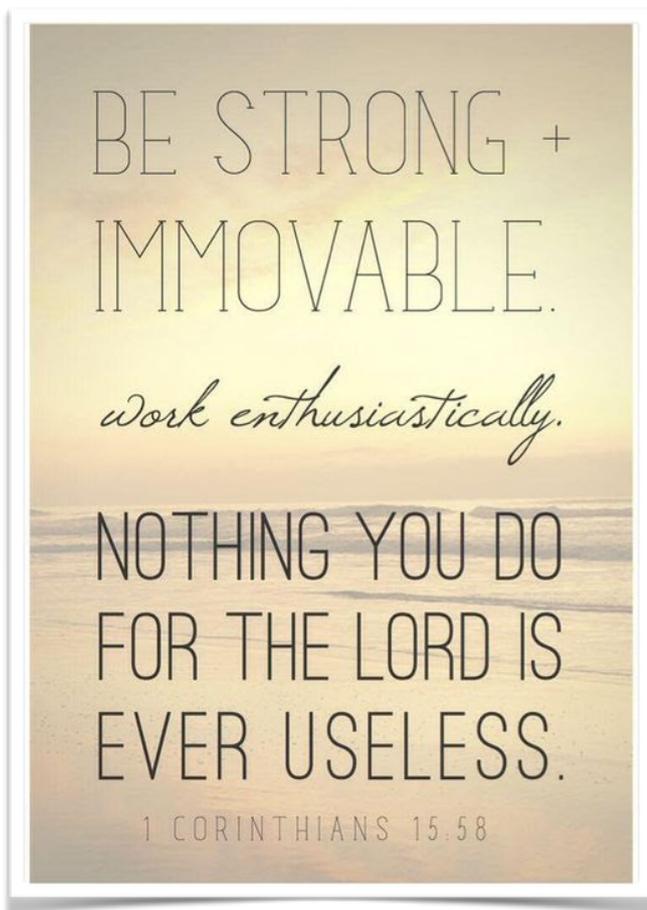
When Human Reasoning Won't Do

"You shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him." (Deuteronomy 13:4)

When we read a command in the Bible, whether we understand it or not, we ought to obey it. The Bible is, first and foremost, NOT a book to be explained; it is a book to be believed and obeyed.

So many times we want to tell God how He ought to do things. I can imagine those early apostles when they first met Paul persecuting believers. Those well-meaning Christians could have been praying for God to strike Paul dead - But what did God do? He struck him alive! And aren't you glad He did?

Don't substitute human reasoning for obedience. God says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).



We sometimes encounter conflicts in our daily lives and tasks that cause us to waver in our focus or purpose. However, when we live each day in obedience to what God has called us to do, things are different. When we accept where God has planted us and engage our tasks for His glory rather than our own, then every day becomes a day of joyous ministry for Jesus Christ. Accept each day's tasks as those God has listed for you to do, and you will be in His plan!

Prayer: Dear Lord, I want to live for You today. Please let my actions and attitudes reflect well on You, my Lord. Thank You. **AMEN**

Dan Elliott

FAMILY NEWS

The word "Family" is heard frequently these days. During our time studying Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth chapters 12-14, about special abilities, he identifies ALL gifts given by the Holy Spirit to ALL people, are for the blessing of the "Church Family". We are blessed individually, because the Church family is blessed.

The same can be said about our Church family: As I imagine the people and places of those attending our Church, I can see each blessed because the Church family is blessed, and vice versa!

FOR THANKSGIVING

This month we celebrate Fred and Jean's wedding anniversary. Jean and Kitty share a birthday, Elisabeta, Celia, and Sylvia also celebrate birthdays. Busy month in celebrations!

FOR SPECIFIC PRAYER

Ted had a minor stroke and was in the JR. He is now back home, his speech and his arms much better. He was in the best stroke unit in the country! Do pray for Jean as she is alone at home. Gillian is back home after a day in the JR today (4th) and recuperating well.

Two people who have had medical operations postponed at the last minute are Margaret Ansell and Mary Timbrell. It is very upsetting to have last minute changes, specially in Mary's case as she had to cancel milk, newspaper deliveries and rearrange schedules.

Riyanka and Nigel enjoyed a few days with his parents up north. Pray for Riyanka as she has swollen right lymph node.

Pray for the Deacons conducting worship Sunday services this month while I take time off to recuperate from a difficult eight months dealing with the developers; pray God's Sovereignty is seen throughout, even by those who neither respect nor acknowledge Him. Enjoy August and look forward to September when I return refreshed and rejuvenated.

