



**The Good
Shepherd**
Four Marks

April 2021 Parish Magazine



The Gospel

**Christ died for our sins
according to the Scriptures. He
was buried, and he was raised on
the third day.
(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

Easter is a gateway to much. For some it is casting off winter and a moving forward to summer. But this sense of lightness and warmth is but a glimpse of the real things that Easter opens to us. There is a line in Corinthians, "... now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12) that speaks to us about seeing the immediate, and then noticing the eternal.



During this pandemic there has been the constant risk of just looking in the mirror and seeing our own dull reflection. The lockdowns have challenged our hopes and dreams and life has seemed a poor reflection of what it was. Our illusion of being in control has been shattered. Our lives have been restricted by government edict, but even they have not been in control. The pandemic has disrupted the power balance as we understood it – we thought we could control everything. But we were instructed to be creative stewards of the earth, not "control" it, and it will not be tamed by us. We are doing our best to regain control, the vaccine offers hope of "normality"; our illusional normal sense of order restored. But things will not be the same culturally, socially, economically, politically, or even environmentally again.

The Bible is clear about who is in control and to where this is all leading. Just read the final chapters in Job, nearly any of the Psalms and especially, Revelation! Our faith and hope need to be in Christ, there is no other (Colossians 1:15-20).

Easter is a gateway to life in Christ. It is the new dawn from the darkest day of human history and the hope of the earth. I hope as we move toward lighter days and (hopefully) passed this pandemic that we renew our faith and hope in God. Lifting our eyes from our own reflections to the grand vista and glorious future that the cross and resurrection offer to us.

We are not in control, but we have a God who is and who is trustworthy. He will lead us through the wonder and the trials of this earth, whether pandemics, social upheavals, economic downturns, or local parish reorganisations. God is good and his plans will not be interrupted.

As we review our strategy and future together, including the opportunity to partner with Medstead, let us look to him for the vision. As we respond to his love, let us grow deeper in him and larger in mission.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard". The script is cursive and fluid.

The information paper, below, sets out the discussions in our deanery, and within our own parish and that of Medstead about a future partnership into a wider perspective.

It's important to note process is a long one involving the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee and the Church Commissioners. It is a privilege that we have been asked to consider the opportunity to build, together the Church of Christ across our two villages, both as they are now and as they continue to expand in the future. The strengths of both parish churches – the historic one of Medstead and the more recent one of Four Marks – gives us very significant scope to go forward as a strong partnership in Christ's name. And so, we all need your prayerful support as we explore the proposals put to us. (Howard)

Deployment work in the Winchester Diocese

The primary way in which, as a diocese, we invest in the mission and ministry of the Church is through the provision of stipendiary clergy to provide pastoral care and leadership in their particular contexts. In 2019 The Bishop of Winchester convened a Deployment Working Group to consider the number and location of our stipendiary clergy appointments, and to make recommendation as to how finite resources could be allocated in a way which best addressed the missional priorities which our Diocesan Synod had formulated and adopted at its 2013 and 2016 conferences.

The work involved a comprehensive review of every deanery, benefice and parish in the diocese, using electoral rolls, statistics for mission, financial information, schools information, and Experian data on population and other social demographics. The group presented its finding to Diocesan Synod in July 2019 and Synod asked the group to continue working with our approximately 140 stipendiary posts, to formulate proposals for pastoral changes which would deliver a more coherent approach to deployment.

Covid and the Financial Situation in the Diocese

In 2020, as this working group was beginning to formulate proposals for pastoral change, the coronavirus pandemic placed immediate and unforeseen pressure on the finances of the Diocesan Board of Finance (WDBF). The Bishop, with the support of the WDBF, responded to a significant £2million deficit in our budget (an element of which was an

underlying deficit) by commissioning a Resilience Task Group to identify and recommend savings.

You will, I am sure, be aware that most dioceses in the Church of England are facing similar kinds of challenges where funding sources have been adversely affected by the current crisis. Some dioceses have significant historic reserves which may provide a temporary cushion at such times; in Winchester 80% of income comes from parish giving and 80% of expenditure goes on providing parish clergy – we have no such reserves. The bitterly hard recommendation the WDBF is following involves a £0.75m cut in diocesan office/central posts (implemented by the end of 2020) and £1.25m saving in clergy stipends and housing, which equates to 22 posts.

Pastoral Reorganisation

The saving of clergy posts necessitates significant pastoral reorganisation, so that every parish continues to be under the care of an incumbent and, wherever possible, is sustainable for the future. 58 benefices (involving 141 parishes) are expected to be involved in pastoral reorganisation over the coming months.

