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**Sunday 28 May 2023 to Sunday 4 June 2023**

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Sunday 28 May 2023

**Am I dehydrated?**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them (John 7:37b,38).***

Read [John 7:37–39](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A37-39&version=NRSVUE)

I find it easy to become dehydrated, especially when I am exercising or drinking too much coffee during the day. I need to intentionally and regularly drink water to avoid the symptoms of dehydration, such as headache, dizziness, fatigue or just a feeling of malaise. I now make sure I hydrate, even if I don’t feel thirsty.

When our ‘stores’ of God’s Holy Spirit are low, we also experience unpleasant symptoms. Left to live our calling in our own strength, we can feel disoriented and overwhelmed. We can become fatigued and even anxious. Our Lord knows that we need his Spirit, so he encourages us to return regularly to him as the source of spiritual hydration. When Jesus declared that ‘living water will flow’, he wasn’t using a metaphor or allegory. Indeed, he made it clear that the person of the Holy Spirit would be part of our lives and, what’s more, would flow through us to others.

It’s easy for us to be spiritually dehydrated too. This Bible verse reminds us that regular, intentional top-ups are part of the Christian life. There are many ways for us to come to Jesus for spiritual hydration. God’s Spirit flows to us as we read and meditate on Scripture. We also experience a boost when we gather as believers and testify to the work of God in our lives. We can ask someone to pray for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and, of course, we receive the Holy Spirit in Holy Communion. One of the ways I get recharged by the Spirit is to exercise the spiritual gifts he has given me. God promises to empower us for service with his gifts.

***Dear Jesus, fill us this day with your Holy Spirit. Touch those parts of our lives that are dry and need renewal. Show us those who need your Spirit so that we can be vessels through which your Spirit flows. Amen.***

*Pastor Greg lives in Adelaide and serves as pastor of Golden Grove Lutheran Church and School. He is blessed to be able to spend lots of time with his grandchildren, Teddy and Olivia. His spare time is taken up with golf, Formula 1 and going out with his beautiful wife.*

Monday 29 May 2023

**Wide awake**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***Let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6).***

Read [1 Thessalonians 5:1–11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A1%E2%80%9311&version=NRSVUE)

One of my least favourite things is waking up tired. If I don’t get the right sleep, my whole day is affected; I am fuzzy in the brain and far less energetic. When that happens, I don’t experience the joy that comes with the day the Lord has given me, and I am not fully present in my relationships. Good sleep is critical for our wellbeing.

The Bible encourages us to live our life attentive to God’s action and refreshed by his presence. Paul talks about the end times and says that no-one can predict the time of the Lord’s return, but knowing that he will return will change the way we live now. Following Easter, Jesus’ kingdom is with us, and he promises to be with us until the very end of the age. Our lives are shaped by the truth that God himself is invested in what happens to us now as we await the Day of the Lord.

This means we can see events in the light of Jesus’ return. Although there is much change in the world and pain is part of everyone’s life, we have the certainty of a God who is with us, guiding and loving us all the way. We don’t live in a haze but rather in the light of Christ. May his Spirit lead and comfort us.

***Dear Lord, thank you for all your promises – for the promise of your return and your presence. Clear our minds and calm our hearts as we live enlivened by your Spirit. Amen.***

Tuesday 30 May 2023

**I want to overflow!**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21).***

Read [1 Thessalonians 5:12–28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A12%E2%80%9328&version=NRSVUE)

When I was a small child, my cousins and I would get together a few times a year for a family gathering, which included our grandmother. Unlike most of my cousins, she was my only living grandparent, so I desperately wanted a relationship with her. Like most grandmothers, she was kind and giving and showed us all great affection. Still, I wanted something that was exclusively between us. Aware of my needs, she would always make time just for the two of us to talk, and I would be elated.

Our God is also aware we need an intimate, one-on-one relationship with him. He knows we ache to hear a personal word for us and our situation. He knows that while all of humankind are his children, he is our one and only Father, and we want a unique relationship. God gives us that through his powerful word – the Word read, preached and released through prophecy.

