

Communion with God

a guide
for daily
devotions



*If you remain in me
and I in you, you
will bear much fruit
~ JOHN 15:5*

download more copies, watch videos & subscribe to the podcast

r e f l e c t i n g J e s u s . o r g

Dedication

For Gwyneth Mudford

who will only discover in eternity
how much a simple act of kindness
has impacted a multitude of lives for Christ

© 2016 by Gavin Anthony

This book includes some material from *One Ambition*

For comments and suggestions, please write to me—
gavin@reflectingJesus.org

Communion with God

CONTENTS

Start Here

My journey into communion.....	1
Why communion with God matters	7
Three attitudes for communion	11
Finding a time & place	13
How to use this guide	15

1 Bible study—*reflecting God's heart & mind*

Method 1 (Listening)—Reading to hear God speak	19
Method 2 (Listening)—Savouring God's words	21
Method 3 (Questioning)—Asking Questions	23
Method 4 (Imagining)—Being there	25
Method 5 (Analysing)—Travelling to Corinth	27
Bible study journal	30

2 Prayer—*receiving God's power*

Column 1—Dying to my sinful nature	75
Column 2—Baptised by the Spirit: Daily transformation.....	77
Column 3—Baptised by the Spirit: Daily mission	79
Column 4—Thanks & Praise.....	81
Columns 1-4—Praying God's words.....	83
Prayer journal.....	86

3 Mission—*revealing God's glory*

Joining God's work 1—How God reveals His glory	131
Joining God's work 2—Becoming: Life in God's school.....	133
Joining God's work 3—Becoming: Pruning	135
Joining God's work 4—Doing: Adventures in service	137
Joining God's work 5—Doing: Building spiritual friendships	139
Mission journal.....	142

my journey into communion

start here

the possibility before us

I do not naturally desire God with all my heart and mind and soul, for “there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:11). This is why the journey to communion with God can be a bumpy ride. As human beings, we all face the same battles and temptations to connect with God.

At the same time, you may be tempted to look at some Christian leaders and marvel at their intimacy with God that appears to continually overflow with great blessing. You may assume they are somehow special, or that God has given them an experience that is not available to you. This is not true. God offers you the most intimate relationship with Himself—indeed, it is the same intimacy that Jesus had with His Father when He walked the earth. Jesus longs that all His disciples “may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me.” (John 17:22b-23a)

beginning intimacy with God

My own journey in such communion with God has often been challenging. In my mind, it began when I was a teenager after I had secretly borrowed two books that had been lent to my mother by a friend. One was entitled, *What Happens When Women Pray*, and the other on Bible study called *Lord Change Me!* by Evelyn Christenson. I was enthralled. I didn't care that I was reading about women praying because as I followed her suggestions on how to pray, things happened. God was suddenly real and personal, and He was dramatically reaching into my life as He answered my prayers. It was a similar experience with the book on Bible study. As I learned practical ways to study, God began speaking through the Bible each day—directly to me! I had never realised such a personal and direct encounter with God was possible.

This period of my life was revolutionary. At the time, I didn't really like church and Sabbath's were bothersome. However, because of my personal

devotional times, I knew God was real. I knew He was my God, and nobody could persuade me otherwise.

As I left for college, my personal times with God continued to nurture a rich experience with Him. God regularly reminded me that I was His son, a thought that continually amazed me. I remember times when I had to run back to my college room because I felt such a compulsion to pray. I wasn't always sure why—I just knew I had to spend more time on my knees.

going deeper

Eventually I graduated from seminary with an MA in Religion and began work as a pastor. I was still single and so the time normally allocated to family matters was instead devoted to extra Bible study and prayer. I had no TV and the internet was yet to appear, let alone mobile phones, so I had no distractions. Life was often gruelling, but I was learning to fall upon God whenever difficulties appeared. In these early days as a pastor, I consumed book after book on prayer with each one opening up new vistas of spiritual possibilities and fresh encounters with God. It was wonderful.

At this time, God permitted a number of personal experiences with satanic forces. It was not pleasant and almost overwhelming. Eventually I realised that God was trying to instil in me the reality that my “struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). Consequently, to make progress in such a supernatural battle, I could not dare to imagine that I could rely on my human abilities and power. To combat supernatural power I had to have God's supernatural power. There is no other way of doing ministry or surviving as a Christian.

learning to live on external power

At the end of my first year in ministry, a number of events conspired together which became a foundational period for the rest of my ministry. At the end of a trip to West Africa, I became ill and was immediately admitted to the tropical diseases hospital in London. The doctors thought I had a haemorrhagic disease and were debating whether to put me in a sealed bubble. As I lay on my bed in isolation, hardly able to speak, I received a letter containing astonishing accusations which resulted in my reputation becoming shredded. I was sick for so long that my work contract was not renewed.

While in hospital, the doctors also found a problem with my heart. After a pacemaker was inserted to help my heart beat correctly, it became infected and had to be removed. A couple days later, after five years of dating, my girlfriend and I decided it was time to break the relationship.

I lay on my bed feeling completely broken. I had lost my job, my reputation, my health, and my dreams of future happiness. I could only muster one prayer. I told God that I didn't have a clue how to pray and so asked the Holy Spirit to pray for me.

Instantly—and this is the only way I can describe what happened next—it felt as though Jesus walked into my room and stood by my bed. The pain and burden of the preceding months lifted and I was filled with a peace and joy that was inexplicable. My face was transformed with a smile that radiated from my face and literally stayed there all night until the morning.

Most importantly, I experienced a supernatural filling of a physical energy. Even though I was currently without a pacemaker and so my heart naturally beat around forty beats a minute, it felt as though jets of energy were whizzing around my body, even causing my fingers and toes to tingle. I now had the energy of a young child. I was more than grateful.

However, as the weeks went by, there was another aspect of my life that I began to grumble about. In the face of God's goodness, I insisted in complaining. I knew I had a rebellious attitude—but I did it anyway. As weeks passed and I continued to complain, the supernatural energy I had received gradually faded until it was completely gone. I was now in exactly the same situation as before my transforming prayer.

This made me really angry. For a couple months I fumed at God until it eventually came to a climax. I finally blurted out to God, "Look, you have taken away my health, my reputation, my job, and my dreams of future happiness. You supernaturally gave me energy and now you have taken it away. I have nothing left!" I was not anticipating a reply, but a voice replied as clear as a bell, "Yes, that's the point. I want you with nothing."

I burst into tears. I knew God was right. He wanted me to have nothing so He could be everything. When I was filled with such supernatural energy flooding my body, I thought that God was healing my heart. But He didn't. The hospital confirmed that my heart was still beating around 40 beats a minute by itself and a second pacemaker was fitted. I didn't fail to get the point: God wanted me to remember that from now on, my life literally depended on an external power source.

too busy to pray

It was a painful lesson, but strangely it was also a lesson that was hard to remember. Five years later at the age of 33 and still single, I was asked to take a job in church administration. God led me to this position in repeated and miraculous ways and I was excited to see what God was going to do. But I had a problem. I had an “important” job and I was busy. From morning till night I had a full agenda.

Knowing the significance of building any ministry on prayer, I immediately started a prayer network as the foundation for my new work. But there seemed little interest in prayer and I soon put that aside for other things that seemed to work better. The pressures mounted and I began to crumple under them. During that time I burnt out severely. I felt like a husk of a human being. I was always tired. I had no interest in anything. I became increasingly withdrawn. I felt utterly empty inside. I didn't smile.

One morning I was sitting at my desk studying my Bible in a desperate attempt to see why I was struggling so badly. Unexpectedly, a voice spoke to me, “I have allowed things to fall apart so you can see how strong you really are.” I dissolved into tears because I knew God was right, again. I had been trying to do ministry on my own.

That's not to say I stopped studying my Bible or stopped praying. I did pray and I did read my Bible, but it was not the type of devotional life that led to any conscious flow of divine power into my life. It was not real communion with God. I was preaching and teaching, but I was trundling through the forms of a devotional life. I was not dependent. My ministry had become the sum of what I could do rather than a display of what God could do. And what I could do was not very much. For too many years, in spite of everything God had taught me, my spiritual life had become a series of sporadic spiritual highs and much longer lows. I had become spiritually bipolar.

Just writing this down is bewildering and mortifying. How can someone whom God has blessed so much respond like this to Him? Years passed and little changed. I was now married and would regularly complain to my wife that I did not recognise myself. I felt restless and unfulfilled, despite the fact that I had written articles, curriculum, Sabbath School lessons, a book, and begun a PhD—all in the area of personally spirituality.

Externally I may have appeared ok, but inside I was getting angrier and increasingly bitter about many things. I burnt out again. Day after day I would wake up and stare at the wall. I felt nothing. I had no physical energy.

