



The Good Shepherd

Four Marks

**Parish Magazine
November 2021**



The Gospel

Salvation is found in no one else
[than Jesus], for there is no
other name under heaven given to
men by which we must be saved.
(The Holy Bible)



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Other Ministries at The Good Shepherd

Rev. Howard Wright leads the Discipleship (with Val Lucas) and Mission ministries; TBA: Prayer ministry; Chris McGrath: Worship ministry; Rev. Jonathan Rooke: Pastoral ministry.

The Vicar's Letter

This month we reach the end of our teaching series in John's Gospel. In John's account of Jesus' earthly life, we get the most intimate of glimpses into the nature and heart of God through Jesus – "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9.

There is so much to see and discover, and here is just a small taste:

In chapter 1, we learn of the distance he is willing to travel to save us.

In chapter 2, we read of the superabundance of the life he wants to give us.

In chapter 3, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In chapter 4, we discover we're welcomed in from whatever place and past.

In chapter 5, we learn about the supreme authority of our deliverer.

In chapter 6, we read of the nourishment which the King brings for his hungry subjects.

In chapter 7, we hear of the life-giving water offered to the thirsty.

In chapter 8, we see the warmth of welcome for the receptive, but also the risk of rejection to the refusing.

In chapter 9, we learn that the blind can see, but that those who believe that can see are blind.

In chapter 10, Jesus has come that we may have life and life and have it to the full.

In chapter 11, the dead seeking Jesus find life, the living reject life, ie Jesus.

In chapter 12, we see light revealing the King, but some cling to darkness.

In chapter 13, we learn of the full extent of Jesus' love, seeing it revealed in service and sacrifice.

In chapter 14, the Father is made known by Jesus, the way, truth, and life.

In chapter 15, our rootedness to Christ, results in fruitfulness for Christ.

In chapter 16, there is trouble ahead, but though tears remain a night, joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5)

In chapter 17, we hear that knowing God is eternal life and joy.

In chapter 18, the truth is questioned and stands perfect.


In chapter 19, we pause, and are struck by the depths of evil in humanity and awestruck by the selfless sacrifice of God.

In chapter 20, there is a new dawn and with it, genuine hope, and glorious new life.

In chapter 21, we receive a fresh commission to love and build the church family.

I would encourage you to re-read the Gospel and listen again to God's heart, that we might even more grow deeper in God and larger in mission.

Yours



Family Ministry

Messy Church



Thank you to everyone who joined us for October's Messy Church and helped make it so much fun. We even managed to fill the church with bubbles.

Our theme for October was all about being sorry, forgiving others and receiving forgiveness.



This continued our series on prayer; previously we have been chatting with God, catching His answers,



and thinking of things to be thankful for. COGS Messy church meets monthly on the second Sunday from 3.45pm, currently numbers are limited and some Covid safety



measures are in place. Registration is via Eventbrite and further details can be found on our website

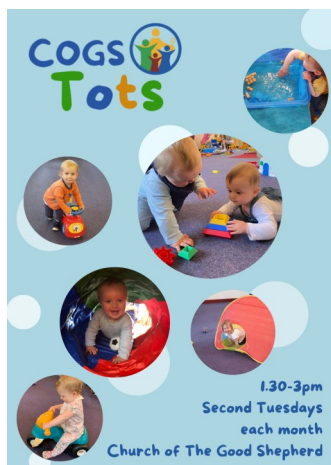
The theme for our next Messy Church on Sunday 14th November is intercessory prayer, praying for needs, the needs of family and friends, praying for our village and our world.

Keep up to date with the latest COGS Messy Church news via our website or join our Facebook group (click below or search COGS Messy Church... at home) for all the latest updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2324513037620944>

Jane_cogs@btinternet.com, 07711407831

COGS Tots



COGS Tots continue to meet monthly on the second Tuesday of each month between 1.30 and 3pm.

The theme for October was "Everywhere I go God is there."

Our next session is November 9th 1.30-3pm.

Bring your little ones along for an afternoon of play, stories and songs, no need to book but some Covid safety measures are still in place.

Further details can be found on our Website; or directly via Jane_cogs@btinternet.com, 07711407831



Bumps and Babies

Bumps and Babies
welcomes expectant and new parents
with babies aged under 1 year.

Join us in the church hall for
tea and coffee anytime between
10.30am and 12 noon every Monday.

