



The way forward: A time to reflect

As the lockdown begins to ease and we cautiously return to a life without the restrictions of the past year this also gives us opportunities to prepare for the first steps of being an in-person gathered church community again. We have travelled a long and hard road through the pandemic, and it is clear that this journey is not over for all. We will have no doubt experienced much, both helpful and challenging, so it is wise to take time and reflect on these experiences. This new season has afforded us a great opportunity to begin again - starting from scratch - so what can we dream? What is God saying to us about the ministry and mission of GBC? What can we, what should we, do differently?

Over the next 4 weeks we invite you to listen, reflect and pray together, and to seek God's guidance as we begin to emerge into this new world and contemplate how our church can share the good news of Jesus Christ and connect to a world finding its way in this time of recovery.

Beginning on Pentecost Sunday Micky and Gill will share 4 weekly messages at our online services. Each message will focus on a picture and passage of scripture to help us focus our thoughts. Following the message we'll send you a brief study so you can put aside time to reflect and pray. Micky and Gill would love to hear from you - perhaps you could forward us your notes so we can collect them together and look for God's guiding through them.

WEEK THREE

Picture three – THE SENTINEL

The sentinel or 'watchman' is a biblical theme that shows up regularly in the Old Testament, particularly in the books of the prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

A literal description of a sentinel is someone who stands watch on the walls of a city looking out for intruders or generally anything that could affect the life of the citizens within the walls. The sentinel had to maintain a constant vigil and be prepared to warn of danger with the blast of a trumpet. There is a strong spiritual aspect to the theme of sentinel too. Spiritually speaking the wall that protected Israel was the covenant relationship with God declared by Moses. The role of the sentinel was to faithfully represent this relationship and warn the people of God's judgement should they disobey the law of the covenant.

For examples of the sentinel theme read: Ezekiel 3:16-21, Jeremiah 6:16-18, Isaiah 52:7-10

Study & reflection

- Q. What is one observation (not interpretation or application yet) you notice when reading these passages? For instance, do you notice any key words, repetition, connecting thoughts, mentions of God, or important themes?

Q. The emphasis on judgement in these verse can be challenging to read, but we must remember disciples of Jesus are not bound by an old covenant, but given new life by the 'grace' of God's new covenant. So how does our message compare with or differ from that of the Old Testament sentinels.

Ezekiel, for example, not only spoke God's word to the people, but he also lived before them in such a way that they saw God's message portrayed before their very eyes.

- Q. How significant to the church is the example of Ezekiel? How can we be 'ambassadors for Christ' in our community – seeing and interpreting through the lens of the gospel?
- Q. What should be the attitude or character of a Christian, and the church, as we seek to be sentinels today?

“To be a sentinel – a contemplative ‘watchman’ for the Lord - is hard, combative and boring; it is not to detach yourself from the world but to stand on the heights and survey the world for its joys and horrors, interpreting the world to the Church and the Church to the world warning of danger when everyone is feeling safe, and proclaiming the victory of Christ when everything looks and feels defeated.”

- Q. As you stand and ‘scan the horizon’ from GBC what do you see? What is the context and culture in which we serve? How do we best represent God's perspective to the world?
- Q. Where should the emphasis for our outreach be?

These are big questions but critical for us to discern the way forward as a church. So take your time - stop, listen and look! How does God prompt you to respond?

Prayer *Move among us, Spirit, and gather us together with you.
Take our many selves - our lives, our loves, our ideas,
our questions, our speech, our silence and unite us as your people.
Give us the gifts of perception and understanding,
so that even as we dream your dreams and see your visions,
we may be able to witness to your presence
in our common life. Amen.*