

## COVENANT PRAYER

*Dear Jesus,*

*I thank you for wrestling and overcoming all the forces that can be against me. I want to take hold of your victory in my life. I confess you as my complete Lord and Saviour. Help me to put on the armour your have provided. Help me not to try and fight in my own strength but in yours.*

*Take me as your servant today, amen.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Texts to Memorise

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV)

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places ”*

1John 4:4 (NKJV)

*“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”*

# New Disciples Guide

Knowing God in Christ

Freedom in Christ

Growing in Christ

Loving God in Christ

Hope in Christ

Victory through Christ

Living for Christ

Worshiping Christ

Community in Christ

Victory through Christ

# ***In Christ is Victory***

The West holds mixed opinions about the existence of an unseen spiritual world. Some believe only things that can be verified 'scientifically' exist. Others believe not only in angels, but fairies, spirits, aliens, ghosts and almost anything! The Bible encourages neither cold scepticism nor naïve superstition, but does affirm a spiritual dimension beyond the senses.

**What does Hebrews 1:14 say about angels?**

## **The Spiritual Dimension Exists**

This world beyond the sense is inhabited by spiritual beings. The Bible says God is Spirit (John 4:24) and creatures called angels are also spirits (Heb 1:14). The spiritual realm is sometimes called 'heavenly places' in which dwell spiritual powers and forces (Eph 6:12). This spiritual world both observes and learns from our world and also effects and interacts with it, although not in easy to understand ways.

## **Materialism**

Some people in the Western World believe that all there is in the universe is matter, what we can see and touch and experience through our senses. This is called scientific materialism. However, enormous areas of reality are not known or based on science! Materialism struggles to understand immaterial things like love, hope, God, beauty, mind and the universal spiritual and religious element in humans. The materialistic view of life is a shallow one that fails to recognise the mystery and wonder of life, with all its beauty and goodness as well as its horror and pain. Materialism usually degenerates into consumerism. If all is matter then we are what we can get. People cannot long endure this empty philosophy. And soon turn to the spiritual – whether good or bad.

# God's Armour

Based on Ephesians 6 draw lines to match the following:

<b>Belt of</b>	<b>Pray</b>
<b>Feet shod with the</b>	<b>Word of God</b>
<b>Helmet of</b>	<b>Faith</b>
<b>Shield of</b>	<b>Gospel of peace</b>
<b>Breastplate of</b>	<b>Salvation</b>
<b>Sword of the Spirit</b>	<b>Truth</b>
<b>At all times</b>	<b>Righteousness</b>

The battle is real and it's important that we do not try and fight alone. We are to stay close to God and Christ. In our own strength we can't fight but we are entirely safe under the infinite power of God.

Have a look at the different parts of the armour.

- *Which ones do you understand or not understand?*
- *Which ones are you weak or strong in?*
- *How can you change this situation?*
- *All of the armour is defensive except for which item?*
- *What does Paul say to do always?*

## Two Extremes and the only Safe Guide

Some people can develop one of two extremes:

- Extreme 1 – they become obsessed with demons, see them everywhere and try to find out what God hasn't revealed.
- Extreme 2 – they are ignorant of the demonic (pretend it doesn't exist and are practical materialists).

Let us avoid both extremes. ***We can do this by focusing on Jesus and the Bible.*** Our only guide to the devil and the unseen world is Scripture – we should not go to other sources! All other explanations of spiritual reality that conflict with the Bible are mis-explanations and will confuse and deceive us.

## Day Five

### ***Putting on God's Armour***

Not all spirituality is neutral or harmless. Non-Christian spiritual paths are a mixture of some truths and errors. Some may even lead us into contact with demons (i.e. the occult, spiritualism, any attempt to contact or channel spirits etc). We live in a world that is being contested by God and Satan.

### **The Christian Life**

The Bible uses many different metaphors or pictures to help us think about the Christian life. Consider some of the following:

- It is like a Race
- It is like the cycle of Life (child > young person > adult)
- It is like a Pilgrimage
- It is like a 'marriage' partnership
- It is like a Growing Plant

Each one of these has much to tell us about life with Christ and can greatly help us. Lets look at one that is relevant for our discussion.

### **Life is a War Zone**

**How does Ephesians 6:12 describe the Christian life?**

**Who do and don't we wrestle with?**

**What are we told to do in verse 10?**

The Christian life is like a battle. We are soldiers on God's side.