I felt no enthusiasm for anything. I felt profoundly damaged and broken, and I wasn't sure if I could ever recover. But I kept thinking back to my early days of ministry and the amazing times I had with God. In my mind, this remained my benchmark of what "normal" life with God should be like.

re-discovering communion

One day I decided to see what Ellen White had written on the subject of communion with God. I was amazed at what I read, particularly that every aspect of who we are is impacted by spending time in God's presence—that "the effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate" (Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*, 200). I could easily see how communion with God impacts the spiritual life, but body and mind as well?

I began to force myself to organise my devotional life better. I set a specific time and place where I would spend time with God and ensured I was there every day, whether I felt like it or not. Within a few days I felt a change beginning to work inside. I could sense God's power in a way that I had not experienced in years. I began to have more physical energy. Unexpectedly, I became more helpful around the house. I became more involved with the children. I began to seek out people rather than wish I could withdraw from them. My memory became sharper. I began to re-discover my purpose for ministry. Most importantly, an appetite for spiritual intimacy with God returned. After more than a decade, I began to recognise myself. I felt at peace. It felt miraculous.

And it was. You see, starting from creation in Eden, human beings were designed to live with God's power within them. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not icing on the cake for the Christian but is a nonnegotiable component of how God designed humans to function. Without the constant nurture of the Holy Spirit in total dependency on Him, we are incomplete, powerless, and in the context of the spiritual battle around us, defenceless.

living life fully human

I began to realise that during my early years with God, I was like a fish that had no idea it was wet. The work of the Holy Spirit had been urging me towards ever deeper intimacy with God. This was an unrealised blessing of grace. It was only when I drifted spiritually due to the pressures around me that I recognised I had left the water. I knew something was wrong, but could never fully explain what—although perhaps I did know, but felt too irritated to do anything about it.

So when I say that I began to recognise myself, I was actually recognising the consequences of the presence of the Holy Spirit within me. It was His presence within that caused me to be fully human. This is how God designed us all to live as human beings—continuously living with our Creator in intimate communion. It is therefore my greatest desire that this book will help you to practically experience this communion for yourself, and to be satisfied with nothing less.

moving forwards

As you go forward to deepen your intimacy with God, I would like to offer a prayer for you that was influential at the beginning of my own journey of learning communion. It is a prayer the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians. I have split up the verses so you can see their content with greater clarity,

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father,
may give you
 the Spirit of wisdom
 and revelation,
so that you may know him better.*

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you
may know
 the hope to which he has called you,
 the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,
 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he
raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the
heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion,
and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in
the one to come. (Ephesians 1:17-22)*

All the best for the Journey!



Gavin Anthony
Hollywood, Ireland
February, 2016

why communion with God matters

start here

what is communion?

When we think about our devotional lives, we often think about the need to pray and study the Bible. One of the dangers we face is thinking about these as “things to do”. But they are more than activities. They are the *means* to achieve the greatest longing of the human heart—personal, intimate, communion with the God who made us.

We don't normally use the word *communion* when describing our life with God. Yet the Oxford English Dictionary defines *communion* as “**the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings**”. This description seems appropriate to the biblical concept of a relationship with God. Read how the Psalmists describe their longings for communion with God,

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple... My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, LORD, I will seek. (Psalm 27:4, 8)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Psalms 42:1)

Now consider these examples of God's desire to care for us,

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. (Isaiah 40:11)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand... For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. (Isaiah 41:11, 13)

...how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings... (Luke 13:34)

These texts describe intimate, personal desires and feelings. We can experience these when we study and pray, however, it is possible to study and pray without experiencing intimacy with God at all.

Communion with God is to help you to think about your time with God as an experience of genuine communion—“the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings” with your God. Ellen White describes the experience and consequences of such intimate communion. Jesus

gives us to feel His precious love. We have a nearness to Him, and can hold sweet communion with Him. We obtain distinct views of His tenderness and compassion, and our hearts are broken and melted with contemplation of the love that is given to us. We feel indeed an abiding Christ in the soul. . . . Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us. We have a realising sense of the love of God, and we rest in His love. No language can describe it, it is beyond knowledge. We are one with Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God. We have the assurance that when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. With strong confidence, we can call God our Father. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. His Spirit makes us like Jesus Christ in temper, and disposition, and we represent Christ to others. When Christ is abiding in the soul the fact cannot be hid; for He is like a well of water springing up into everlasting life. We can but represent the likeness of Christ in our character, and our words, our deportment, produces in others a deep, abiding, increasing love for Jesus, and we make manifest . . . that we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. (Sons and Daughters of God, 311)

our need for communion

Our communion with God is essential for two important reasons.

First, communion with God is essential because this is how we were designed to live. We were designed to live continually in God's presence. However, the moment sin entered into the Garden of Eden and into the hearts of Adam and Eve, they ran from God, “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8). Through Adam and Eve, all humans became disconnected from God. Expelled from God's presence in the Garden of Eden with hearts that no longer automatically orientated themselves towards Him, Adam and Eve had to consciously choose to connect with God every moment of every day. Wrapped in the skins of a sacrifice

(Genesis 3:21), Adam and Eve were continuously reminded of their utter dependency on a coming Saviour who would restore communion with their Creator.

Secondly, communion with God is essential because it is the means by which we become transformed to be like Jesus. Jesus taught His disciples that they could only mature once they were intimately connected to Him as the Vine. Jesus declared,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5).

If you look at this picture of the vine, you will notice the critical connection point between the main stem of the vine and the branch. The branch does not “do” anything except remain connected—although remaining connected to the vine requires giving up trying to connect to other things. But when this connection to the vine stem is made, the sap from the vine flows automatically into the branch and fruit forms automatically. **When we are connected to**



Jesus, His nature is able to flow from Him into us, and so we will automatically bear fruit because His nature, His character, is within us. And this power impacts every part of who we are. As we already noted, “the effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate” (Ellen White, Gospel Workers, 200).

But **for this to happen as God designed, we have to maintain continuous communion.** We are like a lamp connected to the electricity socket. Pull the plug out and the light dies immediately. The plug must be connected to the electricity at all times.

So this is our task—to learn how to connect continually with Jesus so that His nature and power are continually shaping and empowering us from within.

three attitudes for communion

start here

the danger we face

In an earlier chapter, we saw that communion is something intensely personal, “the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings”. However, even though I know this, I can still find myself practicing communion with God merely as a set of activities—things to do every day. Unfortunately, I can cycle through these activities without my time with God being personal and intimate at all, but rather dry and stale.

To avoid the danger of your time with God becoming tedious and barren, I want to share three devotional attitudes that will keep your devotional activities personal and intimate. These are openness, faith, and submission. When these devotional attitudes are operational, your relationship with God will be increasingly meaningful and fruitful because these are the attitudes that will keep you connected to God—even during times when you may be discouraged or hurt by life, or feel like giving up. Such communion honours God greatly, for God Himself will be continually revealed through your life.

attitude 1—openness

The first attitude for your heart that enables communion with God to flourish is openness. Nothing can happen in your spiritual life without openness to God because openness provides the Holy Spirit with access to your heart and mind. In the Bible, both Pharaoh in Egypt and Jesus’ own disciples are described as having hard hearts (Exodus 7:13; Mark 8:17). For various reasons, they were unresponsive to the influence of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, even as a Christian I can easily find myself closed to God if I am too busy, stressed, or cynical.

By contrast, God promises to give you a soft heart that is open to the Holy Spirit in order that He can make changes in your life, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). While none of us naturally desire openness with God (Romans 3:10-12), God

is continually initiating communion with us (Genesis 3:8-9). Openness enables you to respond to His initiative.

attitude 2—faith

Once you are open to God, the second attitude for your heart that enables communion to grow is faith. As you can read in the gospel stories, you will notice that Jesus was unable to bring physical healing—for the blind, the lame or the sick—unless people put their faith in Him (eg Matthew 13:5). In the same way, any spiritual healing in your life depends on faith. If you are doubting, negative, fearful or discouraged, faith will struggle to take root and spiritual growth will be extremely limited. So you have to practice trusting that God will really do what He has promised—so that you can be “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory”! (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The good news is that faith is actually a gift, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Therefore, you can pray to God for faith and He will gladly give it to you, for it is His purpose to see you “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). This is something you pray for every day.

attitude 3—submission

Submission is the third attitude for your heart for communion to grow. As you become open to God and place your trust in Him, you will become brave enough to submit everything you are and have to Him. The apostle Paul described submission in terms of being a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Jesus described this as a prerequisite to discipleship when He declared, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Jesus’ call to follow Him with a cross is not a call to carry a heavy object that makes life miserable. A cross only has one purpose. Jesus was going to die on a cross, and so each of us is called to say with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). Dietrich Bonhoeffer was right when he famously observed, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 99.)

What you are actually submitting to God is your sinful nature—your pride, arrogance, harshness, over-sensitivity, and lots more! You yield yourself to God because you cannot extract this nature yourself—only God can. But when you yield your sinful nature, space is created for the Holy Spirit to fill you with God’s own nature. As you are baptised by His Spirit (John 1:33), Jesus’ character will be revealed through you with supernatural power!

finding a time & place

start here

stick to the plan like glue!