Building on the deployment work already undertaken, the suffragan bishops and archdeacons held further conversations with the leadership of each of our deaneries last autumn and have since brought draft proposals to the joint Archdeaconry and then Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committees. Over the last couple of months the suffragan bishops have spoken with each of the incumbents affected by these draft proposals and, scheme by scheme, we are now briefing all benefices affected and entering into informal consultations.

Smith Wigglesworth Wrote in his Bible

The Bible is the Word of God: supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in valour, infinite in scope, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, universal in interest, personal in application, inspired in totality. Read it through, write it down, pray it in, work it out, and then pass it on.

Truly it is the Word of God. It brings into man the personality of God; it changes the man until he becomes the epistle of God. It transforms his mind, changes his character, takes him on from grace to grace, and gives him an inheritance in the Spirit.

[Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes>]

Small Groups

During the pandemic our Small Groups have been meeting on Zoom or keeping in touch with one another through emails, phone calls and WhatsApp. We are fortunate to live in a technological age where communication is made possible. However, we are all longing for the day that we can meet again in our groups in person, share a meal and freely give out hugs.

Through Zoom, small groups have continued with welcome, worship, word and prayer. Many have found it calming and positive to continue with familiar activities. When Jesus was troubled he went to his favourite place to pray and talk to friends such as the Garden of Gethsemane. We have all appreciated places and situations that are familiar throughout the unfamiliar pandemic world. Jesus was open and honest with his feelings and it's important to find a group where we can share our experiences and feelings. There is a saying in Christian circles: "Go straight to the throne and not to the phone." Without doubt Jesus is there to comfort and support us every minute of the day but he also gave us fellowship with one another. It's been amazing how many times people have commented on how they have felt the presence of the Lord in a Zoom prayer call. Practically, small groups have supported each other by shopping, coming to the rescue over a fallen tree, dog walking, sharing books/jigsaws and sharing daily exercise.

Most groups have followed the online teaching series, whilst others have looked at other resources including the BBC Radio 4 series on the History of the Bible by John Barton. There is a wealth of material for small groups online and the one course that has been used by many small groups is Peter Greig's Prayer Course, particularly part 2 "Unanswered Prayer". This course asks the questions that are on all our minds and answers it through the lives of many Christians who despite profound adversity have gone on to have a positive impact on those around them.

This course can be found online by googling <https://unanswered.prayercourse.org>

The course can be followed within a small group or on your own. The materials are free to use.

Small groups have also tried to support their community and contin-

ue to spread the much needed word and love of Jesus. The Christmas poster outside many Christian homes was a great success. Acts of kindness such as giving plants, honey, soap, pies, chocolate, flowers to neighbours have been undertaken by many groups when safe to do so. These have been well received and many have felt uplifted and blessed by such acts.

The Church has changed through the pandemic and so have small groups – attendance at Zoom small groups has increased as people are able to access directly from their home without a drive to someone’s house through the winter months, perhaps after arriving home late from work. I can see that some element of Zoom calls will continue once we are back to face-to-face meeting. Sadly, some groups haven’t been able to meet and some have lost members through moving out of area and ill-health. However, those groups that have survived are stronger and have a vital part to play in the future Christian growth within our communities.

If you would like to join or form a small group please contact Howard (howardwright.cogs@gmail.com) or Val (valalucas@gmail.com)

Submitted by Val Lucas, Ministry leader.

“Our world today so desperately hungers for hope, yet uncounted people have almost given up. There is despair and hopelessness on every hand. Let us be faithful in proclaiming the hope that is in Jesus.”

Billy Graham

"What gives me the most hope every day is God's grace; knowing that His grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God."

Rick Warren

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places
Ephesians 1:3

God bestows His blessings without discrimination. The followers of Jesus are children of God, and they should manifest the family likeness by doing good to all, even to those who deserve the opposite.

F.F. Bruce

Family Ministry

Messy Church Delivered



Continues each month, this term is themed all around gifts:

Celebrating the
Gifts of Mothers
and Others
in our lives



The Theme for March was all about the gift of Mothers and others, with over 30 families receiving a pack.

For April we celebrate Easter and the gift of Hope that it brings.

Each family bag includes a craft, a game and a prayer activity alongside an invite to join in our Zoom café on the second Sunday each month at 2pm. April's packs will be delivered a week early so you have them for Easter weekend. Registration for April's bags opened on 15th March, and deliveries will be made on Thursday 1st April.