*What are some of the things we can learn from this metaphor?*

## Why the Bad?

The world is not only beautiful but it is also a dangerous and tragic place. Have you ever asked 'why'? Why is there evil, suffering and pain? Will it ever change? If God is good, from where did evil come? But how did that start?

## The Dark Side

**According to Revelation 12: 7-9 who is the Dragon? What are some of the other names given to him? Is he alone?**

## Fallen Angels

Originally the universe was a holy loving community in perfect harmony with God. The Angels were spiritual beings created good by God. However, something happened amid this particular class of beings. A very exalted angel challenged God and the basis of his Kingdom (see the extra handout *The Original Rebellion* for more details). Evidently they rebelled, sinned and were cast out of heaven. Thus, not all spiritual realities are beneficent. In the gospels Jesus often met opposition from unclean spirits or demons. Unclean spirits, demons, devils are all alternative names for fallen angels who have rebelled against God(See also Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4).

## Scripture Our Only Reliable Guide

Please understand, the Bible is *not* affirming most of the foolish notions about spirits and ghosts or crude understandings of devils with horns and tail. Instead, Scripture declares Satan to be a fallen angel, a creature beautiful in appearance and highly intelligent. Do not trust any other information on the spiritual realms, avoid fruitless speculation and stick to the Bible.

## Day Two

### ***Life is a War Zone***

The Biblical view helps explain why there is terrible evil in the world. Not all spiritual forces are good or positive. Belief in the existence of fallen spirits or angels makes intelligent sense and is a powerful explanation for the current chaotic state of our world. Life often looks like a war zone because it is. When we see the unnaturally excessive amount of gratuitous evil in the world and its often highly organised nature (e.g. consider the sophistication and organisation of Hitler and the Nazi's) it is not hard to realise that there are highly organised spiritual forces of evil in the unseen dimension.

### **Sin Comes to Earth**

Evil did not originate on earth. It came from outside. The first human pair enjoyed a special relationship with God. Unfortunately, sin came to earth through Satan's successful deception of the first humans.

**Learn about it now by reading the whole chapter of Genesis 3. What was God's prohibition?**

**Outline the various reasons that the serpent gives for rejecting God's word (vs. 4,5).**

**What were the effects of disobeying God that you can see in verses 7,8,10,12,13?**

## **Practicing the Victory**

A relationship with Jesus in which we focus on him is the key to change. This focus begins to change and transform our very mind and heart and also our words and actions. The following verses add more principles and attitudes that are essential to the Christian walk.

### **Think on this!**

**Read Philippians 4:4-9. What things does Paul tell us to focus on and think about?**

**What things are we to do often and practice?**

**What are we not to do?**

**What promises are in these verses?**

These are very upbeat and positive verses. We can see from these verses that Paul understands what we could call the principles of Focus and Practice.

#### **Principle of Focus:**

- What has your mind, eye, thoughts or emotions has you
- You become like whatever you dwell on and cherish

#### **Principle of Practice:**

- What matters is what we do and practice, not just what we say
- Whatever you practice (physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally) strengthens its hold on you

*Read these principles carefully and think how they operate in your life?*

## Day Four

### ***Practicing the Victory by Focusing on Jesus***

Having overcome the powers and achieved dominion over them. Jesus can rescue those in their control. He brings to each one of us forgiveness of sins (and a forgiving spirit), a new life, a new heart, new courage, deep healing, the promise of eternal life and infinitely more. His amazing victory is ours. He has forged a whole possible life style and journey for us.

*However, now we need to learn how to receive his victory. We need to learn how to allow the new heart to express itself.*

### **The Secret of Growth and Change**

**Read 2 Cor 3:17,18. How does Paul say transformation happens?**

Here is the most powerful way of learning God's way of victory. *By beholding Jesus we become changed.* The most powerful means of transforming one's life is to continually look at and explore the life of Jesus. Jesus is the very image and character of God lived out in a human life. *Meditating on Jesus reshapes mind, heart and spirit.* While all of Scripture is a powerful means to transformation, the life of Jesus is the most powerful. The new heart is constant energised and refuelled by dwelling upon Jesus and Scripture.