What I am going to write next may not seem important at first glance, but I have come to the conclusion that it is one of the most critical things for determining the success of our spiritual growth. It is this: **find a regular time and place for your daily devotions, and stick to your plan like glue! This habit won't change us by itself, but it provides a regular environment where the Holy Spirit can access our minds and hearts more easily.**

The Apostle Paul writes that we are temples for the Holy Spirit to dwell in (1 Corinthians 6:19). So in one sense, you could say that our regular devotional habits with God in the morning and evening are like pillars that hold up our spiritual temples during the day. **Move these pillars around, or lose them, and our temple cracks and crumbles.**

reasons why our spiritual lives crumble

We rarely plan to drift away from God or lose our connection with Him. But these devotional pillars can crack and crumble without us realising for a number of reasons. Here are three:

- 1. Compromising my spiritual priorities.** I may stay up late to watch a movie, but then my time with God before bedtime doesn't happen. Either my mind struggles to hold on to spiritual things, or else spiritual things don't appear as important or as interesting compared to the movie. As a consequence, my devotional time gets pushed out again in the morning because I need the extra sleep or I am feeling too groggy or disinterested to pray.
- 2. Living by my feelings.** I may be feeling depressed, stressed, or angry for a multitude of reasons. As a consequence, I may not feel like spending time with God at all. But as I always recommend, if you ever feel like this, get down on your knees and pray until the feeling goes away! Satan will continually attempt to manipulate your feelings to keep you away from re-connecting with God.
- 3. Family pressures.** One of the greatest challenges to my devotional life

has been the birth of my two children. My schedule and sleep patterns have been pushed all over the place due to my kids very real and constant needs. I don't have a magical answer to this. You may need some outside help to provide necessary space and time to be with God. But I do know that the more tired and exhausted we are, the more we need the divine power that only the Holy Spirit can give. Remember that communion with God is not just about restoring spiritual vision but brings real strength to our bodies and minds. So avoid the temptation that your energy and spiritual power can be replaced by spending time surfing the internet or watching TV! These are false gods which tempt us to believe they can offer us the power and rejuvenation we need. But they cannot. Only God can bring fresh power through His Spirit.

getting a plan together

Creating habits for establishing and strengthening our communion with God requires some simple planning. Here are two questions to help with this.

Firstly, when will you have your daily devotions? It may be helpful to choose a start and end time. This will reduce feeling rushed to move on to the next thing on your agenda as you know this time has been allocated for God. I have also realised I need my morning communion time before anything else—otherwise the stresses of my day start leaking into my devotions and infecting my feelings and thoughts. You may want to negotiate with family members so everyone can have protected time with God each day.

Secondly, where will you have your daily devotions? Luke tells us that “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Being free from distractions—which may include electronic devices—is vital to be able to listen to the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit. Some people describe the need for a special place for devotions, but it is only recently that I realised how important this is for myself. I sit in a “prayer chair” by the window in my bedroom. When I am there, my wife and children know I am having time with God. I am also in a familiar settling so my mind and heart are more easily prepared than if I am moving around the house—or am still in bed!

my plan

In the morning, I will spend time with God from _____ to _____.

In the evening, I will spend time with God from _____ to _____.

My place for communion with God will be _____.

how to use this guide

start here

a tool for orientating our hearts

Communion with God is a tool designed to guide your devotional times in the morning and evenings. In the morning it can help to orientate your heart towards God before you set out for the day. In the evening, perhaps after a busy and stressful day where God may have drifted from your thoughts, it provides an opportunity for reorientation. My hope is that this guide will help to lead you into a deeper and more joyful intimacy with the God who made you, a God who desires personal intimacy with you more than anything else.

what's inside

Communion with God has three sections—Bible study, prayer and mission. Each section will help nurture and deepen an aspect of your daily relationship with God. Here is how to use each section.

- 1. Bible study—learning to reflect God's heart and mind.** God's words are a revelation of God's heart and mind. When we learn to live according to God's words, we are entering into communion with God's mind and heart. God's words define for us what His kingdom is like, and how to live according to His principles, values and laws. This section has the following:
 - a. Five methods for daily Bible study.** There are many different ways to study the Bible so our lives can be shaped by God's heart and mind. In this section I have included five methods of Bible study to help your life become shaped by God's mind. Read through each of these methods and experiment to see which one is best for your daily study.
 - b. A Bible study journal.** These are empty pages for your study notes and discoveries.
- 2. Prayer—learning to receive God's power.** As human beings, we are naturally antagonistic to God, disconnected from Him, and therefore powerless to live according to what is on His mind and heart. Prayer restores our disconnection by bringing us into personal communion with

God's Spirit. As we learn dependency on God, we receive His divine power enabling us to become "transformed into his image with ever-increasingly glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). In this section you will find the following:

- a. Five chapters explaining different focuses for daily prayer that together provide a balanced prayer life.** Your prayer journal is split into four columns, each column focusing on one prayer focus. These are 1) dying to my sinful nature, 2) baptised by the Spirit—for transformation, 3) baptised by the Spirit—for mission, 4) thanks & praise. The fifth chapter explains how you can use the Bible to add breadth and depth to all your prayers.
- b. Prayer journal.** These pages have been divided into the four columns. There are some sample entries at the beginning to give you ideas on how to use these pages.

Think about prayer as a cup. How you are nourished depends what you put inside your prayer cup. It is possible to pray in way that is faithless and complaining which damages the body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, these four prayer focuses enable you to fill your prayer cup every day with prayers that will provide a blessing for every part of your life.

- 3. Mission—learning to reveal God's glory.** God is at work to fill the earth with His glory—His character, and He is working to do this around you right now. When we join God in this work to reveal His glory, we are spending time in communion with Him. To have communion with God includes sharing in His work to restore broken people back into His image. In this section you will find the following:

- a. Five lessons on how to have daily communion with God in His mission.** The first chapter explains why and how God is working to reveal His glory. The next two chapters explain how God reveals His glory by shaping who we are—through our character, or *being*. The final two chapters explain how God reveals His glory through what we do and say—through our *doing*. These chapters provide practical ideas for joining God's mission with your family, neighbours, colleagues and friends.
- b. Mission journal.** The mission journal is for you to explore and record how God is using you each day to reveal His glory to others.

Using the Bible study, prayer and mission journals each day will keep you connected and balanced in your journey into ever deeper communion with God.

1 Bible study

reflecting
God's heart
and mind

reading to hear God speak

reflecting
God's heart
and mind

it's about a person

Wisdom is not found in knowing about things, but knowing a person—Jesus.

This was Paul's desire for the Colossians, that they would "know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2b-3) To know Jesus is to have communion with God.

So as we invite the Holy Spirit to guide and give us wisdom in our Bible study, He will teach us about Jesus and what is on Jesus' heart and mind for us. As we apply what we learn, continually gaining wisdom, we will become like the One who is Wisdom—Jesus Christ.

promises for us

In her book, *Lord Change Me!* Evelyn Christenson explains a helpful way to study the Bible. She starts by encouraging us to claim this promise,

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

This is amazing! No matter who you are, or what you have done, God promises to give you wisdom for your life. All you have to do is ask. As Jesus Himself urges us,

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8).

So as you begin your Bible study, know that God is longing to fill you with His wisdom—which is about knowing Him.

reading to hear God speak

This method of Bible study focuses on listening to God as we read His words to us. This is how it works:

1. **Prayerfully choose a Bible passage to study.** A good place to start would be the beginning of one of the four Gospels.
2. **Claim James 1:5** and pray that God will honour His promise to give you a knowledge of Himself.
3. **Begin reading the text slowly and thoughtfully.** If you don't understand something, try reading it again.
4. **When God calls your attention to an idea or a phrase in the text, stop!** Don't go any further. Christenson notes that God can stop you in different ways. These include:
 - A bolt out of the blue - "This is it!"
 - A quiet nudge or prompt—"Have you thought about.....?"
 - An encouragement—"This will help with...."
 - Peace—"This is right."
5. **Respond in prayer to what God has taught you.** For example, a prayer of thanks, repentance, or submission to God's will.
6. **The next time you study, continue reading from where you stopped.**



using your journal

In your Bible study journal, keep a record what God teaches you each day. You may also like to write a prayer responding to what you have learned.

savouring God's words

reflecting
God's heart
and mind

savouring God's words

There is way to study the Bible which is like tasting an expensive chocolate. You don't just gobble it down, but keep it for as long as you can in your mouth to sense its texture and flavours. The Psalmist says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103) We can learn how to savour God's words as we learn how to meditate on Scripture.

As Joshua takes over from Moses to lead God's people into the Promised Land, Jesus appears to Joshua and says, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8) Notice two things in the text. Firstly, that God's word was to be in Joshua's thoughts continually. Secondly, as God's words were in Joshua's mind, it would lead him to obedience. Then Joshua would be as successful as God had called him to be.