Dates for May Messy Church delivered:

19th April Registration opens via Eventbrite.

6th May Packs delivered.

9th May Zoom café 9th.

Check the 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>

COGS Tots

COGS Tots meet online one Tuesday each month.

Our March packs went out to 15 families with very young children.

The upcoming dates are 13th April and 11th May and 8th June.

Similar to our Messy church packs, but more suitable for younger family members, the bags each month contain a game, a craft, a prayer idea and a story or



song plus an invitation to join in Tots Time on Zoom on the Tuesday afternoon at 2pm.

More information and details of how to register each month can be found on our website.

Support groups for new parents and families with young children

These are peer support groups for new parents, we currently have two groups: families with younger babies (those not yet crawling) and families with older babies or more than one baby/toddler. Both groups meet on a Monday morning. March saw a staged return to face-to-face meetings and we hope to be able to meet more regularly outside when the weather allows.

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.

Easter Trail of Hope

Suitable for all ages, come along with your household between Palm Sunday (28th March) and Easter Sunday (4th April) and check out our Easter trail of Hope in the grounds of the Church. Each of the six trail points will tell a different part of the Easter story and have an opportunity to reflect on its meaning. Bring along some flowers or greenery from your garden (with permission from the gardener) to help us transform one of the trail points over the week.



For more information on the Family Ministry, and offers of help, to Jane Hughes on Jane_COGS@btinternet.com

Mothering Sunday Flowers

Thank you to the big team who delivered the 200 flowers, and ladies for receiving them.

[The editor has taken the risk of saying this, so let him know, please, if you missed out – you shouldn't have done.]



A Word from your Treasurer

Gift Aid

A hugely significant element of the annual income to COGS is that of Gift Aid. Did you know that last year COGS, as a charity, received over £41,000 from HMRC in the form of Gift Aid on your donations? We are thus very grateful that so many of our regular donors have signed up for us to claim gift aid on their gifts to the church.

If you are such a regular donor to COGS, this is the appropriate time of year, at the start of a new tax year, for you to please check that your financial status continues to allow us to include your contribution in our monthly claim from HMRC. The rules state: "The donor must have paid at least as much in Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax in that tax year as he or she is permitting the church claim in Gift Aid on their donation". We claim an additional 25% back on all gift-aided donations. So, you need to confirm please that you are, and/or will be, paying to HMRC tax equivalent to at least one quarter of your regular donations to COGS during the year.

Do please just check that your status as a tax payer is unchanged and that we can therefore maintain your donations in our monthly claim to HMRC. If you are in any doubt, please do have a word with me.

Many thanks.

David Craigen, Treasurer

davidacraigen@gmail.com Tel.:01420 564152

Giving to The Good Shepherd

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



May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. 2 Cor 1:3

Mission of the Month In Ministry To Children (Colombia)



In Ministry to Children is a small, Christian charity set up by a couple from Petersfield nearly 30 years ago which provides love and practical support to children in and around Bogota, Colombia.

The partner foundation receives regular finance from the UK to support their work in the city and outlying areas, neglected by the governing authorities, in identifying families most at risk of poverty and domestic violence, providing essentials for children with their Feeding programme, help with education and Sunday school and support for parents – many of them single mums who get help finding employment or setting up craft enterprises to support their families.

When the national lockdown was imposed in March 2020, the “informal economy” virtually shut down which greatly affected the families in communities in most need – like the street sellers and day labourers in the city. Due to the weak economy, Colombia was not prepared for the health emergency, which resulted in a sharp rise in domestic violence, malnutrition & suicide, as well as lack of medical & virtual educational facilities.

Thanks to the generosity of donors like us, IMC Colombia were able to provide food parcels to numerous people in Bogota, La Guajira & Fusagasuga. This is still ongoing in the areas out of Bogata, supporting vulnerable families with pastoral, educational & finance through established projects, such as volunteers rebuilding a school, digging wells, and the involvement in the feeding programme.

Fund raising events in UK and locally have obviously been suspended, but the Trustees hope to have the Fun Day in Rams Walk, Petersfield in the summer, featuring The Mile of Pennies! Other ways we can help is by recycling printer ink cartridges and plants.

There is a box outside 14 Reads Field, Four Marks, for empty printer cartridges; and a table with books and plants/cuttings for donations. Address labels are available for used stamps, broken jewellery and watches to be sent to the Charity Retail Association.

<https://www.inministrytochildren.org>

Ann Leahy for the Mission Giving Group.