Older siblings welcome.

For more information contact
Jane
Family Worker
Church of the Good Shepherd
Jane_cogs@btinternet.com
07711407831

Bumps and Babies



Every Monday
(except bank holidays)
**Drop in anytime between
10.30am and 12noon**
Church of the Good Shepherd Four Marks

Our Bumps and Babies group is for expectant parents and families with babies up to 12 months. Started on the 27th September 2021 and continues to meet each Monday morning in the church hall between 10.30 and 12 noon.

Providing a welcoming space for families with young babies to make friends over hot drinks

with plenty of opportunity to chat.

Do get in touch with Jane if you would like to know more or would like to be involved in our Young family ministry as we begin to plan what this might look like as lockdown eases.

Community Cupboard – saving food from going to waste and serving the community

Four Marks and Medstead community Cupboard continues to operate from the Church of The Good Shepherd every Thursday afternoon from 3.45pm- 4.15pm. Come along and save a bag of food from going to waste. Now with a pop up Café from 3.30pm each Thursday.



Mission of the Month: Beyond the Streets

The Good Shepherd is a long term supporter of our charity Beyond the Streets, and we've been very grateful for all your prayers and donations to support the work we do with women



who are being sexually exploited. Our work is to stand alongside women who are caught up in prostitution and walk with them on a journey towards positive change. This can be very practical – through support to access substance abuse help, to find safe housing, to work out next steps to employment or guidance to access benefits; but is very much emotional and spiritual too. Women often come to us not knowing their worth, not knowing they are loved by God, feeling scared and small. Bobbi recently shared with us what our support felt like for her:

"There is a huge amount of awareness that has grown in the last few months. I have been able to acknowledge my sadness, my anger, my self-loathing. My fear. I feel I have finally been heard. I have been able to unlock my silence and secrets that I didn't feel anyone else would ever be able to understand or hold the capacity for me to be able to express my feelings."

It's so vital that vulnerable women have a space to be heard, to allow them to take their next steps into a future that is beyond violence, coercion and sexual exploitation. Sadly this kind of exploitation happens in all communities, and so this work cannot be done by us alone.

We rely hugely on supporters like you to help us continue the work that we do. This year – on Sat 20th November – we're thrilled to be able to hold our Sponsored Streetwalk where supporters will be walking 12k across London after dark to raise funds for our work alongside women. We'd love to have some of you come and join our efforts, and spend time with our team as we walk the streets in the footsteps of

women experiencing violence and coercion. We'll talk about their stories, celebrate their courage and resilience, and by walking will raise awareness of the lives of women past and present. Together we'll take steps towards a future where sexual exploitation is history. To find out more, visit our website <https://beyondthestreets.org.uk/events-archive/taking-steps-together-sponsored-streetwalk/>

Tea and Chat with Tea and Bowls

Tea and Chat restarted in October and another very successful one was held on October 20th. The Tea and Chatters created some incredible dried-leaf pictures and had lots of fun and chat. At the end of the afternoon 22 shared afternoon tea.

Tea and Bowls restarted on October 20th with a similar happy time.

We meet again on Wednesday 17th November at 2 pm.

The Gospel is the good news that although we are sinners and worthy of God's wrath, God, in love, sent His Son to be our substitute, bearing our punishment, so that we could be made completely righteous in His sight. It's based only on our faith in this completed work of Christ and not our own performance. Now that's good news!

Andrew Wommack.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' Romans 1:16

Luminosa Choir Concert, 27th November

Luminosa is delighted to be performing at St Andrew's Church, Farnham, on Saturday 27th November at 7.30pm. The choirs have performed there many times and are excited to once again fill the beautiful, spacious and welcoming church with a glorious sound which will bring joy, energy and hope. Tickets are available on TicketSource <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/surrey/st-andrew-s-parish-church/gloria/e-kvgzxy>

Four One-Word Prayers of Hope in a Season of Change

These powerful Bible verses can help us weather a time of transition by Bob Hostetler.

Seasons come and go. As the hymn Great Is Thy Faithfulness says:
Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above;
Join with all nature in manifold witness,
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

” by Thomas Chisholm

But the earth’s solstices and equinoxes aren’t the only seasons that mark our lives. The seasons change from childhood to adulthood, and from youth to middle age to old age. They change from parenthood to empty nest. From one job to another, and sometimes to unemployment or retirement. From health to sickness or vice versa. From one church family to another. From faithlessness to faith, darkness to light, sorrow to healing.

