

WEEK OF PRAYER

10-17 January 2021



BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

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BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Dear Sisters and Brothers around Europe

Years ago, I went on the Camino (ancient pilgrims' route) for two full weeks. It was a fascinating experience. Every day I picked a short bible passage, most of the time just a verse. As I covered many kilometres, I would meditate these verses in the rhythm of my breathing and walking. Sometimes my thoughts would wander off but time and time again I brought them back to the bible passage.

Something truly fascinating happened during that time. Until then I had tried to get into the word of God. Sometimes I tried to squeeze it like a lemon, and I was left frustrated because there seemed to be little juice flowing. But during this walk on the Camino the word of God got into me. God's word did something incredible in and to me and that has continued all of these years. I have developed a love and a hunger for the Word of God and my reward is getting insights from the Lord. Sometimes these insights come as a result of reflecting on what I've read but more often they come as a sudden gift.

So, it is with much thankfulness to the authors of the 2021 Week of Prayer Materials that I recommend to you this great resource which is built around the verbs: read, live, share, invite, think, experience, hear, worship. When I read through it, I thought to myself: yes, the bible takes us closer to God, closer to our sisters and brothers, our neighbours and closer to our own souls. It roots us in our creator and in all of his creation.

It is my prayer that as a result of this Week of Prayer you will engage with new vigour with the Word of God and that it will do its mighty work in you and bring the fruit it promises to bring



Thomas Bucher

General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance

PS A very warm thank you to the project team:

*Oli Proctor; Great Britain; Biblica Partnerships Manager for Europe & Central Asia
and the two Swiss Evangelical Alliance General Secretaries, Christian Kuhn and Andi
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOSTING A WOP PRAYER MEETING

Many local churches in Europe take this Week of Prayer as an opportunity to organise joint prayer meetings, which we would like to encourage. Here a few suggestions for you to keep in mind when you plan:

1. Please make sure that ALL Evangelical churches are invited and included in your prayer gatherings. Make an extra effort to also reach out to the migrant churches. Do you have Roma churches that you could invite? Including everyone will make your unity richer and more diverse.
2. It's always a richer experience to go to various places, don't forget about the smaller ones? Each place is different and adds colour to your unity.
3. How can you practically express the vast diversity in your country? Do you make room for that? Opening up, making room adds surprising perspectives to unity.
4. Is your event relevant and appealing for youth as well? We encourage you to allow youth to participate and even help you plan and prepare. Unity across generations is really important for the church.
5. Plan a creative, relevant and appealing prayer meeting? Double check to make sure that prayer has the bulk of time?
6. We urge you to keep a gender balance. Have both men and women working together to create a program that will help express diversity?
7. Consider the future. Imagine seeing this event grow throughout the years. How can you create this year's prayer event that will draw people back and bring their friends with them?

INTRODUCTION

*The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.
The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.
They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.*

(Ps. 19:7-10; NIV)

In “*the most beautiful text in the world*” (C.S. Lewis), King David enthuses about how all-encompassing and good God's law is. What unbridled joy and unaccustomed enthusiasm for God's Word! In the Week of Prayer 2021 we pray that God's Spirit will do the same in us as it did with David. We pray that we may rediscover the transforming and inspiring power of the Word of God. So that people in Europe can once again enjoy the God-given wisdom and joy (V. 7-8). We dream of people whose eyes shine (V.9) because they have come into contact with God's life-giving Word. Together we pray that people will set out to find food and life in Jesus Christ in the Bible. Pray with us.

On each day of the Alliance Week of Prayer we focus on one aspect of the Bible (read, live, share, invite, think, experience, hear, worship) using one verb. The Alliance Prayer Week 2021 was prepared jointly by the two French and German-speaking national associations of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance and supported by Biblica. It will take place from 10-17 January 2021.

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DAY 1 – READ

VERSES

*“I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.”* (Psalm 119:11)

MEDITATION

In 2011 the Willow Creek, the Chicago-based megachurch, released the findings of their “*Reveal*” study. Over a thousand churches of all sizes, denominations, and locations, as well as 250,000 individuals, participated in the survey. Two of the most significant findings from the survey were around a church or individual’s engagement with Scripture:

Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture; “*Best-practice*” churches (those in the top 5%-scoring responses) “*embed the Bible in everything*”

This came as a shock to Willow Creek, who had spent decades pioneering a seeker-sensitive model and pouring all their resources into creating programmes for their members to consume. The assumption was that greater engagement with a church’s ministry programmes would automatically lead to spiritual growth. The results, though, showed that not to be the case. This provoked a dramatic rethinking of Willow’s strategy and focus, most significantly a commitment to helping members engage with Scripture on their own outside of church.