The 2020 Common Mission Fund

Letter from Colin Harbridge (Director of Operations, Diocese of Winchester)

To the PCC and Congregation of The Parish of Four Marks,

I am writing on behalf of the Bishop's Council to sincerely thank your parish for meeting your requested contributions to the 2020 Common Mission Fund in full.

This year has been unprecedented and different to anything that we have ever faced. I have been astonished by the generosity and commitment shown by our parishes across the diocese throughout the lockdown period, and proud at the dedication shown to our mutuality and commitment to our collective mission and ministry.

Now more than ever, the Common Mission Fund remains a vital element of our diocesan life, ensuring we can provide mission and ministry where it is needed, not just where it can be afforded. We know that many parishes are facing increasing financial pressures, so we want to emphasise our thanks for your ongoing sacrificial and generous giving.

In 2020 your gift to the Common Mission Fund contributed to the costs of our stipendiary clergy and curates, the development of Licensed Lay Ministers, as well those that enrolled in The Bishops' Commission for Mission programme. We were also able to continue our significant ministry across 100+ Church of England schools.

The Common Mission Fund makes it possible to serve the Lord's people across our communities; thank you for playing your part, as it is only through your generosity that our diocese can continue to resource our current mission and ministry whilst also looking to the future of our Church.

Let us be the ancestors our descendants will thank.

Winona LaDuke

Four Marks Care Group

New Contact Phone Number: 07393-538152

Energizing Love

Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? John 21:16



Tony Evans wrote, "Our fundamental problem as Christians is not really obedience. Our problem is keeping our love for Christ fervent, for love makes obedience a delight. A decline in obedience is the outgrowth of a decline in love."

Just before He returned to heaven, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. This is undoubtedly because Peter had earlier denied Jesus three times. But the question wasn't to reassure Jesus. Jesus already knew the exact temperature of Peter's love. He wanted to provide an opportunity for Peter to reaffirm and express his love. Jesus also wanted Peter to realize that genuine love would propel him into his future ministry of feeding Jesus' sheep and tending Jesus' flock.

We reaffirm our love for Jesus by telling Him we love Him, and by doing what He says. Furthermore, our love for Jesus will spill over into our human relationships. We love others because we love Him. Love is the energy of life. It motivates us in our service and in our servanthood.

[Source: Dr David Jeremiah]

The Joy of Prayer: Prayer Walking Monday, 29th March 2021, 8-9pm

The Joy of Prayer is an occasional online series designed especially for those who find prayer dull, boring, frustrating or guilt-inducing.

In this third session we'll think about the places and spaces we inhabit, and how to intercede creatively for those we live amongst. You will be invited to reflect on your experience at the end – and to continue your prayer afterwards.

Led by the Revd Sally Dakin, Spirituality Adviser.

Bookings to wendy.atkinson@winchester.anglican.org

Litter Picking Depending Covid-19 Restrictions 10 - 11 am, third Saturday if operational.

Meet in the car park behind the garage at Oak Green.

Contact: John Fowler-Wright (01420-563380) or cogsoffice@gmail.com

Church is going back into the building, while still being available online.

Latest: Refer to the website for the latest details.

The on-line 9.30am Service is available from 6pm on the Friday before, the Coffee on Zoom at 11am, the 7pm Service, COGS Kids Online, Messy Church at Home, Alpha Online, and COGS on YouTube. Church is open daily for prayer.

Common Worship Morning Prayer & Compline: Contact David Bush, email d.l.bush@mac.com

Small Groups

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

Resource Sharing Network (RSN)

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

Prayer Chain

If you have any urgent requests for prayer through the Prayer Chain, please email Matt Senior (cogsoffice@gmail.com), 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.

Praying for the Persecuted Church

Source: Barnabus Fund, February 2021

Algeria

Algeria is 99% Muslim with a small but growing Christian population, mainly converts from Islam and their children, estimated at up to 90,000. Many Algerian converts are Berbers, indigenous to North Africa, but an ethnic minority in this Arab-majority country. Conversion from Islam is not a criminal offence, but those help to convert Muslims risk a 5-year jail sentence.

The constitution declares Islam the state religion but adds that "freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion is inviolable." But at least 11 churches have been shut by the authorities since the beginning of 2018. three who's congregations total 1600 were forcibly closed on one day in October 2019.

Lift up Christians in Algeria and ask that they remain strong, despite setbacks. Pray that the court's ruling about the churches will not set a precedent for other similar cases and instead that permission will be granted to reopen sealed churches. Ask that the authorities will start the process of granting permits for church buildings, so that they are no longer vulnerable to being forcibly closed.