At such times a few short prayers can often to help us transition to a new season:

1) Beautiful

The Bible says, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” Ten verses later, after illustrating the point by contrasting birth and death, tears and laughter, and more, it boldly states that God “has made everything beautiful in its time” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11). So the word “beautiful” can be a request and a reminder to see the beauty in both your present season and the coming season. Pray it in hope, in faith, even in desperation.

2) Provide

In times of change and transition, it helps to remember God’s provision in the past and ask in faith for His provision in the future. The early missionaries, Barnabas and Paul, reminded the people of Lystra that God “has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:17). The word “provide” can help to remember and call upon God’s faithfulness.

3) Soon

Paul, the great first-century church planter and letter writer, wrote to followers of Jesus who were enduring a season of severe tribulation, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (Romans 16:20). That word, "soon," was intended to give them comfort and hope in difficult circumstances. If you're in a trying season, pray "soon" as a request ("soon, please"). Pray it as an affirmation ("soon, I believe"). Pray it as a reminder ("remember: soon").

4) Prepare

The psalmist sang, "You prepare a table before me" (Psalm 23:5). Whatever a new season holds, the word "prepare" invites our Shepherd to go ahead, even "in the presence of my enemies," and remove obstacles, defend against dangers and make straight paths for your feet (see Proverbs 4:11).

Beautiful. Provide. Soon. Prepare.

Just four words. But they can be timely and powerful in helping us anticipate or face a new season in the awareness of God's "great faithfulness, mercy and love."

[Source: <https://www.guideposts.org>]

Look to Christ

We need to look to Christ. We need to draw our strength from him. The way we grow is simply by looking to Christ. In Colossians 3, in Hebrews 12, and all through the New Testament, we are called to look out of ourselves and at Christ.

As we gaze upon him, as we see him in Scripture, as we pray to him, as we walk through pain and suffering that causes us to see him more acutely and clearly, as we ponder being united to him, as we ponder heaven, all of this is, in a different way, looking at Christ. We are "setting the eyes of our hearts" (as Ephesians 1 puts it) on him.

[Source: Dane Ortlund.]

Sarah Eberle's Psalm 23 Garden for Bible Society at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show has scooped a gold medal in the Sanctuary Garden section at the first ever September Show. It will be rebuilt at the Winchester Hospice.

Martin Wallace, from Gang Member to Bishop

A vision of Jesus on the cross changed everything for retired Bishop Martin Wallace, who was just 17 at the time. Until then he had been a troubled teenager, but now he was sure that Christ was alive, and he soon dedicated his life to helping others experience the reality of personal faith.

And he is optimistic about the future of the Church. "Many people are very interested in spirituality but can sometimes find it difficult to connect that with the formal church. People want something that will touch their heart and soul, but they will not put up with boring, formal religion that has no content. Where there is spirituality that's real, people are interested and will respond, but they have no time for dead religion. And the churches which have woken up to that are the ones that are growing."

Born in West Ham in London's East End and later brought up on a council estate in Brighton, Bishop Martin described himself as a fairly regular churchgoer as a youngster (his parents were regular attenders) who got into "a huge amount of trouble" at school where he constantly played truant and got in with the wrong crowd. "If you didn't belong to a gang you simply did not survive," he said.

But all this changed through the influence of his religious studies teacher whose infectious enthusiasm brought the whole subject alive for him.

"When I was 17 I had a vision of Jesus on the cross which changed me from being a casual churchgoer into a committed Christian who realised that Jesus loved me to bits. For the last 45 years he has simply been my best friend and my greatest desire is that other people would find the same truth for themselves. So my becoming a Christian was a very big turnaround."

He later returned to West Ham where he spent 16 years leading a congregation representing 21 nationalities, which grew from 30 to 200 and "where just about every social issue imaginable was thrown at you every day: we fed 200 homeless every week and had a pastoral care team of 30 who responded each year to 800 calls of help passed on from social services and the caring professions.

Martin became the Bishop of Selby from 2003 to 2013 and was one of three bishops who deputised for Archbishop John Sentamu in the

York diocese. He said at the time, "My area encompasses a 30-mile radius around York. With a population of one-third of a million (half of whom live in York), it has 200 churches."