In Psalm 119, written 2,500 years ago, the Psalmist celebrates the power of God’s Word to curb sinful attitudes and behaviours. He knows first-hand its effectiveness in encouraging obedience to God’s law. But what can we learn from this in the 21st Century?

We live in an age where we can celebrate the availability of a written scripture in almost every language in Europe; the Psalmist had the privilege to celebrate the centrality that the Word of God played in the life of the people. It is widely believed (due to references to passages from the Prophets of exile) that Psalm 119 was written shortly after the Babylonian exile, when the primary symbols of God’s presence among his people – the Ark of the Covenant and the Monarchy – had been lost. God’s presence was now supremely seen in the Torah, the law of God. This is why the psalmist is so committed to hiding the word in his heart – it is the very voice of God!

Consider your own spiritual health – are you growing in your love for God and your love for others? What spiritual practices can you adopt in your life to keep the fire burning, remembering above all that engaging with Scripture is by far the most significant indicator of spiritual health & growth?

PRAYER TOPICS

- Give thanks for the availability of Scripture in Europe, especially for those who gave their lives, centuries ago, to see the bible translated into the language of the people.
- Pray for the ongoing work of translation, that the remaining Bible-less peoples of the world will soon be able to read and hear the Word (see here for more information -<https://illuminations.bible/pray>)
- Pastors & leaders – pray for the people of the churches you serve, that they would increase in their love for the Bible and obedience to its teaching.
- Church members – pray for your pastors & leaders, that they may continue to preach the Bible faithfully, as well as equip you for a lifelong journey in Scripture.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law, day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.”
(Psalm 1:1-3)

REFLECTION

Spend 15-20 minutes reading Psalm 119 in its entirety. It is the longest chapter in the Bible (176 verses) but rewards the reader who commits to studying its truths.

Consider reading through the Bible together as a church or as a small group. Biblica has a helpful resource to help you do this called “Community Bible Experience” – see here for more details: www.biblicaeurope.com/cbe



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DAY 2 – LIVE

VERSES

The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (Luke 10:36-37)

MEDITATION

If we desire to impact society, sometimes we must stop and ask ourselves the right questions such as: why do we do what we do? What is our motivation for our social justice involvement? What are the real needs we should become experts in the needs of those around us.

Jesus understood that asking questions is the wisest way to help people mature. Moreover, He made Himself available to people who wanted to ask Him questions. There was something that attracted people of all classes and generations to Jesus.

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’

He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’” (Luke 10:25-29)

Jesus replies with the parable of the Good Samaritan. In conclusion, Jesus asks another question: *“Which one of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” (10:36)* This religious scholar discovers that social justice (respecting God's will) begins with simply being a neighbour, showing compassion there where he finds himself.

Each Christian is called to be a neighbour, to be in contact with others. We have no control over those who are our neighbours, but we do have complete freedom to behave as a *“neighbour”* to others. Become a neighbour. Let's open our eyes to the reality around us. Through concrete actions, and through our attitudes, Jesus calls us to join him in creating a more just world. Our commitment involves two relationships: one with God, and one with our neighbour – it is the same single call. God's justice is always social. Let us seek His justice

together. People may not read the Bible, but they read our lives. «*Go and do something!*»: This was the challenge that General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army gave to his son Bramwell, after having seen the plight of many homeless people in London. Go and live the gospel.

PRAYER TOPICS

- That we may gain a greater awareness to the social needs in our own neighbourhood.
- That we may have the courage to obey when our Lord says: "*Go and do likewise.*" (Luke 10:37).
- That we, like Jesus, may be available to those with questions.
- That we may open our eyes to see those whom others might ignore.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord, I ask myself: what is divine about my creed, if I am blind to human need? It takes courage to seek justice, to go against the flow, but you gave a clear imperative to go and do just like the Good Samaritan. Open my eyes and heart to become sensitive to human need on the road that I will walk today. May Your Spirit of compassionate stir me into action as I strive, with others, to advance Your kingdom here on earth. May we seek justice, Your justice, together.