Paul makes it clear that we are not to work against the movement of God’s Spirit in prophecy. It is easy to be sceptical when a brother or sister says to us that God has a word for our situation and to reject what they say. But Paul encourages us to test rather than reject a word from another in the faith. Often we see God’s love and concern in a new way and are drawn closer to him through a personal prophetic word. Indeed, I have witnessed blessing and renewal that was obviously the work of the Spirit through prophecy.

Naturally, every prophecy needs to be tested by those who have oversight in a faith community. When administered rightly with pastoral oversight, prophetic ministry enhances the life-giving word received through the means of grace.

***Lord Jesus, send us your word in every form. Heal us, renew us and encourage us by your Spirit. Amen.***

Wednesday 31 May 2023

**I love a good doctrine**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***Command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work – which is by faith (1 Timothy 1:3b,4).***

Read [1 Timothy 1:1–17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+1%3A1%E2%80%9317&version=NRSVUE)

I often hear people say that we shouldn’t be divided on doctrine; instead, we should focus on the ‘main thing’ of faith in Jesus and the salvation that comes through the gift of faith. It is easy to see doctrine as something that is limiting or gets in the way of our faith growth and mission. This can even seem like a waste of time and energy to get caught up in doctrinal issues. However, the Bible tells us that true doctrine is essential to the expression of God’s love.

Paul was concerned about the doctrine being taught to the saints in Ephesus. As a mature leader, Paul understood that even the most enthusiastic and well-meaning believer can cause hurt by teaching a doctrine that does not lead to the expression of God’s love. Indeed, Paul’s experience in ministry and the direct revelation given to him means that he was able to guide new churches to live ‘good doctrine’ for the sake of the gospel.

What we believe and teach is reflected in the practices we have in our church. There are many examples of poor doctrine that have hurt people. Poor doctrine in terms of marriage meant that some were trapped in abusive marriages. An over-emphasis on the sanctified life has sometimes created a new legalism that has led to anxiety. On the other hand, good doctrine is a means for us to experience God’s love. May we seek good doctrine together as a church.

***Father God, help us all work together to teach and love good doctrine for your glory and our blessing. Amen.***

Thursday 1 June 2023

**Praying for leaders**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1,2).***

Read [1 Timothy 1:18 – 2:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+1%3A18+%E2%80%93+2%3A15&version=NRSVUE)

As I watched a little of King Charles' coronation a few weeks ago, I saw a group of protesters waving placards that read ‘Not my king’. One of the reporters covering the event asked if they would pledge allegiance to the new king and support the ceremony (which included prayers) to respect the monarchy, even if they were not very keen on King Charles. The protesters replied with a definitive ‘no’.

What do we do as Christians when we have leaders who are enacting policies that we disagree with? As our world becomes increasingly anti-Christian, we will find time and again that our leaders do not represent our views and values. Ethical issues of life promoted by the government have troubled many Christians here in South Australia recently. More than that, there is a strong push now to define human sexuality in ways that some Christians find go against God’s will for his creation. Should we pray for these leaders and governments?

Paul gives clear instructions here that we have a responsibility to pray for our leaders despite their policies. In fact, our priestly duty is to bring all people before the throne of God – believers and non-believers alike. We pray that all people will receive the gift of faith in Jesus, and we pray for our governments to act in godly ways for the good of all. We can disagree with our government and even campaign against them at an election; that is our right as citizens. But we are called to pray for those in authority; that is our responsibility as Christians.

***Lord of all, we pray for our leaders today and ask that they administer power for the good of all and in line with your will. Amen.***

Friday 2 June2023

**I can’t manage my family!**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***[The overseer] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect (1 Timothy 3:4).***

Read [1 Timothy 3:1–16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+3%3A1%E2%80%9316&version=NRSVUE)

There are times when I feel successful as a father. There are many other times when I feel like a failure. What’s particularly difficult for me as a pastor is the requirement that I manage my family well and ensure my children obey me. Anyone who knows my wife and children realises that is an impossible task! I would do great damage to my marriage if I tried to manage my wife, and I have no desire for my daughters to obey me. My call as a father is to sacrifice for my family and love and respect them.