Asked about the strident atheism reflected in today's culture, he said: "I think the voice of atheism has become very loud but I do not believe the country has become any more atheistic than it was 50 years ago," adding that Christianity was very much in the market place and the challenge for Christians was to demonstrate the positive effect of faith in Christ both on individuals and society as a whole. "I know that because of Jesus I am uniquely loved and he has a purpose for me in this life and I am secure in his hands for eternity."

[<https://www.reallifestories.org>]

His Workmanship

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

We believers didn't make ourselves who and what we are — God did. So be careful about passing judgment on God's creation.

Christians who think they are being humble, sometimes say, "I'm so unworthy." But God didn't make any unworthy new creations. I'm not unworthy, and you're not unworthy either. To say that you are unworthy is not humility — it is ignorance of the Word of God, and it gives place to the devil to dominate you.

We are God's workmanship! When you belittle yourself, you are actually complaining about what God has done. You're belittling His workmanship.

"Created in Christ Jesus," our scripture says. Quit looking at yourself from the natural standpoint. Look at yourself in Jesus. You'll look much better. You see, God the Father doesn't see you like anyone else sees you. He sees you in Christ!

Confession: I am God's workmanship. He made me a new creation. He created me in Christ Jesus. I see myself as God sees me. I see myself in Christ.

[Source: Faith Food Devotions by Kenneth E. Hagin. <https://events.rhema.org>]

Church is back in the building, with some available online.

Latest: Refer to the website for the latest details.

The 8am service is unticketed.

The 9.30am Service is unticketed and is streamed at the time with the recording available later from the website / YouTube.

Kid's Church is in the church during the 9.30 service.

The 7pm Service and mid-week services are online.

Messy Church is in church on 10 October, 14 November, 12 December — booked through Eventbrite.

Giving to The Good Shepherd

This can be done via the "Donate" button on the Church website.

Donate



Small Groups

For further information contact Val Lucas, the ministry leader for small groups (01420-561139).

Prayer Chain

If you have any urgent requests for prayer through the Prayer Chain, please email Matt Senior, or Howard Wright (howardwright.cogs@gmail.com, 01420-563344).

Pastoral Care

If you would like to hear from a member of the Team or you know of someone who would, please contact the team leaders, Debbie Norgate (84534) or Gilly Cobb (544404), or Howard Wright (01420-563344) or Matt Senior.

Resource Sharing Network (RSN)

The Resource Sharing Network (RSN) will accept and circulate requests from the Church Family – for themselves or for family / friends. Money is not to be part of requests. Email cogs.rsn@gmail.com to go on the circulation.

Giving to the Church of The Good Shepherd

This can be done online or through the Church or Church office.

Donate



Litter Picking. Next: Sat November 13th

10 - 11 am every third Saturday Meet in the car park behind the garage at Oak Green. Contact: Elaine Moore on email elainechristinamoore@gmail.com

The Faraday Institute



The Faraday Institute is hosting a large number of events over the coming term. The programme offers a variety of lectures, seminars and training exploring the interaction of religion and science.

Not Forgotten: Meeting Dementia with Pastoral and Spiritual Care.

6th November 9.45am – 3.30pm Online. £40

Varieties of Atheism in Science.

10th November 7.30pm. Free. Online

This lecture will explore what everyday atheist scientists think about religion and the limits to what science can explain, atheist scientists' views on meaning and morality, pathways that led to atheism in science, and more.

[Information and booking: <https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/events>]

To the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen.
Romans 16:27

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Luke 6:37-38.

The Ten Commandments in a Positive Frame

1. I esteem You, God, more highly than anyone. You are my creator.
2. I recognise You fully as God. I will bow my knee to You and worship You only.
3. I love You so much that I will never use your name disrespectfully.
4. I will rest my body one day a week. Your command kept the Israelites, I want the same.
5. I will honour my father and mother; even now, long after their lifetime.
6. I will never do murder. You are their creator too.
7. To love is to be totally faithful to my spouse in body or mind.
8. To love is to always be honest with the money, goods and possessions of others.
9. To love is to tell the truth in all situations.
10. To love others is to treat You alone as my source of everything.