This sort of meditation is very different from the type found in Eastern religions. For example, in Buddhism, meditation is a way of emptying the mind. Biblical meditation is just the opposite. **In biblical meditation we learn how to fill the mind—with God's words.** We do this as we learn to savour the words God speaks to us in the Bible.

listening to God's words

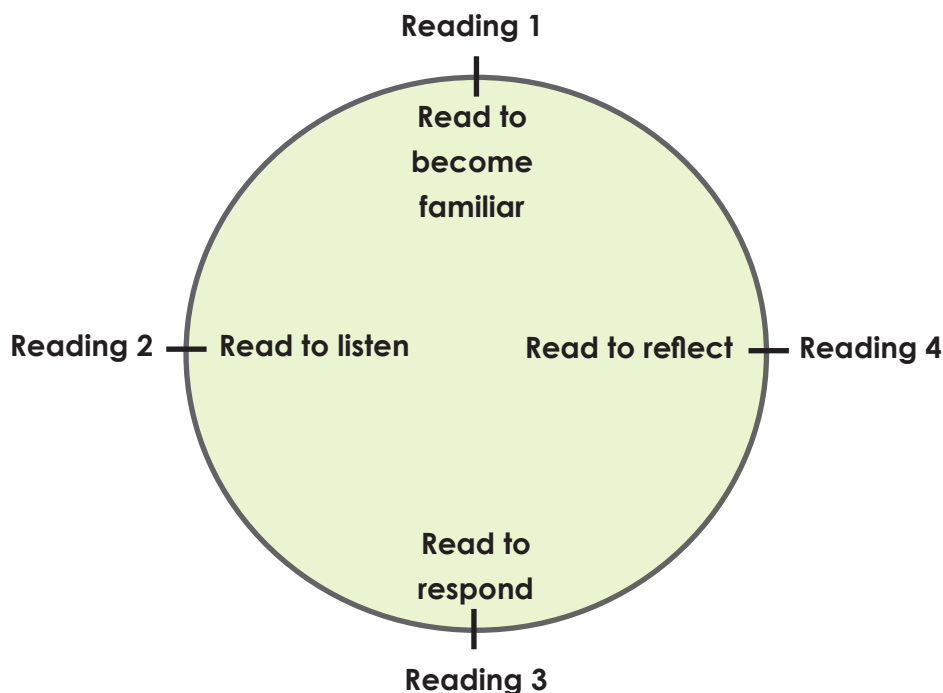
Here is a second method of learning to listen to God's words which is through meditation on a Bible passage. Before reading, pray for the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit. You are now going to read the passage four times. This is how it works:

1. **Read to become familiar.** Read the passage once to become familiar with the text. You may want to read the passage out loud. You may do this a couple times until you are familiar with the passage. (It is suggested that you don't take too many verses to begin with.) If there

is something you don't understand immediately, don't worry. As you increasingly immerse yourself in God's words over time, God will give you understanding.

2. **Read to listen.** Read the passage a second time to identify an idea or phrase that you noticed after the first reading. Take time to "listen" to its meaning. Don't rush. Don't try and force the text open but rather allow time for the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of the text to you. This is time to pause, listen, observe, watch.
3. **Read to respond.** Read the passage a third time. Based on what you have seen and heard, respond back to God in prayer. It could be a prayer of praise, thanks, confession of sin, or a specific request.
4. **Read to reflect.** Read the passage a final time. Take time to rest a little longer in God's presence to reflect on what you have learned. This prevents us hurrying off quickly to do the next thing on our agenda and lose what God has just been teaching us. God may now bring new insights to your attention that you had not noticed before.

With practice, you do not have to follow the specific order for meditation. You can move backwards and forwards between reading, listening, responding and reflecting. Here is a diagram showing this process:



using your journal

In your Bible study journal, record the lessons God is teaching you as you savour the words on His mind and heart for you. You can also record your prayers in response to what God has shared with you.

asking questions

how does this apply to me?

Sometimes when I read my Bible, I think to myself, “but what has this got to do with me?” or, “what difference does this make?” If I do not learn how to apply God's mind and heart to myself, I will have wasted my time.

7 questions

Applying the Bible to our lives is the most important part of Bible study. Here are 7 questions to ask as you read the biblical text to help with applying the meaning of the text to your life.

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin God wants me to avoid or repent of?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. What does the passage teach me about God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
5. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
6. Is there a promise for me to claim?
7. Is there something in the passage the Holy Spirit is urging me to pray about?

passages to start with

The stories about Jesus in the Gospels are great places to begin using this method of study. You can start at the beginning of a Gospel and work your way through to the end. As you think about the seven questions, remember that these stories are not simply historical records, but were inspired by God for your spiritual growth.

If you want to move outside of the four Gospels, you can also use this way of studying in Acts and the writings of Paul. Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are also great places to explore.

how to use the questions

1. Prayerfully choose a passage to read, or continue from where you finished reading last time.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read, that your life will be increasingly shaped by the mind and heart of Jesus.
3. Read your chosen Bible text a few times until you understand what you are reading.
4. Once you have read through your passage, go through the 7 questions to see which ones may apply to you.
5. Praying at the end of your study is really important. Pray that the Holy Spirit will remind you of what you have learned, and that your life will increasingly reflect the mind and heart of Jesus.



using your journal

In your Bible study journal, write down what God teaches you each time you study. You may also want to write down any further questions to explore later, and their answers as God reveals them. You can also write prayers in response to what God has revealed is on His heart and mind for you.

METHOD 4—IMAGINING

being there

reflecting
God's heart
and mind

using your imagination

The Holy Spirit works through your mind and heart to teach you about the mind and heart of Jesus. He can draw your mind and heart into communion with Jesus using your imagination.

When writing about Jesus giving the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, Ellen White encourages,

*Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, **enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts.** (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 1)*

The reason why God uses your imagination in Bible study is simple. By

understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons. (Ibid.)

Again, in the book, *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White encourages the following,

*It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and **let the imagination grasp each scene...** (83)*

Using your imagination to think about the Bible enables the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and mind into the thoughts and feelings of people living thousands of years ago. This work of the Holy Spirit brings insight and enables us to experience the awe of the truth which God placed into the hearts and minds of those biblical characters so many years ago.

example: the story of Zacchaeus

Here is an example of how you might use your imagination to explore what God was doing in the story of Zacchaeus.

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will be your teacher and guide as you read through the story.
2. Read Luke 19:1-10 at least a couple of times so you are familiar with the story.
3. Choose one of the people in the story and think about the story from their perspective.

Imagine you are Zacchaeus:

1. What is it like to be small and unable to see in a crowd?
2. What sort of view do you have up the tree? Can you see Jesus clearly?
3. What was it like to hear Jesus ask to visit your home? Were you embarrassed?
4. How did you feel when you heard Jesus say “today salvation has come to this house”?

Or, imagine you are Jesus:

1. Why did you pick Zacchaeus to visit out of all the people in the crowd?
2. What did you think when you saw Zacchaeus up the tree? What sort of look did he have on his face?
3. How did Zacchaeus respond to your request?

Or, imagine you are someone in the crowd:

1. Would you have preferred Jesus to come to your home instead of going home with Zacchaeus?
2. What do you think of Jesus going to a tax collector's house? Why do you think Jesus did this? Do you think that is strange?

application questions

When you have finished the story, you may like to consider a couple of general application questions: 1) What did I learn from this story about God? 2) What did I learn from this story about myself?



using your journal

Use your Bible Study journal to record what you have learned. You can use this method of study with any of the Bible stories. The stories in the Gospels and Acts are a good place to start. You may also write prayers in response to what God is teaching you.

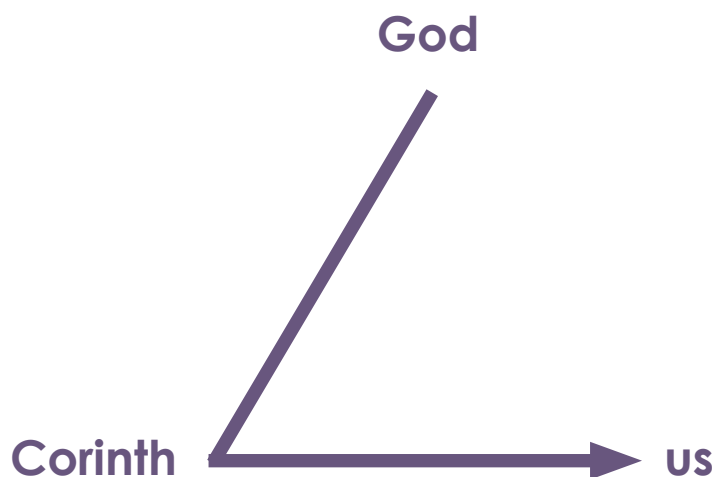
travelling to Corinth

it's not always easy

Knowing God is not always immediate or easy. Sometimes it takes time and energy to uncover God's will and purposes, and to grow in understanding of who He is. I think this is why Jesus said that "the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field." (Matthew 13:44) But like digging for treasure with a spade, spending time and effort to enter into the mind and heart of God is always greatly rewarding, for ever deepening intimacy with God Himself is our reward.