Iran

Iran is the leading Shia Muslim country and has been an Islamic Republic since the 1979 Revolution. An Islamic cleric is the Supreme Leader and appoints key judicial and military posts. Historic Assyrian and Armenian Christian minorities, whose languages are not understood by the majority-Muslim population, are permitted to worship in their own languages. There are thought to be around one million Muslim-background Christians inside Iran. These are the main target of persecution, as well as any Christians who evangelize Muslims or conduct worship in Farsi, the national language. Such Christians are often charged with acting against "national security" and imprisoned.

Ask God that new Believers leading convert groups will be equipped by the Lord to nurture even newer converts towards a firm grounding in their faith.

Pray for courage for imprisoned Christians and for those who have to flee their Homeland and families.

Sylvester Stallone

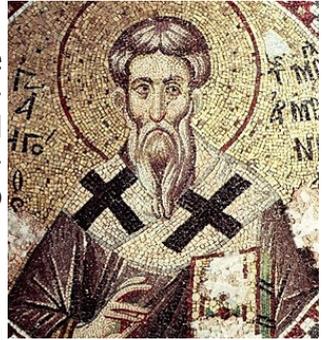
Known for his tough guy image in the movies Rocky and Rambo says: "The more I go to church and the more I turn myself over to the process of believing in Jesus and listening to His Word and having Him guide my hand, I feel as though the pressure is off me now."

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

Gregory the Illuminator Inspired the First Christian Nation

Gregory is called the "illuminator" because he brought the light of the gospel to Armenia.

Tradition says that the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus evangelized Armenia in the first decades after Christ ascended into heaven. However, the Persian Empire dominated the region and attempted to exterminate Christianity. Somehow a few churches managed to survive into the third century.



The man who restored Christianity to Armenia was born around 257. Gregory's early life was lived under a cloud. His father, Anak, had treacherously assassinated the king of Armenia and, in retaliation, Armenia's princes killed most of his family. A nurse hid Gregory and then fled with him to Caesarea in Cappadocia where she brought him up in the knowledge of Christ. He married and had two sons but, after a few years, he and his wife agreed to become celibate so that they might serve the Lord more fully.

When King Tiridates ascended the throne of his forefathers in Armenia, Gregory returned to Armenia and began to preach. Tiridates harassed Gregory, but Gregory remained faithful to his mission and won many converts. At last King Tiridates became a Christian himself and then declared Armenia a Christian state—the first in the world.

The princes of Armenia followed their king's example and the nation's old religions disappeared. Christianity filled the vacuum, even taking over some pagan temples for use as churches.

[Source: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org>]

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus

"Nothing But The Blood of Jesus" by Robert Lowry is a traditional American hymn about the blood atonement and propitiation for sin by the death of Jesus as explained in Hebrews 9.

The song was written in 1876 and first popularized at a camp meeting in Ocean Grove, New Jersey.

Camp meetings were held for worship, preaching and communion on the American frontier during the Second Great Awakening of the early 19th century; and have continued to be held since.

Norton Hall Band – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1Yn6pFfbg4&ab_channel=SouthernSeminary

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

2
For my cleansing this I see —
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
For my pardon this my plea —
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

3
Nothing can my sin erase
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Naught of works, 'tis all of grace —
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

4
This is all my hope and peace —
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
This is all my righteousness —
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

The Life of Power to Follow

By Oswald Chambers



Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward." —John 13:36

"And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me' " (John 21:19). Three years earlier Jesus had said, "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19), and Peter followed with no hesitation. The irresistible attraction of Jesus was upon him and he did not need the Holy Spirit to help him do it. Later he came to the place where he denied Jesus, and his heart broke. Then he received the Holy Spirit and Jesus said again, "Follow Me" (John 21:19). Now no one is in front of Peter except the Lord Jesus Christ. The first "Follow Me" was nothing mysterious; it was an external following. Jesus is now asking for an internal sacrifice and yielding (see John 21:18).

Between these two times Peter denied Jesus with oaths and curses (see Matthew 26:69-75). But then he came completely to the end of himself and all of his self-sufficiency. There was no part of himself he would ever rely on again. In his state of destitution, he was finally ready to receive all that the risen Lord had for him. "...He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (John 20:22). No matter what changes God has performed in you, never rely on them. Build only on a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Spirit He gives.