[Have a go at your own ten commandments? – Ed]

The 104th Psalm

John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States was well known for his use of words. His handwritten poem, dated September 10, 1841 still exists and is transcribed from the 104th Psalm It is a wonderful example of not only Adams' appreciation for the Word of God, but also of his firm conviction and faith in God.

To Miss Mary Talbot

from John Quincy Adams, 10 Sept. 1841.

Oh! Lord, my God! How great art Thou!
With honour and with glory crown'd
Lights dazzling splendours veil thy brow,
And gird the universe around.

Beneath the deep, above the skies
Thy mansion boundless space we find.

Thy Spirit in the Tempest flies
And spreads the pinions of the wind.

[Source: <https://wallbuilders.com>]

Almost all false doctrine is an attack on God, on His glorious majesty and the wonderful truth concerning who and what He is as God. That is why false doctrine is so very serious. That is why saints of God who love God have been ready to die for the cause of the true doctrine of God.

Arie DenHartog.

India

Hindus made up 79.8% of India's 1.2 billion total inhabitants in the most recent census, conducted in 2011. That is 0.7 percentage points less than in the previous census in 2001, and 4.3 points below the 84.1% recorded in 1951. Meanwhile, the share of Muslims grew from 13.4% in 2001 to 14.2% in 2011 – up by a total of 4.4 percentage points since 1951, when the census found that Muslims comprised 9.8% of India's population. Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains, who together make up nearly all of the remaining 6% of the population, were relatively stable in their shares since the 1951 census.

If what you hear preached doesn't cause faith to come and build faith in your spirit, then it either isn't the Word of God or else you're not hearing it.

Kenneth E. Hagin.

Feed your faith and starve your doubts.

Kenneth E. Hagin.

At the Cross, Some things:

- Ended, e.g. animal sacrifice, or were
- Changed, e.g. the Jubilee – Jesus is now the Jubilee, or were
- Unchanged, e.g. Davidic worship.

[Source: Bill Johnson.]

The Tablet of Your Mind

Proverbs 7:2–3

Solomon recognized a tragic truth about humanity: we desperately want to do things our own way, and we hate being told what to do. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). So Solomon urged his sons to avoid mistakes he had made, encouraging them to heed God’s Word and to make obedience a lifelong habit.

Keep my commandments and live,
And my teaching as the apple of your eye.
Bind them on your fingers;
Write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 7:2–3)

While I encourage regular Bible reading and studying, I cannot stress enough the value of Scripture memorisation. Committing verses of the Bible to memory straps the truths of God to your soul. The word translated “bind” really means “to tie together, to bring something in league with something else.” It’s often translated “conspire.” Our word correlate also fits. Scriptures correlate so much better when we store them up. We are better able to come to terms with life when certain Scriptures are in place in our heads.

No verses more clearly encourage Scripture memory than these in Proverbs 7. When we write something, we don’t abbreviate or confuse matters. Quite the contrary: we clarify ideas when we write them out. The Lord said, “Write [My commandments and My teachings] on the tablet of your heart.” Don’t be sloppy or incomplete in your memory work. It is essential that we are exact and thorough when we memorize. Without this attention to detail, our confidence slips away. I often think of being thorough in Scripture memory in the same way we plan a flight. Every number (flight, seat, gate) as well as the time of takeoff is precise and important. Commit the wrong information to memory, and you won’t end up where you expected!

Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your mind to my knowledge;
For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
That they may be ready on your lips. (Proverbs 22:17–18)

I love those two verses. They constantly encourage me to stay at this discipline! The idea of having God’s Word “ready on [our] lips” should convince us of the importance of maintaining this discipline. I say again, nothing will chase away biblical illiteracy like memorizing

Scripture.

[Source: Pastor Chuck Swindoll, <https://www.insight.org>]



Faiths and Sects, a Short Summary

Bahá'í

The Bahá'í faith is essentially a spiritual ideology that teaches the value of all religions, espousing the importance of universal equality and unity. Bahá'u'lláh, the founding figure in the Bahá'í faith, officially established his ideology in 1863 in Persia (or modern-day Iran). As something of a hybrid of other faiths, Bahá'í grew out of the tradition of Babism, which itself emerged from an Islamic denomination called Shaykhism. (Today, Babism exists with a few thousand adherents, concentrated largely in Iran, and standing separately from the Islamic ideologies that surround it.)