REFLECTION

- The Good Samaritan's action cost him something personally. Are we ready to pay the price when the Lord expects us to "*go and do something*"?
- The Samaritan asked for help from the innkeeper and entrusted his neighbour with him. Who can help us in bringing about social justice - even outside our usual "circle"?
- Do we ask questions as an excuse not to exercise our God-given duty to care?
- How can I be a compassionate neighbour to somebody today?



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DAY 3 – SHARE

VERSES

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1: 3 – 6)

MEDITATION

Life is all about partnership nowadays, isn't it? It's a buzz word that gets used everywhere. Our marriages are partnerships, our teamwork is partnership, and our work with like-minded organisations is often privileged with the epithet of partnership too. Very often, as organisations giving the Bible to the last, the lost and the least, we might have an unwanted and unplanned tendency to see our financial and prayer partners as simply a wonderful resource and blessing. In fact, Paul shows that through their partnership with him, they are actually being transformed. Paul's focus is on this "*good work*" being carried to completion. The partnership in the gospel that the Philippians had with Paul is a manifestation of a commitment to Christ and a commitment to do their bit. If Paul had this balanced view, then so can we. We cheer our supporters on for doing their bit and equally we should praise God that their partnership is part of bringing the good work of God in their lives to completion. Here more than anywhere else in the Bible, the emphasis is on the joy and praise resulting from Paul's reflection on the fact that the Philippians are, indeed, playing their part through their generous financial support of his ministry.

How often do we box supporters unwittingly into the "*givers*" section? How often does our language evince a sense to some degree that these individuals are in such a place spiritually that they can and would just keep giving? To assume that they don't have issues and concerns that perplex them or hold them back from attaining God's glory is both unrealistic and not very caring. We might even be tempted not to care about this as long as the money rolls in. It is interesting however that Paul's final thought in verse 6 reflects his confidence that for his support team, his partners in Philippi, God will complete the good work that He began in them.

Today, let's reflect with joy on the great cloud of supporters who give unstintingly, both financially and spiritually, and make the translating and giving of the Bible possible. Let's also reflect on the means within which this generosity and support is a sign of a good work being carried to completion by a sovereign, loving and proactive God.

PRAYER TOPICS

Thank you, heavenly Father:

- For binding us together in love and unity as we work together in cooperation. As “*iron sharpens iron*” may we sharpen and encourage each other in Christ (Colossians 3:14, Proverbs 27:17). We pray for partnerships throughout Europe focused on giving people the Bible.
- For filling us daily with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We want to walk in a manner worthy of you, to please you in all respects. Help us to bear fruit in every good work as together we increase in our knowledge of you (Colossians 1:9,10). May the work of Wycliffe Italy bear fruit as they focus on Bible translation in Russia.
- That you do not withhold nor take back your gifts and calling. By your grace, may you continue to develop them within us as we partner together in the gospel. (Romans 11:29). Praise God for the partnership between Wycliffe Norway and the Raja* people of Southeast Asia.
- That some of us are given the job of planting and some of us do the watering, but you, Father God, cause the growth. Thank you for assigning each of us our part in your kingdom plans and purposes. May we be faithful and diligent in fulfilling your mission (I Corinthians 3:6,7).
- For all those who generously and sacrificially give to the work of the Gospel. May financial and prayer supporters know the gratitude of Bible translation organisations for providing “*seed for the sower*”. May there be an incredible harvest of righteousness to your glory and praise! (II Corinthians 9:10).

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father. What a joy and privilege it is to co-labour with You in your soon-coming kingdom. Thank you for the body of Christ around the world that You have called, equipped and trained to do your will. As we partner together in Bible translation and distribution, may we greatly impact the world for Christ. Lord, we submit ourselves afresh to you today. Please do a divine work in and through us that will have far reaching effects for the world’s good and for your glory. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

REFLECTION

Consider joining with Wycliffe, Biblica, United Bible Societies and many other Bible agencies in the IllumiNations Alliance in making God’s Word accessible to all people by 2033. Go to illuminations.bible for more information.



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DAY 4 – INVITE

VERSES

“In the future, when your son asks you, ‘What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?’ tell him... ‘The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.’” (Deuteronomy 6:20-21,24-25, NIV)

MEDITATION

Thirty years ago, a friend of mine invited me to join our middle school’s Christian student group. It was there that I first came into contact with the Christian faith. In the group, we simply read the Bible together. It was not about what I should or should not do, think or believe. We studied the Bible to find out who God was.

