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**Sunday 5 June 2022 to Sunday 12 June 2022**

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Sunday 5 June 2022

# Not alone

by Georgie Schuster

**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:26).**

Read John 14:8–17 (25–27)

What comes to your mind when you hear the words, ‘And there will be a test’? While assessment of knowledge and skill acquisition has changed considerably in recent times, the idea of ‘finding out what you know’ may bring to mind a range of memories. You may have relished the opportunity to share your knowledge. For others, memories of nights of coffee, cramming and anxiety might resurface. The teacher’s guidance and assistance are withdrawn. You are on your own. There’s the feeling of ‘I’ve tried so hard; will I remember everything?’ Then later, putting those skills and knowledge into practice is where it all becomes very real …

For the disciples, the days of having their beloved teacher and friend walking and talking with them every day were drawing to an end. Jesus was preparing and comforting them for what lay ahead. Things were going to be different, but they weren’t going to be alone. The Holy Spirit was coming to live with and be in them to be their advocate, guide and helper. To remind them of Jesus’ words. To encourage, equip and continue to teach them.

And we aren’t alone today. The Holy Spirit is with us, too. Have you ever had the experience in a conversation with someone when a Bible verse or encouragement that fits the moment perfectly pops into your mind? Or when you read the Bible or hear someone talk about God, and everything becomes clear?

When it comes to God’s love and grace, we are all lifelong learners. And we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with us all the way!

**Dear Father God, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to be with us always to comfort, guide, teach, equip and strengthen us each day. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.**

Monday 6 June 2022

# A new name

by Georgie Schuster

**You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow (Isaiah 62:2b).**

Read Isaiah 62:1–12

Names are closely linked to identities. If I gave the name of a famous landmark and asked what popped into your mind next, I imagine you might ‘see’ a picture pretty quickly and suddenly be thinking about its features. How about the Sydney Harbour Bridge? The Eiffel Tower?

Isaiah spoke of many things. Earlier, he shared that Jerusalem would fall. But here in Isaiah 62, he shared words of comfort and hope.

‘No longer will they call you Deserted or your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married’ (verse 4). The name Hephzibah means ‘my delight is in her’, and Beulah means ‘married’.

‘They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted’ (Isaiah 62:12).

He spoke not only of the city but also of the people who would return.

There were times that sadness filled the hearts of those who thought of Jerusalem’s identity in this period … The names Deserted and Desolate offered no joy.

But God had a new identity, new names in mind, seen through his eyes for his city and its people. Hephzibah, Beulah, Holy People, Sought After, Redeemed, No Longer Deserted.

Isaiah also looked forward to the time when the Saviour would come, and we have the privilege of knowing all that Jesus did for us. Our identity is in Christ! Just as God spoke over the people long ago, he sees and calls us by our new names today! My Delight, Married, Holy, Redeemed, Sought After, No Longer Deserted, among many others!

Which of these names resonates with you today?

**Dear God, thank you for seeing me through my new identity in Christ. Help me to live in it today. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.**

Tuesday 7 June 2022

# Poured out

by Georgie Schuster

**And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions (Joel 2:28).**

Read Joel 2:28–32a

He poured maple syrup all over my pancake ... Her excitement poured out … I’m not thinking here of a carefully measured dose of sweetness or someone showing restraint in how she expressed herself. I’m thinking of syrup being lavished all over a dessert and someone expressing herself freely, without holding back!

Joel’s prophesy, later quoted by Peter at Pentecost, uses the words ‘pour out my Spirit’.

Here we see God’s love in action. The Holy Spirit is being poured out for all people, regardless of age or gender. God doesn’t hold back or ‘administer sparingly’. His desire is that all would come to know him and his great love for us. Jesus paid the price for our sins and restored our relationship with our Father. The Holy Spirit continues to point us to this truth and lead and guide us to flourish in our relationship with our loving God. The Spirit emboldens and empowers us to share God’s love with others too.

What does this mean for you today?

**Dear Father God, thank you for pouring out your Holy Spirit on all people. Open all our senses to receive from your Spirit today. Please guide our words and actions with those you may bring across our path. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen.**

Wednesday 8 June 2022

# There’s something about them …

by Georgie Schuster

**When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).**

Read Acts 4:5–21

We like things that make sense. One plus one equals two, and all is right with the world. But it can be confronting when something doesn’t appear to add up.

The educated men (rulers, elders, teachers of the law, the high priest etc) would have done their research on Peter and John as they sought reasons to silence them.

Initially fishermen by trade, one could expect their skillset and expertise to be confined to that profession. But then they hung around the itinerant Jesus, who challenged long-held traditions and understandings and was crucified for his troubles. Reports had been made of his resurrection, but he had since disappeared off the face of the earth.

Still, his influence seemed to be spreading. Peter and John were going around healing people using Jesus’ name! Now, these same men stood before the hierarchy and spoke with boldness. They even had the audacity and courage to quote Scripture, naming Jesus as the one who the psalmist referenced … in front of some of the same men who orchestrated Jesus’ crucifixion.

So how did they go from being ordinary, uneducated fishermen to men of courage who performed miracles and spoke with authority? Well, they did spend time – a lot of time – with Jesus. He seemed to have a profound and life-changing impact on these two extraordinary men … and they weren’t (and aren’t) the only ones!

How does spending time with Jesus impact you and influence your words and actions?

**Dear God, thank you for all the ways we get to spend time together. You share your love and refresh my soul in many different ways. You show me paths to walk and people to connect with. I look forward to what you have in store for me today! In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.**

Thursday 9 June 2022

# Up against it

by Georgie Schuster

**Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness (Acts 4:29).**

Read Acts 4:23–31

Self-preservation is a natural instinct. A typical first response to a threat is to back away, keep safe and survive. But that is not what was happening here.