All our promises and resolutions end in denial because we have no power to accomplish them. When we come to the end of ourselves, not just mentally but completely, we are able to "receive the Holy Spirit." "Receive the Holy Spirit" — the idea is that of invasion. There is now only One who directs the course of your life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wisdom From Oswald Chambers

The Bible is a relation of facts, the truth of which must be tested. Life may go on all right for a while, when suddenly a bereavement comes, or some crisis; unrequited love or a new love, a disaster, a business collapse, or a shocking sin, and we turn up our Bibles again and God's word comes straight home, and we say, "Why, I never saw that there before."

Bible in a Year: Genesis 13-15; Matthew 5:1-26

How George Floyd's Murder Helped This Former NFL Star Find a Biblical Solution to Racism

Former NFL star Miles McPherson, senior pastor of Rock Church in San Diego, California, knows about racism.



As a member of what he calls a “United Nations family” with a multiracial heritage, he’s faced it all his life. “I grew up in New York,” he said. “We lived in a Black neighbourhood, and I went to school in a white neighbourhood for the first eight years of my schooling. I was harassed in the white neighbourhood because I wasn’t Black and was harassed in my Black neighbourhood because I wasn’t Black enough ... Martin Luther King was killed when I was eight. And I remember thinking, “What can we do?”

But God used the 2020 murder of George Floyd to help him discover a biblical key to the problem of racism. “One of the many things that went through my mind was: It was a statement of insignificant value that that police officer put on George,” he said.

Our culture only gives us two options, McPherson said: “We live in an ‘us versus them’ culture, where you have to choose either for the police or against the police, for immigrants or against, for Black lives or not.”

McPherson takes what he calls a “third option” straight from Scripture. “When Joshua was going to the promised land, he said to the commander of the Lord’s army in Joshua 5, ‘Are you for us or our adversaries?’ Those are the two options he gave the Lord. And the Lord said, ‘No, I’m not for either one of you. I am the battle.’ And that’s the third option, that we honour what God has deemed as important, which is His image in every person.” This perspective also moved McPherson to write his recent book, *The Third Option*.

He also shared his own definition of racism from a spiritual perspective: “Racism is when you deem God’s image of someone less important than yours, which we all know is sinful. And if we can come to agreement to understand the value of every person, then we can eradicate racism.”

[Source: <https://www.charismamag.com>]

How did the Apostles die?

[Source: <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com>]

How the Apostle Matthew Died:

Matthew, like most of the apostles late in their lives, became a missionary and was arrested in Ethiopia. It was there that he was staked or impaled to the earth by spears and then beheaded.

Not much beyond this is known since Matthew was in such a remote place in Africa and went where few historians or Christians ventured to go.

How the Apostle Bartholomew or Nathaniel Died:

Bartholomew is also known as Nathaniel and there is scarce little known about how he died but it appears that since he was martyred in Armenia, he too must have been involved in the Great Commission and taking the good news into that part of the world.

Apparently, he became a missionary to Asia Minor. Sadly, most agree that he was basically flayed to death by whip, where he was literally torn to shreds. How agonizing that must have been.

How the Apostle Thomas Died:

Again, not very much is known about the method of Thomas' execution but that maybe due to the fact that he was a missionary in India and was establishing a church there when he was stabbed with a spear and died from the wound.

There are so few historical facts that are available beyond this account that we cannot add much to this and do so with absolute certainty.

Nothing created has ever been able to fill the heart of man. God alone can fill it infinitely.

A man's heart is right when he wills what God wills.

Thomas Aquinas.

We pray not to inform God or instruct Him but to beseech Him closely, to be made intimate with Him, by continuance in supplication; to be humbled; to be reminded of our sins.

Saint John Chrysostom

Fruit of the spirit: Patience is the force that keeps you from fainting under pressure. It is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

G. Copeland.

God Cannot

Abandon you:

Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.
Hebrews 13:5

Change:

I the Lord do not change.
Malachi 3:6

Lie:

He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie.
1 Samuel 15:29

Show partiality:

For God does not show favouritism.
Romans 2:11

12 Interesting Bible Study Methods

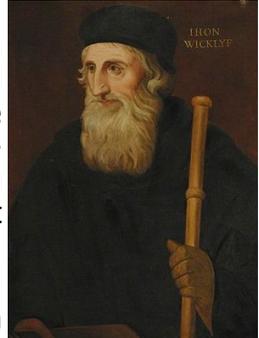
1. Scripture Verse Mapping method.
2. Bible Journaling method.
3. Topical Bible Study method.
4. Book Study method.
5. Chapter Analysis method.
6. Verse by Verse method.
7. Word Study method.
8. Character Study method.
9. OIA (Observe, interpret, application) method.
10. SOAP (scripture, observation, application, prayer) method.
11. ACTS method (ask, chapter, think).
12. GROW method.