My friend did not keep his treasure to himself but invited me to find it too. That the faith should be shared and passed on has been a part of Christianity from the very beginning. However, sharing the faith encompasses much more than communicating certain beliefs or doctrines, or individual passages from Scripture. First and foremost, an invitation to the Christian faith is an invitation into the great freedom narrative of God and humanity: from Abraham to the Exodus, from Christmas to Easter.

It is primarily through the Bible that God communicates with us. The Bible’s function is rather like the Old Testament tabernacle: it is the appointed place for coming into the presence of God.

Offering the Bible to others is not just a gift for the other person. Reading the Bible in community helps us to discover its value and riches. When we read the Bible together, God speaks to us through the words of others as much as through the printed text. In addition, it can be helpful to read the Bible with a variety of methods. Some methods are designed to help people with less theological knowledge or a less extroverted personality to find their place in a group.

One method I am particularly fond of is the parallel reading of related Old and New Testament texts, e.g. the anointing of David (1 Samuel 16:1-13) and of Jesus (John 12:1-8). By inviting us to look for similarities and differences in the specific texts, this method is a great starting point for grasping the big picture of God’s freedom narrative, while remaining accessible to those with less Bible knowledge. It is a method that helps us share the treasure of God’s word, and with it the message of his Gospel.

PRAYER TOPICS

- Be thankful for the treasure we hold in the Bible.
- Let us see that we need the help of a community to discover this treasure fully.
- May God grant us the freedom, opportunity and desire to offer the Bible to others in a very simple way.
- Discovering the Bible as a “*tabernacle*” for the presence of God.
- Pray for divine revelation when we read the Bible together.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord our God,
you have sown your seeds,
gave your son;
broken and died for us,
he is bread and life for the world.
We pray to you, let us find the strength
to go his way:
that we are fruitful for one another, that we are the seed
and nutritious as bread.
And let us live such happy lives.
Amen

Huub Oosterhuis; Translated from the original German

REFLECTION

How can we invite our friends and neighbours to read the Bible together? What words can we use?



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DAY 5 – THINK

VERSES

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbour as yourself.” (Luke 10:27, NIV)

MEDITATION

What I find fascinating about Jesus is that he doesn't ask us to switch off our minds. On the contrary. The greatest commandment says that we shall love God with all our mind. God loves it when we think, investigate and fathom his thoughts.

But by doing this, we often encounter questions that make us feel insecure: how shall I handle difficult passages from the Bible? How do certain biblical statements fit a loving God? Why do I experience so few of the promises made in the Bible? God invites you not to push questions like these aside but to look into them. To dig deep, to investigate and to discuss them with God and with other people.

Doubts and trials belong to our faith. The Bible speaks about them. The mothers and fathers of faith knew them.

But how do they influence our prayers? When we stop talking honestly to each other in a partnership or friendship, we drift apart. Things left unsaid block access to the other person. The distance increases. It becomes more difficult to come together. That's what can happen when we don't share the urgent questions and doubts that plague our mind and our heart with God.

The Psalms show us how we can remain in conversation with God. The psalmists lament and pour out their hearts to God (e.g. Psalms 13 & 69) - honestly and without mincing their words. Thoughts are expressed in the raw. Yet even if their minds and hearts are full of questions and doubts, they experience how trust grows out of honest dialogue with God. For centuries, men and women at prayer have borrowed words from the Psalms when in conversation with God.

In addition to honest prayer, it is helpful to fix one's eyes on Christ. Even if we struggle with difficult passages from the Bible, we return again and again to the place where the love of God is painted in front of our eyes in all clarity. When I look to Jesus, it becomes clear to me that his promise is meant for me: My faith does not depend on my feelings or thoughts, but on his promises! Lie down in them just like in a soft feather bed. Breathe in deeply. For He is for us. (Romans 8:31ff)

PRAYER TOPICS

Praise

- That God invites us to search for him with our mind.
- For his invitation to stay in honest conversation with him.
- That nothing can separate us from his love – no questions, doubts or trials!

Lamentation

- Where we don't understand God, where we are disappointed and angry.
- Where the Bible seems unfamiliar, incomprehensible and doubtful to us.
- Where God's character is a mystery to us and where his love doesn't seem to reach our hearts.

Supplication

- That Jesus would meet us in our searching, thinking and investigating.
- That he shows us his perspective on our questions and doubts.
- That he speaks to our minds and our hearts and that we can trust.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Foreign influences may temporarily succeed in taking your Lord from you, but they cannot succeed in taking you from your Lord! Sometimes it may seem like you're falling into the abyss, but you won't be able to fall any lower than into the rescuing hands of God.