Kalyan

Just in from **Southern Counties Baptist Association**

Following the Prime Minister's press conference on Friday, we thought that it would be useful to send out the updated information from the Baptist Union:

SUMMARY

Guidance on Church Worship – updated 31st July 2020

The Government now advising that **face coverings are used by all those attending church regardless of distancing**. This will be mandatory in places of worship from 8th August. Young children and those with respiratory conditions are excluded from this

Weddings – the relaxation of the rule that would have allowed receptions of up to 30 people from 1st August, was withdrawn by the government on 31st July.

Guidance on Re-opening Baptist Church Buildings updated 3/8/2020

Use of PPE in services - the government encourage attendees to wear a face covering which covers their nose and mouth while in the church building to reduce transmission risk. From 8 August the wearing of a face covering will be mandatory by law.

Bins should be provided to allow for disposable face coverings to be disposed of safely.

The requirement to wear face coverings includes all those leading a service (unless they are exempt for health reasons). If there are likely to be individuals in the congregation who lip read then an individual leading the service or reading from the front can wear a visor instead of a face covering. Visors are not as effective at preventing the spread of droplets so a face covering should be worn when they are no longer leading

An Amazing Fact: Squirrels gather nuts. Dogs bury bones. Camels store food and water to travel across vast deserts. And pigs? Well, pigs save nothing, bury, and store nothing. So why do we save our coins in a piggy bank? A little history.

During the Middle Ages, about the 15th century, metal was very expensive and seldom used for household wares. Instead, dishes and pots were made of cheap orange clay called pygg. Whenever housewives could save an extra coin, they dropped it into one of their clay jars or pots. They called this their pygg bank. Over the next two hundred years, people forgot that “pygg” referred to the earthenware material, but the “piggy bank” retained its name.



In the 17th century, an unknown potter thought to shape a “pygg” jar to look like a real “pig.” The piggy banks appealed to customers and delighted children. The first piggy banks only had a slot at the top with no access hole at the bottom. Banks and savings institutions would often give piggy banks to children to encourage them to save. People dropped their coins in the top and then when it was full or an emergency presented itself, they literally “broke the bank”.

Isaiah tells us, God is the potter and we are the clay. The apostle Paul expands on this, describing the message of the gospel being spread by simple people. “We are like common clay jars that carry this glorious treasure within, so that the extraordinary overflow of power will be seen as God’s, not ours” (2 Corinthians 4:7). In other words, the piggy bank is not as important as the coins (treasure) it holds.

I’m looking forward to the day when our earthly bodies, these vessels of clay, will be laid aside and a new heavenly body will be given to us. But the treasure of the gospel in our hearts will not change

An Amazing Fact: On July 23, 1983, Air Canada Flight 143 ran out of fuel at 41,000 feet. The new Boeing 767 jet was only halfway through its flight from Montreal to Edmonton when the aircraft's warning system sounded in the cockpit, indicating a fuel problem on the left side. The pilots naturally assumed that a fuel pump had failed, and turned off the alarm. But then a few moments later a second fuel alarm sounded, followed by a loud bong, and then both engines starving for fuel went silent, which stunned the pilots and terrified 63 passengers.

Without engine power most of the cockpit instruments went blank, leaving only a few battery-powered basics. Still disbelieving the jet could be out of fuel, the pilots scrambled to restart the engines. When they saw this was futile they began frantically searching charts for any landing strip within gliding distance that would be long enough to accommodate their rapidly descending jet. They turned towards the nearest landing site, a closed airbase at Gimli, Manitoba, 20 miles away.



What the pilots didn't know was that the decommissioned runway was being used that day as a drag racing strip and was full of cars, campers ... and people.

Without regular engine power, the hydraulic steering became very stiff. Captain Bob Pearson performed a difficult side-slip manoeuvre to line up the silently descending aircraft with the runway. As the 767 main gear touched down the captain stood on the brakes. Then the nose wheel collapsed, sending sparks flying 300 feet into the air as the aircraft plowed down the runway. Shocked spectators, racers, and kids on bicycles scattered, clearing the runway. Miraculously, the crew was able to safely land the jumbo jet and no one was hurt.

The subsequent investigation revealed that someone had miscalculated the fuel load. Canadian airlines had recently adopted the metric system in place of the imperial system.

It takes controlled power to fly an airplane up into the blue sky and to bring it down safely. It also takes controlled power for the Christian to “live always to honour and please the Lord.”

There are times when your fuel tank is empty and the engines are not running, and you find yourself gliding downward like the Gimli Glider.

Fortunately, the pilots of Flight 143, with hundreds of hours of training and experience, using all the knowledge and wisdom at their disposal made a safe landing.

How many people will crash and burn because they do not know how to access the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit?

KEY BIBLE TEXT

(Colossians 1:9-10)

We have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honour and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

A Baptist Church in Botley

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Items etc. are welcome and can be emailed above, or submit in person
Editor's discretion/decision is final.*

Thank you.

Editor: Gillian Guest