My role as a pastor has some similarities to my role as a father. I am called to pray for my family just like I pray for the people I shepherd. In fact, this is the most powerful thing I can do. When my youngest daughter was born, I had recurring dreams of her being hurt, which disturbed me. When I spoke to my pastor about it, he told me it was the fear of being unable to protect her. He asked me if I thought she was a child of God and if God was parenting alongside me. In truth, I thought I was doing it alone. From that day on, I prayed for my family every day and asked God to partner with me; after all, he is the ultimate good Father.

Over the years, my relationship with my children has changed as they have grown from infants to children to women. I tell them that I pray for them still. I tell them I am still their father, but they have a better one in God.

***Father God, be with us all as we live our calling to be husbands, wives, parents etc. May you be with us as we seek your will for our families. Amen.***

Saturday 3 June 2023

**Who are we?**

by Pastor Greg Fowler

***When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3,4)***

Read [Psalm 8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8&version=NRSVUE)

There are many times in my life when I feel like a bit of a nobody. I know that comparing myself to others is the worst thing I can do, yet I fall into this trap more often than I should. When we get together with the extended family at Christmas or other gatherings, I hear how others are doing amazing things with their lives and positively influencing others. I feel good for them and celebrate with them, but in times of doubt, I wonder who I am and what I am doing that’s of any real worth. I know that I am not alone.

God tells us exactly who we are and how much we’re worth. In this psalm, we see that the Lord of the entire universe is mindful of us! And not mindful of us as a collective; he is mindful of us individually, as he has created us. This gives me great comfort. It also means that I can say, truthfully, ‘I am who God made me, and I am doing what he asks me to do’. I realise that we all do valuable things; it’s just that some are more obvious than others. I know that God is at work through me in many ways and often even when I am unaware. We are God’s treasure, his love and his masterwork.

Growing in our relationship with God allows us to see how he is at work in and through us. When I have my eyes on him, I am not looking at others and comparing myself. I am content with the provision of God and the work he has for me to do. I delight in his blessing!

***Lord God, may we know our worth and grow in relationship with you. Provide for our needs and direct our attention to you. Amen.***

Sunday 4 June 2023

**Calling the doubting**

by Annie Duarte

***When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted (Matthew 28:17).***

Read [Matthew 28:16–20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A16%E2%80%9320&version=NRSVUE)

After everything they had been through, three years of shared life and ministry with Jesus, some of the 11 disciples still doubted. After years of miracles, healing, teaching, and hours spent in prayer together, they still succumbed to doubting Jesus. But despite these doubts, the Scripture says that they worshipped Jesus upon seeing him. They worshipped even though they doubted. What’s more, they were still commissioned to jump-start the greatest task in human history! These were the men tasked with building the church. They were charged with taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. And still, they doubted.

The beautiful thing about Jesus is that he knew they doubted, yet he still commissioned them. Nothing comes as a surprise to Jesus. He knows the masks we wear and the doubts and fears we hide in our hearts. But as believers and members of the body of Christ, he still calls and commissions us to make disciples of all nations, just as he called and commissioned the disciples so long ago. God has an amazing history of calling unlikely heroes from humble beginnings – from the beginning of the Bible and even into our present time.

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by Jesus’ commission to go and make disciples? You may even disqualify yourself when you consider your inadequacies. Praise God that he sees everything. He knows everything about you and still calls you to great things for the sake of his name. So bring your doubts and worship him anyway. He promises that his grace is sufficient. Bring your doubts and receive his calling and commission – his purpose for your life. He isn’t bothered by your brokenness. He is honoured by your obedience and perseverance despite your doubts.

***Jesus, thank you for equipping me to do what you have called me to do. I trust you and your intimate knowledge of my gifts, skills and capacities. Amen.***

*Annie Duarte is a wife, mom, worship leader and preschool Bible teacher. She and her husband serve in ministry together in the United States. Annie loves seeing God’s word come alive to people of all ages.*