Pre-Pentecost, the disciples kept to themselves, out of sight and worshipped God in seclusion. But when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, everything changed! They came out from behind closed doors into the full view of everyone – to those who would receive their message of God’s love and forgiveness through Jesus and those who would do anything they could to shut them down.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples continued what Jesus had begun, teaching, healing and pointing people to the truth. Their priorities had changed. Their identity and security were firmly in their Lord and Saviour, Jesus. His promises anchored them; his mission took precedence over their own lives.

But it was no picnic. The disciples were up against it; the opposition would be relentless. Peter and John had just come from spending a night in jail and being threatened and questioned by authorities. So, what did they do?

They prayed! They presented their circumstance before God and asked him to help them continue speaking his word with courage and confidence anyway!

God granted their request. Once again, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to share God’s word boldly!

God knows already that we can’t further his kingdom in our own strength. We were never meant to. But as we remain in his love with our identity secure in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the possibilities are endless!

**Dear God, you already know that some days are just plain tough. Remind me again of the love and security I have in you. Holy Spirit, help me be brave and bold and share the Father’s love with those you show me today. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.**

Friday 10 June 2022

# It’s free

by Georgie Schuster

**Peter answered: ‘May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!’ (Acts 8:20)**

Read Acts 8:12–25

It seems that anything of value has a price. We live in a world where money has power and influence. In fact, this concept is so firmly entrenched that if you receive a free gift, you can feel uncomfortable. The questions ‘What’s the catch?’ or ‘How am I now obligated to you?’ might swirl around in our minds or pits of our stomachs.

This is not exactly a new concept; it’s existed for millennia! So, Simon perhaps thought that his request was reasonable … at first!

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, ‘Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 8:18,19).

Peter’s response was both direct and penetrating. This gift was not something that could be bought!

God levels the playing field. From the poorest of the poor, right through to the richest of the rich, God’s gift is not something that can be purchased by any human monetary system. Our greatest need, a restored relationship with God, has been paid for with the precious blood of Jesus, available for all, free of charge.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is also given freely. God’s desire is for us to flourish in our relationship with him and share his love with others, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Money, in this case, has no power or influence. God’s great love for people, on the other hand …

**Dear God, I can’t earn or repay you for your freely given gifts. Thank you for your love. Thank you for Jesus’ sacrifice. Thank you for the Holy Spirit. I receive your gifts with thanks and gratitude. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.**

Saturday 11 June 2022

# From where we stand

by Georgie Schuster

**When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers … what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3,4)**

Read Psalm 8

I used to love staring up into the inky darkness of the night sky when I lived in the country. The Milky Way was on display. (It took me a long time to learn where the Southern Cross was because the constellation seemed to hide amongst the millions of other stars. It felt like a ‘Where’s Wally?’ puzzle to me!)

I like to think that David enjoyed the night sky, too, all those years ago as he warmed himself by a campfire. His thoughts would often turn to the Creator, his majesty and glory … But his ponderings ventured further to where our own thoughts go from time to time.

Where do people fit into the big picture?

How does it even make sense that the One whose creativity set into being the heavens, the earth and all living things places such value on the human race? Created in his image, he gives people honour and purpose. He invests himself, his love and care, knowing all the shortcomings and failures that human lives present.

I won’t be able to logically explain how this all makes sense in a concise way to satisfy everyone. But then again, I don’t have to. What I can do is to receive God’s grace and love with gratitude and join David in thanking, praising and worshipping our Creator, our Lord and our God. How will you respond to him today?

**Dear Creator God, it doesn’t make sense that you value me so much when you know every detail about me, yet you do. Your love paid for my sins on the cross, and you restored me to the position you always intended for me to have. I thank and praise you for your love and grace. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.**

Sunday 12 June 2022

# You can handle the truth

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth (John 16:13a).**

Read John 16:12–15

In the movie, A Few Good Men, Jack Nicholson plays a passionate yet deceitful military officer, confronted by an upstart lawyer accusing him of the heinous crime of covering up the chain of command, which leads to murder. During the most iconic scene, Nicholson takes the stand, swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him, God.

When posed with a yes or no answer as to whether he ordered the hazing of a marine, Nicholson gives an impassioned speech, criticising the lawyer and openly questioning those who don’t understand the military’s role. At the end of the monologue, his face full of fury, he iconically states: ‘You can’t handle the truth’.

There are many times in my life when I feel like that. When the next straw falls on top of the last one, our backs feel broken, and our spirits crushed, I wonder if I can handle the truthful statement that life really isn’t fair.

In our reading today, Jesus, about to be led to Golgotha, describes the unfairness of what will happen to him and the struggle the disciples will encounter afterwards. Knowing that his disciples could be overwhelmed by the entirety of the news of his death (and not listen to the good news following), he tells them, ‘I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear’.

In other words, I don’t have enough time to ease you into this and to be honest, you couldn’t handle the truth.

Thus, Jesus promises the Spirit of truth, the one who will guide them into all the promises that Jesus has for them. The Spirit of truth, the Advocate, the one who will speak to them and for them, will reveal that there is much more to this life than death and despair, pandemic and pestilence, inflation and unfairness.

There is the resurrection. And the hope. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

That is the truth they can handle.

**Heavenly Father, through your Spirit who listens to the Son, please guide me into all the truth of your promises and relieve me from the fears that press in so closely. Amen.**