Like Babism, Bahá'í incorporates some of the teachings of Islam but merges them with some Christian principles. The central governing body of the Bahá'í faith, a nine-member council called the Universal House of Justice, operates from Haifa, Israel. Today, the Bahá'í faith has somewhere between five and seven million adherents around the world.

[Source: <https://thebestschools.org/magazine/world-religions-study-starters/>]

The Christian Gospel

God reveals Himself in many ways; including in creation, in the prophets and apostles, and supremely in Jesus Christ.

- God became a man in Jesus Christ.
- He lived the perfect life that we couldn't live.
- He died on the cross the death for sin for which we should die.
- Three days later he rose from the grave, so proving that he is the son of God.
- He offers forgiveness of sins – past, present and future sins (Hebrews chapters 9, 10) – and eternal life to all those who repent and believe.

Knowing God

"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

Man's highest purpose is to know God. Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Of us He said, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me" (John 10:14). John added that "we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:20).

Every Christian knows God through salvation, but beyond that lies an intimate knowledge of God. That should be the quest of every believer. Moses prayed, "Let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favour in Thy sight" (Ex. 33:13). David entreated his son Solomon to "know the God of [his] father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind" (1 Chron. 28:9). Even the apostle Paul, who perhaps knew Christ more intimately than any human being thus far, never lost his passion for an even deeper knowledge (Phil. 3:10).

Such passion is the driving force behind powerful prayer. Those who know God best pray most often and most fervently. Their love for Him compels them to know and serve Him better.

Paul's admonitions to "pray at all times in the Spirit" and "be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18) presuppose that you know God and desire to see His will fulfilled in His people. If not, you'll never appreciate the importance of interceding on behalf of others.

The martyred missionary Jim Elliot once prayed, "Lord, make my life a testimony to the value of knowing you." Let that be your prayer each day.

[Source: J. MacArthur, gty.org]

For from him and through him and for him are all things. [The intrinsic glory of God.]

To him be the glory for ever! [The glory ascribed to God by us.]

Amen.

Romans 11:36

God of the moon and stars

God of the moon and stars. God of the gay and singles bars.
God of the fragile hearts we are, I come to you
God of our history, god of the future that will be
What will you make of me, I come to you

God of the meek and mild. God of the reckless and the wild.
God of the unreconciled, I come to you
God of our life and death. God of our secrets unconfessed
God of our every breath, I come to you

God of the rich and poor. God of the princess and the whore.
God of the ever open door, I come to you
God of the unborn child. God of the pure and undefiled
God of the pimp and paedophile, I come to you

God of the war and peace. God of the junkie and the priest.
God of the greatest and the least, I come to you.
God of the refugee. God of the prisoner and the free.
God of our doubt and certainty, I come to you.

God of our joy and grief. God of the lawyer and the thief.
God of our faith and unbelief, I come to you.
God of the wounds we bear. God of the deepest dreams we share.
God of our unspoken prayer, I come to you

God of a world that's lost. God of the lonely cross.
God who has come to us, I come to you.

[Source: Paul Field. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VvAydyFyRQ&list=RD1VvAydyFyRQ&start_radio=1]

Ten Ways to Overcome Your Toughest Doubts

Even the most active Christians struggle with doubts. They're a natural by-product of taking the Bible seriously while living in a fallen world.

It's not a sin to have doubts, everyone has them. Don't pretend you don't have doubts. And whatever you do, don't hide them. Instead, deal with your doubts head-on. Address each one that comes up. In the end, your faith will be stronger!

Here are 10 ways to overcome the toughest intellectual, emotional and physical doubts:

1. Revelation

We have to get back to the question, "How do we know what we believe?" The answer is God has revealed His message in the Bible. In this book we find all the answers we need for life and godliness. We don't find answers to all of life's tough questions. But most of them are answered with far greater authority and clarity than thousands of years of philosophy.

2. Authority

We have to address the question, "Who decides what is true?" Ultimately, the answer is God. He has stated His position quite clearly in the Scriptures. God's Word is our absolute authority for faith and practice.

3. Orthodoxy

We have to answer the question, "Where do we draw the lines?" The answer is in the classic, orthodox teachings of the Church. Those teachings are based solidly on Scripture. The core Gospel truths were lived out by Jesus and written out by His apostles nearly two thousand years ago.