Something that takes time and effort is accurately understanding what God is saying as I read. I may come to a conclusion about what God means, but is that *really* what God intended me to know? One of the things that helps us avoid the pitfall of misinterpreting the Bible is to use a simple exercise Dick Lucas calls "travelling to Corinth".

Below you will see a two-sided triangle which explains how God communicates biblical truth. The Bible was not written directly to me. It was first written to people living in Bible times, in this example, the books of Corinthians were written to the people in Corinth.



So if I am reading I & II Corinthians, I must first "travel" to Corinth to understand what the original readers understood God to be saying to them through Paul. Once I do that, I can apply the Bible accurately to my culture and myself.



using your journal

To apply this idea to Bible study, we can follow the following steps:

1. Make four columns in your journal. You may find it easiest to use a double page.
2. Label the top of column 1 “verse”. In this column you will write the Bible verse or reference you are going to study.
3. Label the top of column 2 “original meaning”. In this column you will write what you think the original readers understood. You can also use Bible commentaries to help with this.
4. Label the top of column 3 “application today”. This is the first level of application. What do you think the verse means to our world today—the Church and the culture around you.
5. Label the top of column 4 “reflecting God's heart and mind”. This is where you will apply the verse to yourself. How will this passage help you to reflect the heart and mind of Jesus?
6. As always, before you open your Bible, pray that the Holy Spirit will teach you. For example, claim God's promise in James 1:5.
7. Prayerfully choose a passage to study. Some good places to start might be the letters of John, Peter, James, or Philippians, where you can focus on one verse at a time, but you can choose longer passages also.
8. Taking the first verse in your passage, follow the instructions at the top of each column in the example.

1 verse	2 original meaning	3 application today	4 reflecting God's heart and mind
Write the Bible verse or reference here.	What did the original hearers understand when they read or heard this verse?	How would this verse be applied to people or the Church today?	How can I change—to reflect God's heart and mind?
1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours...	Because of what Jesus has done, Paul is reminding us that we have been called by God to be His special holy people, but not just us in Corinth, for there are people everywhere whom God has called to be part of His family.	There are people all around the world that God has called to be holy. No-one can claim to have a monopoly on God's care and grace. God's family is a global family!	I have been called to be holy. I am part of a global family, and don't have to be discouraged when tempted to think I am alone—I will continue to stand up for God in my neighbourhood!

2 prayer

receiving
God's power

dying to my sinful nature

the problem we all face

Ever since sin entered our world, our rebellious natures have naturally blocked intimate communion with God. We were designed in the image of God, and designed for a wonderful purpose. Yet the Apostle Paul describes how we instinctively long to do the opposite of what we were created to do and be. He wrote, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). The reason we find this so difficult is simple: due to sin, we all struggle with a nature that is naturally antagonistic to God (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 3:10-12). Andrew Murray writes,

Why is a lamb always gentle? Because that is its nature. Does it cost the lamb any trouble to be gentle? No. Why not? It is so beautiful and gentle. Has a lamb to study to be gentle? No. Why does that come so easy? It is its nature. And a wolf—why does it cost a wolf no trouble to be cruel, and to put its fangs into the poor lamb or sheep? Because that is its nature. It has not to summon up its courage; the wolf-nature is there. (Absolute Surrender, 16)

the sin factory

The problem Murray highlights lies at the core of who I am. **My battle is not simply against the sinful acts I do, but the factory inside me that generates those sins. That factory is my sinful nature. Indeed, the closer I move towards God, the more I will see the gravity of this situation. The closer I move towards God's light, the more the Holy Spirit is able to reveal the power of my own sin factory.**

The problem of the sinful nature factory goes all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). While living in a perfect world Satan arrived in Eden and tempted Eve to disobey God. She chose to follow Satan's suggestion, and Adam chose to follow her. The result was the corruption of the image and character of God within them. Rather than longing to be with God, Adam and Eve both hid from Him. They were both, by nature, in rebellion against His authority as King. Therefore, if we are corrupt and sinful by nature (Ephesians 2:3), we cannot simply modify our

sinful natures to become nicer or kinder. We can only replace it with the nature of Jesus. But for this replacement to happen, we must be emptied of self—the sinful nature has to die because it prevents the power of the living God operating within us. My only solution is to follow Paul's advice and "put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Colossians 3:5). Indeed, Jesus describes the doorway into a life of discipleship using the language of death, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23). A cross is necessary for all disciples of Jesus because only a daily death can address the problem of the sinful nature—it must be put to death. But how?

how does the sinful nature die?

Dying to my sinful nature successfully is not done by focusing on my sins, or trying harder, but by focusing on Jesus. When I spend time facing my sin, Satan brings discouragement and I can become frustrated. But when I face Jesus, I see the source of my help and realise I cannot fix my problems myself. **As I look to Him, I realise I can't do anything about my sin except hold out my hands, palms upwards, and yield my sin to Him.**

Notice how Paul emphasises this idea of yielding or offering in Romans, "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness." (Romans 6:13) Using the language of the Old Testament sacrificial system, Paul urges later "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).



using your journal

The first column in your prayer journal is to daily confess sin and sinfulness that is blocking your intimacy with God. When the sinful self is put to death, space is created for communion with God. Each day your challenge is to open yourself to the Holy Spirit so that He can identify aspects of your life that need to die (John 17:8). As you are created in the image of God, and that image consists of everything you are—mind, body and spirit—there will be sin to yield that impacts everything about you—your attitudes, habits, feelings, the way you treat your body, your ambitions, etc. When the Holy Spirit points out something to yield to God that is precious to you, you may find yourself in a struggle. **Dying to the sinful nature takes time** because we resist yielding things that feel part of us, or feel are essential to our happiness. Don't give up when it is hard, because the Holy Spirit will only ask you to sacrifice the things that would otherwise damage your life or risk eternal life with God.

baptised by the Spirit —daily transformation

receiving
God's power

filling what has been emptied

Imagine yourself as a container. Without God, your container is filled with the junk of your sinful nature. Praying for God to fill you with His Spirit won't work well because you are already full—of your sinfulness. To deal with this, we must become “a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) and die to our sinful nature, for “unless the soul-temple is daily emptied of self, and prepared for the reception of the Holy Spirit, self will rule the entire being.” (Southern Work, January 29, 1903.) Dying to—or emptying—the sinful self is the focus of column 1 in your prayer journal.

Column 2 focuses on the second part of this process—receiving the divine nature and power of the Spirit, to fill our container, and be re-formed in the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). “The soul must be emptied of self, that Christ may pour his Spirit into the vacuum” (Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, 1891).

Emptied of self we must be, else we cannot show that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory... The preciousness and importance of truth must appear, and will appear, when self is hid with Christ in God; then Jesus will be revealed in our lives. Our characters will be molded after the divine similitude. Then the Holy Spirit will control the human agent. Men will possess the attributes of Christ. (Ellen White, 12 Manuscript Releases, 50.)

divine fire only falls on a sacrifice

This picture of divine fire entering into a sacrifice is seen in the Old Testament. At the inauguration of the tabernacle, “fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar” (Leviticus 9:24). At the start of the services in Solomon's temple “when Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (2 Chronicles 7:1). God specifically instructed the priests that this divine fire should never go out, “The LORD said to Moses: “Give Aaron and his sons this command: ‘These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt

offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar... The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out... The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out" (Leviticus 6:8-9, 12-13).

Notice this connection between becoming a sacrifice and the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus. Matthew describes that "as soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him" (Matthew 3:16). Baptism symbolises death to the old life. When someone is baptised, they go completely under the water to show that their old life has been put into the grave. However, they then rise to a new life which is empowered by the Holy Spirit. **As Matthew indicates, it was after Jesus had come up from the watery grave of the Jordan river that the divine fire of the Holy Spirit came down out of Heaven and rested on Him.** But this baptism of the Holy Spirit was not just for this one occasion,

From hours spent with God [Jesus] came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace... (Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, 139)

As Jesus offered Himself as a daily sacrifice and was daily baptised by the Holy Spirit, so should we as His disciples. Jesus declared that those who want to follow Him should die "daily" (Luke 9:23) and as Paul wrote of himself, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). Consequently, as John the Baptist foretold, Jesus "will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). This two-fold experience is highlighted in the Upper Room. As the disciples humbled themselves and confessed their sin to each other, the Spirit baptised these "living sacrifices" as "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).



using your journal

The focus of prayer column 2 is receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, that we can be "transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Therefore, prayers for the baptism of the Holy Spirit will include three specifics—a) receiving God's nature in exchange for my own—empowering mind, body and spirit, b) receiving faith to pray confidently for my physical and spiritual needs, c) receiving grace (which is power) to live according to God's words. Remember that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an actual experience. So like Jacob who prayed until he received God's blessing (Genesis 32:26), make it your priority to pray each day until you have received a "daily... fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit." (Ibid.) Avoid rushing out into your day before experiencing divine empowering!

baptised by the Spirit —daily mission

mission!