Hans-Joachim Eckstein, „Du hast mir den Himmel geöffnet“; Translated from the original German

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:28-30, NIV)



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DAY 6 – EXPERIENCE

VERSES

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11, NIV)

“My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.” (Psalms 119:112, NIV)

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Matthew 7:24-27, NIV)

MEDITATION

Let's have a Bible Breakfast!

For more than 5 years, we have hosted and developed a simple and stimulating open bible experience for our local church and for people without a Christian background. It is amazing to observe how the bible touches the hearts and the minds of all participants, day after day! In only a few minutes, you'll be able to reproduce this experience in your community. It is called “Bible Breakfast” because it is often the first thing we do in the morning.

During the week, our church is scattered to many different places in the “sent mode”. Nevertheless, it is possible to have a common list of biblical books we want to read and meditate on together in a synchronized way. 5 days each week we all read the same chapter of the same biblical book. After reading the passage carefully, everyone selects a verse, a topic or a passage that stands out for him/her. It's not about a full exegetical study of the chapter; just one element we identify with in that moment with Jesus. We meditate on this thought and share our experience in a WhatsApp group through a short message with a simple defined structure:

1. *“What verse/passage/topic has popped up for me today?”*
2. *“What will I do about it?”* (This can be a commitment to pray, speak, position myself, etc. or anything specific asked by Jesus in this moment).

The group does not need to respond to these messages (an occasional thumb up is ok!), but we pray for all the contributors for this day. From time to time the group may gather in person – maybe for breakfast!

The word of God is received and applied with the constant support of a praying community. Simple, isn't it?

In the last years, several non-believers have discovered the message of the Gospel through the Bible Breakfast, directly in the pages of the Bible, and their lives have been transformed and rooted in God's word. Praise God that today hundreds of groups have been started and thousands of people, for the first time in their life, read and experience the Bible every day.

PRAYER TOPICS

- Pray for the spiritual thirst and hunger of your church or for the small group you connect with regularly.
- Pray for those who don't/can't/won't access the treasures of the Bible.
- Pray for those close to you who don't know the Gospel of Jesus and could easily connect with His Word.
- Pray for your group to welcome non-believers at your "spiritual table" and share a kingdom feast.
- Pray for transformed lives through a daily walk with Jesus, hearing and applying his Word.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for your Word. It's a living testimony of your presence in my life, day after day. Listening carefully to your loving will for me and practising your love changes my whole life... not suddenly in an instant, but in a marvellous transformation process you steer so carefully. Help me today, to listen to you and obey your loving instruction. Thank you that by your grace, you invite me into the many good things you have prepared for me. Amen.

REFLECTION

- Are some of my neighbours and job colleagues ready to discover the Bible?
- How can I invite my church to begin a sustainable Bible experience?
- Could a Bible Breakfast be an easy and efficient way to live an open community bible experience in your context?



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DAY 7 – HEAR

VERSES

The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:1-15)

“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.” (Luke 8:15, NIV)

MEDITATION

Sometimes it drives me to despair. My children just can't hear me. Especially when it's about tidying up, washing their hands or going to bed.

Sometimes I will have a conversation with someone but have no recollection of what the other person said. Hearing one another obviously isn't only about receiving sound waves.

Jesus probably experienced a similar situation when he told the parable of the sower. It is not without irony that Jesus tells a parable about hearing God's Word and his disciples don't understand what their Master means (verse 9). Behind this rather frustrating experience for Jesus is a solid drama which constantly recurs in the Bible: people with ears to hear can't hear (e.g. Isaiah 6:9; Ezekiel 12:2). The underlying reason why they don't hear is not simply slow-wittedness. There seem to be truths which require more than common sense to be understood. According to the prophets, and to Jesus, there is a more fundamental epistemological problem.

In order to hear, one needs a *“noble and good heart”*, Jesus says. The seed of the word of God can put down roots and bear fruit especially well in the life of a certain kind of people. So how can we become people who hear, whose life is just like the *“good soil”*?

First, we need a fundamental renewal, for our heart is deformed like the rocky or thorny soil in the parable. And because of that, something inside of us is disinclined towards God's voice. A divine intervention is needed which changes our being fundamentally. The truth, Jesus Christ himself, must be in us so that we become capable of hearing (cf John 8:45; II Corinthians 3:18 & 11:10; Ephesians 4:14ff).