4. Inspiration

We have to tackle the question, "Is everything God says in the Bible, through the prophets and apostles, inspired by God Himself?" Scripture itself says, "Yes." In his second letter, Peter said, in essence, "You can believe everything I've told you about Jesus. Just as Jesus told me, I'm going to be martyred. I'm going to be nailed to a cross and die because I won't stop believing in Jesus ..."

5. Doctrine

We have to wrestle with the question, "What do I believe?" The answer is in the teachings of your particular denomination or church. To the degree that they're based solidly on Scripture, you can bank on

them. The answer is also found in your own beliefs and convictions and questions and doubts. This is particularly important if something Scripture says seems too good to be true.

6. Life Is Hard

In the last chapter of his Gospel, Matthew says the apostles struggled with doubts and disbelief for days and weeks leading up to Ascension Day. Mark, Luke, and John do the same. But why? Jesus wants us to remember: This is what doubts and disbelief feel like; and don't come down on anyone who's already feeling awful. Instead, listen. Love. Let them talk. Allow them to see Me in your eyes. At the right time, when you are the quietest, the Holy Spirit will speak truth and comfort to their soul.

7. God Is Good

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus loves to remove people's emotional doubts. Two examples are found in Matthew 14:25-31 and Luke 24:36-43. In the first account, Jesus appears to His disciples walking on water. In the second, Jesus appears to His disciples out of thin air. Both times it's night. Both times the disciples are scared out of their wits. Both times Jesus says, "It's Me!"

Both times Jesus gladly erases their doubts. And both times the disciples finally believe, worship Jesus, and rejoice!

8. No Answers Yet

What do we do with emotional doubts and questions we can't answer? In the realm of the natural world, not understanding why things work the way they do can lead either to seeking more satisfying answers or to acceptance. The same is true in the spiritual realm. We certainly can't even begin to explain who God is, let alone how or why He designed faith and spirituality as He has. In fact, our comprehension is very limited. Yet we still accept Him, read His Word, pray, and converse with His active followers

9. Pastoral Care

Doubts about salvation, of eternal life, is often a subject needing assurance.

10. Personal Crises

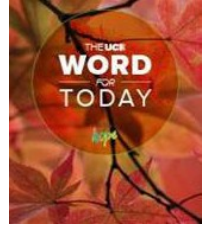
Our bodies are intimately connected to our souls. But some faith struggles are borne out of physical crises and recovery is needed.

[Source: David Sanford, www.Crosswalk.com]

Learn to be alone with God

Moses alone is to approach...the people may not come up with him.

Exodus 24:2



It is essential to be alone with God in order to hear clearly from Him. For a texting/tweeting generation hooked on mobile phones and bombarded by round-the-clock media, this can be a tough concept to grasp. But until you do, you'll get nowhere spiritually.

Are you serious about following Jesus? He "often withdrew ... and prayed" (Luke 5:16). He "went up on a mountainside by himself to pray" (Matthew 14:23 NIV).

How did Jacob the deceiver become "Israel, a prince with God"? (see Genesis 32:28). The Bible says he "was left alone, and a man (the Angel of the Lord) wrestled with him till daybreak" (Genesis 32:24). The greatest spiritual victories come from the battles God calls you to fight when you're alone with Him. He outlines and clarifies His plans for your life when there's nobody else around. That's because He wants you to be more influenced by Him than them. When God is grooming you for a special assignment, you'll be required to spend time outside the company of others.

In Exodus God said, "Moses alone is to approach...the people may not come up with him." After Elijah spent the night alone in a cave, God told him, "Go out and stand on the mountain...for the Lord is about to pass by" (1 Kings 19:11). Daniel "was left alone, gazing at this great vision" (Daniel 10:8). Jeremiah wrote, "I sat alone because your hand was on me" (Jeremiah 15:17).

Learn the difference between loneliness and solitude. When God sidelines you, glean all you can from the experience and move to the next level.

Bible in a Year: Jeremiah 1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4



Copies of The Word for Today are available from www.ucb.co.uk

The prayer for refugees and RNLI volunteers

Almighty God, who parted the sea that your children might flee from terror and live the lives to which you called them. Hear our prayer for those who work upon the waters.

Give aid to their efforts and strength to their resolve, and so bring safely to shore all who are in peril; that all may come, at the last, to your haven of rest through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

[Source: an RNLI chaplain]

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. Psalm 122:6-7.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

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