In the previous chapter, we saw that **one of the consequences of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is personal transformation. A second consequence is divinely empowered mission.**

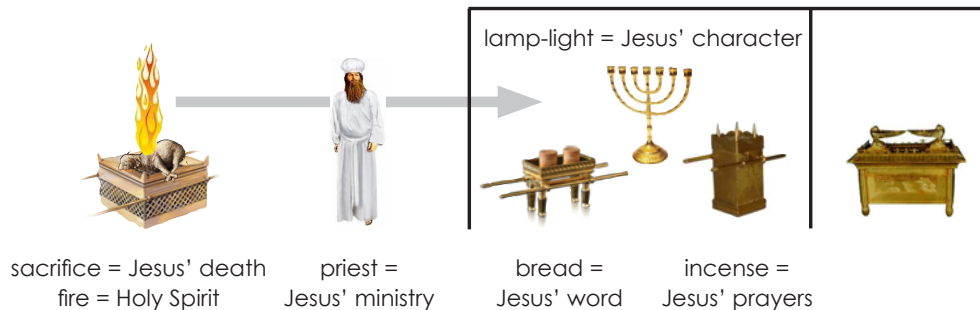
After Jesus' baptism, Luke tells us that "as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him" (Luke 3:21-22) But what did Jesus pray for that caused the Holy Spirit to come? Luke tells us that baptism of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life resulted in two important consequences.

Firstly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to overcome the temptations of Satan, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2). Unlike Adam and Eve who fell for Satan's temptations, Jesus—continually dependent on the Holy Spirit—overcame his temptations. **Secondly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to enter into Spirit empowered ministry.** After overcoming Satan in the desert, Luke describes how "Jesus returned to Galilee *in the power of the Spirit*, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him" (Luke 4:14-15). Luke then quotes what Jesus said next, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19). While the coming of the Holy Spirit enables us to become transformed into the character of Jesus, He also equips us for communion with Jesus in His mission. It is for Spirit empowered mission that we pray in column 3.

how shall we pray for others?

The daily Israelite sanctuary services—which illustrated Israel's continual dependence on God—summarises our focus on prayer. In the previous chapter we saw the importance of being a living sacrifice which is continually consumed by divine fire. We also saw that God was clear that this divine fire should never go out. But why? **The reason the divine fire should never go out was because divine fire was needed for the priest's daily**

(continual) ministry in the Holy Place. In the Holy Place, there were three continual offerings of bread, light and incense which depended on holy fire. If sacrifices were no longer brought, the divine fire would die out, and the three offerings would cease. As we see in the tragic story of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2), human-made fire cannot be substituted for divine fire in God's work.



Each of the three offerings in the Holy Place pointed to Jesus' mission. Jesus is continually the bread of life (John 6:35, 51), the light of the world (John 8:12), and our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25). However, Jesus' ability to perform this mission was because He was a continual sacrifice (Philippians 2:6-8) and was continually full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22).

In a similar way, every disciple of Jesus is to reflect Jesus and His mission.

We are to continually tell others about the bread of life (Matthew 28:19-20), reveal the light of the Holy Spirit in our lives through Christlike character (Matthew 5:16), and pray for others (James 5:15). We are to do these continually as priests for God (2 Peter 2:9). Like the ministry of Jesus, our ministry is also dependent on the fact that we are continually "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1-2), "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). **In contrast to Nadab and Abihu, we cannot afford to do mission with our own fire.**

Notice this connection between the divine fire of the Spirit and our mission,

What we need is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without this, we are no more fitted to go forth to the world than were the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord. Jesus knew their destitution, and told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endowed with power from on high. (Ellen White, 1 Selected Messages, 411)



using your journal

Our prayers for others in column 3 of the prayer journal will be shaped by this three-fold ministry. Pray daily for divine power from the baptism of the Holy Spirit so you can, a) reveal the character of Jesus to others (light), b) intercede in faith for the spiritual and physical needs of others (incense), c) have opportunities to share God's word (bread).

thanks & praise

receiving
God's power

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a British pastor living in the 1800's, is considered to be one of the greatest preachers in history. It is said that his weekly sermons literally sold by the ton. Among his writings is a book called *The Practice of Praise: How to develop the habit of abundant, continual praise in your daily life*. There he outlines **three steps to practice praise** from Psalm 145:7, "They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness, And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness" (NASV). When we learn how to praise God like this, our hearts will thrill as the Holy Spirit draws us into deeper communion with Jesus.

three steps for learning to praise

1. **Practice looking around me**, "They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness." To remember God's great goodness means I first have to notice it. If I do not look around me to see God's goodness, then I will have nothing to praise Him about.

What can I see in the physical world that reminds me of His goodness? Have I taken time to observe the beauty of His creation? Have I noted the harmony of nature? What can I see in the spiritual world which makes me want to rejoice in Him? Have I observed the many blessings that my salvation has brought me or the steady development of the importance of prayer and grace among others? The more time I take to observe, the more I will see, and the more reasons I will have to praise my Father.

2. **Practice remembering what I have seen**. Can I remember what God has done in the Bible? Can I remember when God has intervened throughout my life with His goodness—times spent with Him in nature, religious events, or providential meetings with people? Do I hold these things in my mind so they become permanent markers on my journey—to remind me of His purposes for my life?

3. **Practice talking about it**, "They shall eagerly utter." Like a bubbling stream or a fountain, I am called to let praise for the goodness of God flow unrestricted from my mouth. As I do so, I am encouraged, and so is everyone around me.

five reasons to share God's goodness

Spurgeon adds five reasons why we should talk of God's goodness:

Firstly, we should continually praise God because we cannot help it, for the truth of God's goodness compels us to speak out.

Secondly, we should continually praise God because within our culture there are a myriad voices trying to drown out the praises of God. Therefore, the more society cries against God, the more we should speak out for Him.

Thirdly, we should continually praise God as a witness to those who don't know God. Praise is not primarily a private matter. It demands that someone is listening. Both God, to whom the praise is directed, and our neighbours, who need to know that our God is real and that the Christian life is worth embracing.

Fourthly, we should continually praise God to encourage fellow Christians. Often, those who are struggling feel so alone and that there is no way out of their predicament. Praise encourages them.

Fifthly, we should continually praise God to glorify God—for God is worthy of our honour and praise. Praise to God is an activity that the whole universe is involved in constantly. So how can we praise Him any less if we have been redeemed from eternal condemnation to live with Jesus forever?

Ellen White encourages this habit of praise,

Then let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love. Let us educate our souls to be hopeful and to abide in the light shining from the cross of Calvary. Never should we forget that we are children of the heavenly King, sons and daughters of the Lord of hosts. It is our privilege to maintain a calm repose in God. (Ministry of Healing, 253)



using your journal

In the fourth column of your prayer journal, you can practice educating your heart by daily listing your reasons for giving God thanks and praise.

While these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, thanks normally relates to the acts of God in our lives—both physically and spiritually, while praise often focuses on who God is. As this is a spiritual exercise, ask the Holy Spirit to open your spiritual eyes to record the goodness and love of God in your life. You may even want to spend time to sing your praises to God!

praying God's words

biblical praying

The prayer journal helps to structure our prayers by providing four categories to provide balance. However, we may still struggle to focus our thoughts or find ourselves repeating the same prayer more often than we would like. To provide breadth and depth to our praying, it is inspiring to use the Bible to help us pray. **As we pray this way, we are praying ideas that come directly from the mind and heart of God. As His thoughts become our thoughts and His heart is mirrored in ours, we enter into communion with Him. It is in such communion with God—as we pray God's words—that we receive God's power through God's Spirit.**

Here are two ways to pray using your Bible. The first is to **pray Bible verses as your prayer**. The second is to **pray in response** to the Bible verses.

praying the Bible: examples

Firstly, when we pray the text of the Bible as our own prayer, we are re-wording the text so that it becomes an expression of our own heart and mind. Secondly, when we pray in response to the text, we are describing our agreement or struggles with what God is saying. Here are some examples of both methods relating to the four categories in the prayer journal. (***Bold italics*** show added or changed words.)

1. **Dying to my sinful nature eg Romans 6:6**—"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Praying the text: For *I* know that *my* old self was crucified with him so that *my* body ruled by sin might be done away with, that *I* should no longer be *a* slave to sin.

Praying in response to the text: Father, this is hard! But may I daily surrender everything to you—my ambitions, dreams—everything.

2. Baptised by the Spirit: For transformation eg Colossians 3:12—“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Praying the text: Therefore, as ***I am*** God’s chosen ***child***, holy and dearly loved, ***may I*** clothe ***myself*** with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience ***today***.

Praying in response to the text: Father, grant me Your Spirit today that I am filled with humility as I meet with the parents on the school board.