Second, in order to remain capable of hearing, we need Godly character. What drives us in our core being? What are our yearnings? What do we love? Are we oriented towards the good, towards Jesus? The renewal of the heart is a gift. We can collaborate on obtaining Godly character. Personally, I practise the spiritual exercises (e.g. worship, prayer, fasting, Bible reading ...) as a wonderful way to become whole, ready to receive and hear God's voice. They are like gardening tools that help us keep our heart's soil free from distraction and that thus make room for the seed of God.

PRAYER TOPICS

Praise

- For all people, institutions and churches that help us to become people who hear the word of God and capable of understanding it.
- For the possibility that the word of God can be preached without to everyone (freedom of worship and freedom of speech).

Lamentation

- Where we have neglected our heart's soil and where, as a consequence, God's voice is difficult to hear.
- Where diversion and entertainment distract us from listening to the quiet whisper of God.

Supplication

- We plead for theological educational establishments, that they may be places where knowledge is imparted in an integral manner, and where future responsible persons may become hearing persons.
- We plead for the churches, that people may experience a fundamental renewal through Jesus Christ and thus become capable of hearing as a consequence of their work.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord, give us hearing hearts. Let us be expectant when we open the Bible. Let us be all ears for your word given to us. Lord, give us hearing hearts. Make us people of “noble and good hearts”, ready to receive what you want to say to us through your word. Lord, give us hearing hearts. Enable us to help each other out of our spiritual deafness. Let us become a hearing community.

REFLECTION

- Have I experienced a fundamental renewal through Jesus Christ?
- How do I cultivate Godly character that is ready to hear?
- What was the last thing I heard God say to me?



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DAY 8 – WORSHIP

VERSES

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’” (Isaiah 6:1-3, NIV)

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

MEDITATION

In summer 2019 my family spent a day at the beach. My son & I splashed in the waves while my wife looked after our baby. After a while James decided he wanted to go back to Mummy for a snack. James wears glasses, but he'd taken them off to go swimming. As James got out of the surf, his eyes couldn't see Chantal waving in the distance, so he started running in what he thought was the right direction, weaving this way, then that way, because he didn't know the way - UNTIL he caught a clear sight of his Mummy, at which point he ran STRAIGHT to her.

It struck me that this was a great picture of our attempts to come before the Father in worship. Without a clear revelation of God, we will stumble, trip and fall in our efforts to reach Him. But when God reveals Himself to us, in His Son Jesus, we are able to respond in worship.

We see this very clearly in the Bible, when Isaiah receives his famous vision. Upon seeing God, Isaiah is convicted of his sin, and his response is to repent and accept the call of God on his life. Without God's revelation of Himself, Isaiah's worship would have been ill-informed, half-hearted and mis-directed. New Testament scholar David Peterson has this wonderful definition of true worship: “Worship of the living and true God is essentially an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and, in the way, that he alone makes possible”.

So as we seek to worship God in praise & thanksgiving for all He has done and will do in Europe, how do we best receive revelation of the true & living God, and engage with him on the terms he proposes and in the way he has made possible? Well, primarily in the pages of Scripture.

Martin Luther famously wrote, *“let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture.”* Without the Bible we don't hear God speak, and without hearing God speak we don't know what to do.

Let us not be ignorant in our worship but let us worship God in Spirit and in truth. Read the Bible and hear the voice of God. Read the Bible and see Jesus. Read the Bible and receive the Holy Spirit's power.

PRAYER TOPICS

- Thank God that He has revealed Himself in Scripture, and in His Son.
- Pray for Christian hymnwriters and worship songwriters, that the words of Scripture will be a rich source of inspiration for the Church today and in the future.
- Pray for your church, that you would be a community that worships God in Spirit & in Truth.
- Pray for faithful preachers of God's Word, who continually point the way to Jesus.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

Father in Heaven, thank you for the gift of the Bible, which is a light for my feet and a light on my path; fill me with your Holy Spirit, who leads me into all Truth, so that I may see Jesus your Son, the radiance of your glory and the exact representation of your being.

REFLECTION

Set aside 2 hours this week to read through Mark's Gospel in one sitting. As you follow the action of Jesus proclaiming the Kingdom ask yourself 5 questions:

- What did I notice for the first time?
- What questions do I have?
- Was there anything that bothered me?
- What did I learn about loving God?
- What did I learn about loving others?



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