[Source and more details: <https://www.crosswalk.com>]

Two Bible Translators

John Wycliffe

c. 1320s – 31 December 1384, Wycliffe was an English scholastic philosopher, theologian, biblical translator, reformer, priest, and a professor at the University of Oxford. He became an influential dissident within the Roman Catholic priesthood during the 14th century and is considered an important predecessor to Protestantism.



Wycliffe questioned the privileged status of the clergy which had bolstered their powerful role in England and the luxury and pomp of local parishes and their ceremonies. He advocated translation of the Bible into the common vernacular. In 1382 he completed a translation directly from the Vulgate into Middle English – a version now known as Wycliffe's Bible. It is probable that he personally translated the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and it is possible he translated the entire New Testament, while his associates translated the Old Testament. Wycliffe's Bible appears to have been completed by 1384, additional updated versions being done by his assistant, John Purvey, and others in 1388 and 1395.

While he was saying Mass in the parish church on Holy Innocents' Day, 28 December 1384, he suffered a stroke and died as the year ended.

There still exist about 150 manuscripts, complete or partial, containing the translation in its revised form. From this, one may easily infer how widely diffused it was in the 15th century. For this reason the Wycliffites in England were often designated by their opponents as "Bible men".

[Source: Wikipedia]

William Tyndale

c. 1494 – 6 October 1536, William Tyndale was an English scholar who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation in the years leading up to his execution. He is well known as a translator of the Bible into English, influenced by the works of Erasmus of Rotterdam and Martin Luther.

Tyndale's translation was the first English Bible to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts, the first English translation to take advantage

of the printing press, the first of the new English Bibles of the Reformation, and the first English translation to use Jehovah as God's name as preferred by English Protestant Reformers. It was taken to be a direct challenge to the hegemony of both the Catholic Church and the laws of England maintaining the church's position.

In 1536, he was convicted of heresy and executed by strangulation, after which his body was burnt at the stake. His dying prayer was that the King of England's eyes would be opened; this seemed to find its fulfilment just one year later with Henry's authorisation of the Matthew Bible, which was largely Tyndale's own work, with missing sections translated by John Rogers and Miles Coverdale.



Tyndale's translation of the Bible was plagiarised for subsequent English translations, including the Great Bible and the Bishops' Bible, authorised by the Church of England. In 1611, the 47 scholars who produced the King James Bible drew significantly from Tyndale's original work and the other translations that descended from his. One estimate suggests that the New Testament in the King James Version is 83% Tyndale's words and the Old Testament 76%. Hence, the work of Tyndale continued to play a key role in spreading Reformation ideas across the English-speaking world and eventually across the British Empire.

In 2002, Tyndale was placed 26th in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons.

[Source: Wikipedia]

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,

And wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean ...

He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own; He bore the burden to Calvary, and suffered, and died alone.

When with the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see, 'twill be my joy through the ages to sing of His love for me.

How marvellous! How wonderful! And my song shall ever be: How marvellous! How wonderful! Is my Saviour's love for me!

[Charles Hutchinson Gabriel (1856-1932)]

Soldier Saved by his Mama's Prayer Cover

In the Korean War of 1950-53, South Korea and North Korea fought a savage war. Allied nations fought to drive out the communists of North Korea from the South. They fought the battle back and forth until they pushed the battle to the demilitarized zone.

One platoon was pinned down under a heavy barrage of machine gun fire of the northern communists in the zone. All the other platoons had tactically withdrawn from the zone, leaving that platoon there. So the platoon alone faced the fire of the North Korean soldiers

One South Korea soldier suddenly crawled and jumped out of the fox hole to neutralize the next machine gun of the Northern Koreans by a hand grenade. He crawled close to the enemy, but a sniper of saw him through binoculars, targeted him and blasted his arm.

He shouted to his comrades for help. Each time somebody jumped out to help him, he was stopped by the machine guns of the communists.

He remained there for hours, the sun went down, midnight, no one was able to help him again.

Then around 8.45am Korean time, this young man took his rifle, and at exactly 9.00am, he just went to the captain and said, "Sir, am gone!" With no permission, he jumped out of the foxhole, zigzagged towards the dying man, and all the machineguns of the North Koreans opened up on him. In a hail of bullets, he still went ahead and carried the dying man on his shoulders and brought him to the fox-hole!

His captain summoned this young soldier, "Why did you leave without permission?"