3. Baptised by the Spirit: For mission eg Matthew 5:14—“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Praying the text: ***I am*** the light of the world. A ***visible testimony*** that cannot be hidden.

Praying in response to the text: Father, may I realise that I have the possibility to reveal your presence in my life wherever I walk today.

4. Thanks and praise eg Psalm 23:1—“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

Praying the text: The Lord is ***my*** shepherd, ***I*** shall not be in want !

Praying in response to the text: Thank you Lord for being my shepherd. It’s such a relief that I don’t have to worry about what is coming tomorrow!

using prayers in the Bible

It can also be helpful to shape your prayers around the prayers of Bible characters. You can use the prayers of David—for forgiveness (Psalm 51), Jesus—to teach you how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13), Solomon—for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-9), Stephen—when people attacked him: (Acts 7:59-60) or Paul—in praying for others (Ephesians 1:15-20, Ephesians 3:14-21).



using your journal

You can write your Bible based prayers in the appropriate column of the prayer journal, or use extra space in your Bible study journal.

prayer journal

receiving
God's power

1

dying to my sinful nature

yielding my sinful nature and my sins utterly to God—which are damaging mind, body, and spirit, in myself and in others

Jan 1—continually rehearsing in my mind how John has hurt me. Father, take away my desire for revenge.

Jan 2—I keep snapping at my children. Please take away my irritation, I don't know where it comes from?!

Jan 5—I feel so resistant to spending time in your presence...

Jan 7—I didn't listen to others in the meeting—I just pushed my point of view. Take away my desire to be heard.

Jan 10—I just ignored Emma when I could have encouraged her. Replace my indifferent heart with a heart of concern.

Jan 11—I have been stuffing my mouth full of rubbish because I have felt angry. Take away my anger and may I treat my body with care—as you created me to live.

Jan 13—I feel addicted to surfing the internet. Can you show me why I feel compelled to do this?

Jan 16—I am feeling overwhelmed by stress! Teach me to trust you completely!

2

baptised by the Spirit

DAILY TRANSFORMATION

- a) receiving God's own nature
- b) receiving faith to pray for my needs
- c) receiving grace to live by God's words

Jan 1—Wisdom for what to say when meeting Mark! Generosity with the children! A graceful attitude for my 1pm meeting! power to keep a positive attitude

Jan 2—Peace before I step out of the door! I desperately need to know you are with me today.

Jan 5—Father, I sense a deep need for your Spirit within me. Unless your Spirit fills me, I have nothing to offer today. PM—Since I got angry with Philip today I lost all sense of Your abiding presence. Restore to me the joy of your salvation!

Jan 7—Before I meet with the team today, grant me the peace that your presence brings! my faith feels rather feeble—I long for faith which removes my fear and uncertainty.

Jan 10—May I trust you completely as I send out my CV for a new job.

Jan 11—May I be faithful to your word and full of godly integrity as I fill out my tax return.

Jan 13—Grant me a vision of Your holiness that lesser things will fade away.

3

baptised by the Spirit

DAILY MISSION

- a) revealing a Christlike character to others
- b) praying in faith for the needs of others
- c) sharing God's words with others

Jan 1-Please show me someone I can encourage today.

Jan 2-That Emma may know "the hope to which you have called her" (Ephesians 1:18) / Abbey to find a job close to home.

Jan 5-As Jesus was the light of the world (Matthew 5), may I reflect His light today / May I have an opportunity to be a verbal witness for you today / Patrick to learn patience as he waits for his results.

Jan 7-That I will be perfect in loving Kerry, even as my Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:45,48) / That Dad will recognise the importance of faith for a transformed life

Jan 10-Rachel is struggling with her finances. Help me to find someone who can help her keep out of debt & that she will trust you through these difficult times / Patrick's school fees / That I may not be ashamed of You when I meet with Michael today.

Jan 11-Father, may my face reflect your peace and joy as I go to work today-may your Holy Spirit be noticeable, and shape every moment of my day-that You will be honoured.

4

thanks & praise

asking the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to the goodness and love of God—in the past, present and future

Jan 1-Thank you for your Presence which gives me peace as I set out today (Exodus 33:14-15)

Jan 2-Thanks for giving me the right words to say to Mark-it was wonderful to see You at work in our conversation!

Jan 5-Thank you so much for the call from Emma today. You are doing great things in her life! / Thanks for a sense of the abiding Holy Spirit during the day.

Jan 7- 'Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits- who forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases, who redeems my life from the pit and crowns me with love and compassion, who satisfies my desires with good things so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's! (Psalm 103:1-4)

Jan 10-Father, I am just so amazed at Your faithfulness to me! "The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him" (Lamentations 3:25)-The kids are doing really well at school.

Jan 11-Abbey found a job! Thanks!

prayer journal

1

dying to my sinful nature

yielding my sinful nature and my sins utterly to God—which are damaging mind, body, and spirit, in myself and in others

2

baptised by the Spirit

DAILY TRANSFORMATION

- a) receiving God's own nature
- b) receiving faith to pray for my needs
- c) receiving grace to live by God's words

receiving God's power

3

baptised by the Spirit

DAILY MISSION

- a) revealing a Christlike character to others
- b) praying in faith for the needs of others
- c) sharing God's words with others

4

thanks & praise

asking the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to the goodness and love of God—in the past, present and future

3 mission

revealing
God's glory

how God reveals His glory

God's mission for human beings

Let me ask you a question: as a human being, what is your purpose? We all want to live lives full of meaning and usefulness. So to try and answer this question, let's go back to the original mission with which God charged the first human beings, still living in a perfect world. After creating mankind "in his own image" (Genesis 1:27) the story continues, "God blessed them and said to them, "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it..." (v28) **God's task for Adam and Eve—created in His image and thus revealing His character and glory—was to expand their human family across the earth. By doing so, the world would become full of beings reflecting the image of God, and so the whole world would become full of the glorious character of God.**

in the image of God

At the time Genesis was written, the idea of being made in the image of the gods was common within Ancient Near Eastern culture. The supreme rulers of the land declared themselves to be made in the image of their gods. These rulers were considered priests who were mediators between their god and the people. As they conquered new territory, they would set up literal images of themselves so that everyone would know that this land was now under the authority of the god whom the ruler represented (c.f. Daniel 3). In just the same way, **as human beings were originally made in the image of God, they were intended to act as priests on behalf of the God of Heaven, and expand His authority and reveal His glory across the earth.**

restoring God's image, revealing God's glory

But then sin entered into the heart of mankind and the image of God became de-formed. While human beings did multiply, and they have filled the earth, **the plan to fill the earth with image bearers authentically revealing the glory and character of God was severely damaged.**

While nature reveals the glory of God, and the glory of God is seen in the

gospel, God's glory is also revealed in the lives of transformed, re-formed, people. **God is greatly honoured as people participate in His eternal purposes for de-formed people to become “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29).** As we learn and teach others “to contemplate the Lord's glory, [we and they] are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). **As God's authentically transformed image bearers multiply across the earth, they are expanding God's rule and realising God's original purposes for mankind in Eden—that the whole earth is filled with His glory. Becoming part of this mission which God declared for human beings in Eden is still at the centre of God's purposes for you today.** Indeed, the very last message that sounds across the world before Jesus comes is an urgent call to come out of spiritual Babylon—a place in rebellion against God—and into a community devoted to filling the earth with God's glory. Here, God's people devote themselves to rebuilding broken people back into temples for God who will reveal His glorious image once again (Revelation 18:1-4; c.f. Zechariah 2:6-7, Ezra 1:3).

2 ways for you to reveal God's glory

In the context of this mission, there are two ways for you to reveal the glory of God in the world:

- 1. Through who you are:** the glory of God can be spread through the increasing transformation of people in the image of Jesus. I would suggest that this is the most compelling revelation of God's glory which confounds Satan's lies most convincingly.
- 2. Through what you do:** the glory of God can be spread through the proclamation of the content of the gospel. It moves verbally from person to person and through different forms of media.

So communion with God is not limited to private spiritual experiences, but includes collaborating with God in His two-fold mission to reveal His glory.



using your journal

God is calling you into communion with Him in His mission to fill the earth with His character—His glory. As He prepares you for this, two things will happen:

1. God will shape circumstances to mature His character in you.
2. God will provide opportunities for you to share the gospel with others.

Use your mission journal to record what God is doing in both of these areas. The other lessons in this section will further explain these two ideas.

becoming— life in God's school

it's about our whole lives

Paul wrote that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). So how does God prepare us to do these good works? **We serve God primarily out of who we are, and who we are is matured through God’s providential circumstances in our lives. These circumstances are God’s school.** Often, these circumstances call us to deeper communion with God.

God’s school includes two types of processes which He uses to shape us for God’s glory. Firstly, life phases, and secondly, character tests.

1—life phases: how God prepared Moses

Consider the example of Moses. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but how do you learn to do a job like that? Look at how God trained him through four different phases in his life.