You can behold Jesus by the following means:

- Reading about his life in Scripture and meditating and dwelling on his life. (In our imaginations we can go over different scenes in the life of Jesus, his healings, his love, his death, his resurrection. Then realise he has done this for you).
- Developing a very personal prayer life with and to Jesus
- Praise, adore and worship Jesus. (We should intelligently engage our emotions and mind in thanking Jesus for all he has done).
- Meet with other believers and share your insights into the character of Jesus.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil functioned as a simple test to mature character, enable free choice, and develop trust and loyalty to God. Before eating from the tree, Adam and Eve only had an ever-increasing experience of good. God did not want them to experience the knowledge of evil (war, rape, anger etc).

## The Serpents Lies

Satan's original lies are ones he still uses today:

- He questions and instils doubt about whether God really means what he says (vs. 1).
- He blatantly denies that God speaks the truth or that God will actually enforce his command. "*You will not die*" (vs. 4 compare 2:16,17). He also suggests that humans are naturally immortal.
- He implies that obedience to God will withhold something good from you (vs. 4, 5).
- He suggests sin and rebellion are actually a means to progress (vs. 4, 5) because it enlightens ("*your eyes will be opened*") and make us become God-like ("*you will be like God*").

Today whole philosophies, religions and spiritualities are based on variations of these original lies. The original man and woman fell for it and today people continue to fall for it.

## The Effects of Sin

The price for rebellion was high. In the narrative we immediately see the comprehensive and devastating effects of sin, re-read verses 7-13.

- **Alienation within Themselves.** Adam and Eve feel *shame* and *guilt* for the first time.
- **Alienation from God.** Adam and Eve hide and want to avoid God. They now become *afraid* of the God they once loved and were at peace with. Cut off from God, they will now experience *death*.
- **Alienated from Each Other.** Notice Adam shifts the *blame* to Eve, and then she blames the serpent that God created (blaming God!).
- **Alienation from our Environment.** Creation becomes a hostile environment.

*Can you think of modern examples of the Serpents lies?  
Where can you see the alienating effects sin?*

## Day Three

### *The Reversal*

Satan, sin and evil naturally dominate the world. The natural pattern of existence looks like this.

**World > Body > Emotions > Mind > God**

The world, with its values and behaviours that ignore God, tends to shape, mould and dominate each one of us. This world is heavily shaped and influenced by the principle of sin, selfishness and the ongoing activity of Satan. In following the world we seek to satisfy our physical and emotional whims before moral, social or spiritual considerations.

### **Change**

This is the opposite of God's design for creation. Adam and Eve's sin left humans enslaved and doomed. Only one has lived differently.

**According to Heb 2:14-18 why did Jesus come, what did he do and how did he do it?**

Jesus did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. He overcame all the forces that overcome us. He overcame *Sin* and all its temptations, the *Flesh* with its manifold weaknesses, *Satan* and the demonic host with all their subtlety and deception, the *World* and its hostility to God, and the final enemy, *Death*. We see Jesus in the Gospels battling all of these. What particularly stands out are the powerful temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11), his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-45), and the unimaginable spiritual pain of the cross, which was vastly greater than his physical suffering (Matt 27:45,46).

As a result Jesus both made a way of forgiveness for us and modeled a new kind of human life. This salvation he offers to us as a gift. Look at how the transforming victory of Jesus comes to us in the verse below.

## **A Gift from the Inside Out**

**What is God's promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27? Outline the different things God will do for us?**

**Vs 25**

**Vs 26**

**Vs 27**

This way of transformation is built on *God's method of working from the inside out*. At our spiritual rebirth God gives us a new heart to follow him. As a result of this new heart we receive new desire and power from the Spirit to follow God and we enabled to obey him.

## **Right Side Up**

The combination of Jesus victory and the gift of the new heart is that God's original purpose for humanity has begun to be restored.

**God > Mind > Emotions > Body > World**

Jesus changes the order and pattern of life. God becomes first. His Spirit renews our heart (or inner person) and makes our spirit come alive. The spiritual connection to God then guides our mind, conscience, reason, and will. The body and its desires, habits, emotions and powerful feelings become our servants not our masters. We listen, care and attend to them but are not dominated by them. The 'World' no longer controls us. We accept the good, but reject whatever is of sin and Satan. We seek to be an influence for good in the world. This is something we experience, though imperfectly, and it is God's goal for us.