He said "Captain, I know I needed your permission, but I knew you wouldn't have given it. At 6.00pm when he was shot it wasn't time to take such a risk. I had to wait till 9 o'clock, sir. When I was leaving America, my mama, a prayer warrior, said to me," Son, you aren't going to die in this war. At 9 o'clock Korean time every morning, I will be praying for you at my prayer altar." So I was waiting for mama's prayer cover!

The young soldier ran into the direction of hail of bullets, yet no bullet touched him. Why? His mama was at the prayer altar.

[Source: <https://www.teachingoftheword.com>]

A Prayer by Richard Baxter 1615 – 1691

Keep us, O Lord, while we tarry on this earth,
in a serious seeking after thee, and in an affectionate walking with
thee, every day of our lives;
that when thou comest, we may be found not hiding our talent, nor
serving the flesh, nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished, but wait-
ing and longing for our Lord, our glorious King, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Ekklesia (ἐκκλησία)

“Ekklesia” is the Greek word used for “church” in Matthew 16:18. When Jesus said, “I will build my church –my Ekklesia –He was not talking about a building; He was talking about people, about YOU. And when two or three of you gather together, He comes to be in your midst.

The Genesis of the Ekklesia:

During the New Testament days, there were 3 main institutions in Israel:

1. The Temple was where people met with representatives of God, the priests.
2. The Synagogue was where God’s people met with each other.
3. The Ekklesia was an assembly of people deputized by the emperor to introduce and implement the culture and laws of the empire.

Ekklesia Starts in the Home:

When we inject the leaven of God’s Kingdom (Matthew 13:33) into our homes, it spreads from the inside out like wildfire to every surrounding sphere of influence.

(Article continues ...)

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

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

Faiths and Sects, a Short Summary

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.

Those who do:

- become children of God (John 1:12),
- have sins forgiven; but not forgetting to turn to God when you do (1 John 1:9),
- have prayers answered (Mark 11:24),
- a new spirit and power to live a transformed life (2 Cor 5:17),
- and have no need to fear death (Hebrews 2:9),
- and find proof in relationship with God because Jesus is alive.

Atheism

Chambers, Merriam-Webster, Dictionary.com and Thefreedictionary.com define "Atheism, noun" – here summarised – as the belief, or the doctrine, that there is no God or gods; or denial of their existence.

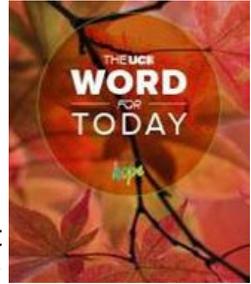
Such deliberate, definite, dogmatic denial of the existence of God means:

- It is difficult to pin down a moral law.
- It is hard to find the meaning of life.
- That there is no hope, death is the end.
- There is no recovery if wrong.

Keep Persevering

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us

Hebrews 12:1



God's plan for us involves dealing with problems and overcoming obstacles – it's in those moments that our character is developed and our faith is encouraged to grow. James wrote, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown" (James 1:12). God calls the people who persevere "blessed", but how often do we think about giving up rather than persevering? When we choose to persevere, God can strengthen us and help us be victorious.

Giving up doesn't build character, endurance does. It develops something in us that nothing else can. We're told that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Nobody knew more about endurance than Jesus. The Bible tells us that "He endured the cross." Not only did He endure the torture and crucifixion, He also endured the mocking voices of others, betrayal and abandonment from His friends, and God turning His face away from Him. When we feel like we want to give up, we need to follow Jesus' example.

In Hebrews 12, it says: "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (v.1-3)

God has blessings in store for us, promises waiting to be fulfilled, and things that will bring us joy. We can look forward to eternal life where we see God face to face. Right now things might be tough, but we need to try and see beyond our current circumstances. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and keep going.

Bible in a Year: Numbers 1-2, Mark 3:1-19



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

Two Prayers

O God, our Judge and Saviour, set before us the vision of your purity.

And let us see in the light of your holiness.

Pierce our self-contentment with the shafts of thy burning love, and let that love consume in us all that hinders us from perfect service of your cause;

for as your holiness is our judgement, so are your wounds our salvation.

Amen.

[William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury (1881 – 1944)]

Oh God, have Mercy on our brothers and sisters around the world who live with the reality of anti-Christian violence.

We pray for the countless thousands who have been injured or bereaved, who have had to flee their homes and livelihoods. Comfort them with the reality of your present, protect them like a mighty fortress, and make the escalating violence peace. May the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, be glorified as Christian victims of violence forgive and love their persecutors, just as Jesus did. (Psalm 46)

Amen.

[Source: Barnabus Fund]

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