Phase 1: Shaped by time with his parents (Exodus 2:1-9). Though taken out of the Nile by Pharaoh’s daughter, God enabled Moses to return to his own mother who taught him the ways of God. God provided the right environment for Moses’ early development (around 12 years).

Phase 2: Learning in Pharaoh’s court (Exodus 2:10). After learning about God from his mother, Moses then went to live in the courts of Pharaoh as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. This is where Moses learnt the specific skills of a civil and military leader (28 years).

Phase 3: Refining in the wilderness (Exodus 2:11-25). After killing an Egyptian in an attempt to repay the cruelty of the Egyptians against the Hebrews, Moses escaped to Midian. It was in Midian that God taught him not to depend on his own strength and to learn the Christ-like characteristics of humbleness and patience—as he looked after sheep (40 years).

Phase 4: Applying learning successfully to ministry (Exodus 3 onwards). Moses was 80 years old before God called him into service at the burning

bush, and when this happened Moses felt incompetent (Exodus 3:11). But these previous 3 phases of Moses' life were exactly what God needed to prepare Moses for successful mission.

2—character tests

Robert Clinton studied hundreds of Christian leaders throughout history to see how God trained them. He found that God used particular methods to foster certain qualities, and checked to see if these qualities had taken root. Clinton saw that if people failed these tests they could not move forward until they were re-tested and passed. He observed that God tests the following through His providential leading in our circumstances:

1. **Integrity**—where God assesses my intentions and desires—which lay at the heart of character. For example, Daniel's integrity was tested as he refused food offered to idols (Daniel 1), or Joseph's integrity was tested when Potiphar's wife wanted to sleep with him (Genesis 39).
2. **Obedience**—where God looks to see if I will obey his voice. For example, God's call for Noah to build an ark (Genesis 6).
3. **Word integration**—where God checks if I will take and apply His word to my life. For example, God's call for Peter to minister to non-Jews even though it went against everything he had previously believed (Acts 10).
4. **Submission**—where God tests my dependency on Him. Submission is often tested in the face of chaotic circumstances, injustice, and conflict, and requires a growing trust that God is responsible for leading my life. For example, God's call to Hagar to return to live as Sarah's maid, even after Sarah abused her (Genesis 16).

life is God's school

While God will use you today, God's preparation for you to become increasingly effective is often a process over time. This is because God is looking to re-shape your heart to increasingly reflect Jesus. So from the moment you are born, God is leading you through various experiences to build into you the qualities that enable you to authentically reflect His glory. **Our whole life is God's school—a school from which we never graduate!**



using your journal

Use your mission journal to explore how God is shaping your life to reveal His glory, through His providential leading of a) the phases of your life, and b) character tests God brings to reflect Himself through you.

becoming— pruning

revealing
God's glory

why difficult things happen

A goldsmith was purifying gold in the white-hot fire. “How do you know when the gold is pure?” someone asked him. He replied, “When I can see my face in it.” (Amy Carmichael, *Learning Of God*, 50.) Sometimes God does the same with us. Experiencing problems does not mean God has abandoned you. Rather, as Peter writes to a suffering church,

These [trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:7)

Ellen White affirms that such trials enable us to become more like Jesus:

Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness. (Christ's Object Lessons, 61)

We encounter trials in this world for four main reasons. Firstly, we experience the impact of Satan in the world (Revelation 12:12). Secondly, we reap the consequences of our own sinful actions (Romans 6:23). Thirdly, we may suffer when we God removes our sin because the sin is so deeply entwined inside us (Jeremiah 9:7). Fourthly, we experience pain that is the result of pruning. It is this last category of pruning that we will now expand a little further.

pruning

Jesus says that His Father “cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” (John 15:2) I may not have sinned in a specific way I can think of, but as a sinner, I know that I am still weak in faith and trust and all the other Christlike virtues that God wants to strengthen inside me. Consequently, Bruce Wilkinson writes, “Are you praying for God’s superabundant blessings

and pleading that He will make you more like His Son? If so, then you are asking for the shears" (Secrets of the Vine).

Also think about the pain from Paul's thorn. Paul writes, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) Notice that Paul considers that he was "given" this painful "thorn". He considers it "a messenger of Satan", yet he also sees it is intended to carry a holy purpose, for God permits the thorn to keep him humble. In other words, this experience keeps Paul in communion with God. The author of Hebrews describes how God uses such difficulties in His school:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. (Hebrews 12:7-13)

As you go through difficult periods in God's school, pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the determination for godliness that Job had when he declared, "when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Even though such pruning can be challenging, always remember that power to keep going is found in communion with God. Remember that

we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)



using your journal

Use your mission journal to record how God may be permitting trials to prune your life? What is God pruning in your character today, so you can "be transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory"? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

doing— adventures in service

what Heaven is doing

In his book, *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby writes that God is at work all around us, so our task is to identify what God is doing and join Him in His work. All Heaven is busy to prepare people for the return of Jesus. So if you desire to enter into communion with God in what He is doing to reveal His glory, you can be certain that God will use you.

God will never say...

God will never say that you can't be used because you are not old enough, or clever enough, or you don't know enough. God specialises in using people who don't think they are good enough. He used Moses who pleaded, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." (Exodus 4:13) God used Jeremiah who complained, "'Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.'" (Jeremiah 1:6) God often chooses people who don't think they can do the job because only such people are willing to depend on Him 100% for their ideas and strength.

God chooses the weak things of the world

We like to think we are clever and strong, but as humans living in the middle of a battle between two supernatural powers, we don't have what it takes to live for God without complete dependence on His divine power.

This is why Paul says, "we have this treasure [Jesus and the power of his word] in jars of clay [us] to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Later, Paul explains God's promise to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) So no matter who you are, or how weak you think you are, God can use you. He is willing to start the moment you are willing.

how to have an adventure with God

This makes every day a potential adventure with God in witnessing and service. You will notice this is simple. Here is how it works:

1. When you wake up in the morning, ask God to guide you to serve or witness to someone today.
2. As you go through your day, keep a prayerful attitude, continually asking God to open your eyes to the service and witnessing opportunities around you.

You don't need to be stressed thinking of ways to force an opportunity to be a witness or to serve. Remember that God is already at work in the lives of people around you. You cannot open or change a heart. God Himself is responsible for providing these opportunities for you. This will happen naturally as you remain open to the direction of the Holy Spirit.



using your journal

Use your mission journal to write about your daily adventures in service with God. How did God use you today? How did the Spirit direct you? If you can't see where God was, think back to the places you visited, the people you spoke with, the things you did. Were there times when God may have wanted you to serve Him but for some reason you missed the opportunity? Why was that? Ask God to show you your day from His point of view.

The good news is that every time you pray to be used, God will send people in your direction, or you will be sent to them. You can be sure that God is continually at work around you to reveal His glory. He will surely use you as you enter into communion with Him in what He is doing.

doing—building spiritual friendships

God is already at work in the lives of your family, friends and co-workers. So how can you enter into communion with God and join Him to grow spiritual friendships—friendships that allows God to reveal Himself through you—and restore His image in their lives “with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)? Here is a 3 stage process for you develop and deepen spiritual friendships. The 3 stages are pray, encourage, invite.

1 pray

- Ask God to place a burden on your heart for people with whom you are in personal contact.
- Begin praying that they will become spiritually open to God so that you can develop a spiritual friendship. Pray that their lives will reflect the image of Jesus “with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Particularly pray that God will forgive them and lift the burden of sin from their lives so that they can experience God's peace and joy.
- As this is a supernatural battle, praying daily for them is vital.

2 encourage

Ask God to show you how to encourage them. You could send them a text message, a card, or a message through social media. You could also encourage them with an act of service, like baby-sitting for a mother with young children, or helping someone to fix a problem in their house.

3 invite

Ask God to help you identify opportunities to deepen your friendship. Remember it is not about making “a contact” but developing genuine, personal, spiritual friendships. For example, you could invite the person for a meal, go on a walk together, attend a Christian small group, or attend a special event at church.

As you work through these 3 stages, allow time for the Holy Spirit to work on your people's hearts before moving too quickly to the next stage. God will enable you to gauge when to move forwards.



using your journal

Keep a daily record of the people for whom you are praying, encouraging and inviting. To keep everything together in one picture, you may like to use lists or a prayer-map. You can use different lists or prayer-maps for different categories of people, eg. family, friends, Bible class, colleagues etc. You can use these daily, and easily add to them to create an ongoing action plan.

Here is an example of a prayer-map using the 3 stages:



God is calling you into ever deeper intimacy with Himself. But how does this happen? When you take time each day to be with God, what should you do, and how?

Sometimes it is challenging to know how to read the Bible in order to hear God speak personally into our lives. Or how to pray so that things really happen. Or what to do so that God is able to use us for His glory as we step out into the world each day. It can be challenging to know how to do all this with God's divine power rather than surviving life with our own.

Communion with God is a guide to help shape your daily devotions. It will teach you how enter into ever deeper communion with God, so that you can live with God's own mind and heart, live with His divine power, and live as His witness in the world, and so be "transformed in his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

