

## COVENANT PRAYER

*Dear Jesus,*

*I see your ways are for our freedom. Thank you for giving me life. I want you to be leader in every area of my life: in my heart and mind; in all my relationships; in all I possess; in my body and in all my time.*

*Signed* \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Texts to Memorise

Philippians 4:8

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”*

Psalm 139:14

*“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

# 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

Living for Christ

# ***Living For Christ***

In the previous study we saw that God is Lord of all, and that he calls us to love him with all our hearts and minds and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Let's take a closer look at love for God and love for others.

## **God Desires The Absolute Best For You**

**What is God's desire for you according to 1 Thess 5:23-24? (See again Matt 22:37).**

To 'sanctify' means to set apart for God. God wishes to set *all* of you apart for what is good and holy and true. Christian Spirituality is wholistic. The three areas the text mentions embrace all of our life. God is Lord of, and has a purpose in, each area.

1. Our '*spirit*' refers to the spiritual dimension of us that seeks meaning and longs to connect with God
2. Our '*soul*' refers to our inner world of mind, will, attitudes and emotions
3. Our '*body*' refers to our physical existence and its interaction with the outside world

Thus we can see that:

### **God is Lord of Inner life (our Mind and Heart)**

This includes our minds, thoughts, feelings, choices, and our spiritual life.

### **God is Lord of Outer Life (our Relationships)**

This includes how we relate to family, friends, strangers and Nature.

### **God is Lord of Material Life (our Possessions)**

Everything we have is a gift from God.

### **God is Lord of Temporal Life (our Time)**

Time, along with life, is *the most* precious gift from God. He wants us to develop a sense of its value and its potential.

### **God is Lord of Physical Life (our Bodies)**

Our bodies are wonderful gifts from God. Let's not abuse them.

## **Living as Stewards of God**

God gave humans the earth, not to do anything they wanted with it and destroy it, but to look after it. To be stewards. God has individually given each of us: life, influence, money, time, talents and abilities. We are to look after and use them. God has some interesting reasons for giving us these.

- God wants us to enjoy life by being productive and using our gifts. These gifts make our existence interesting. As you have probably already discovered there are few things as fulfilling as using your abilities.
- In using our gifts God wants us to learn to reflect his character, particularly his love and generosity, and become more like him.
- God wants us to serve him and bless others.
- If we are faithful in a little then *God wants to give us more and more!!* (See Luke 16:10). God has big plans for us, but they are only realised as we learn his ways.

## **Putting It All Together: Living for Christ**

This week we have been looking at the Lordship of Christ. God is our Lord and we are his *servants* or *stewards*. The challenge now is to use whatever abilities you have for God and to bless the world. If you are good with your hands (or mind, or you're good socially, whatever) – then use it wisely and well.

We should aim to develop all we have. It doesn't matter if we don't have as much as the next person, what matters is that we use what God has given us. Whatever we use grows! The person who doesn't use their gifts and abilities actually starts to lose them. Whatever we neglects starts to die. You will find fulfilment when you use your God-given abilities to bless the world.

Remember that life is a special journey with God. This means everything takes on a new and deeper meaning. We are servants of a great God. Nothing we do, no matter how small, will be wasted.

*Lord help me to enter into the fullness of the life you wish for me*

## ***Talents and Abilities***

God has not only given us life, time, possessions, influence but also talents and abilities. Each of us is extremely unique. No two people have the same combination.

### **Parable of the Talents**

**Read Jesus' story in Matthew 25:14-30.**

**What happens to the three servants? (vs. 14-15)**

**What do the different servants do? (vs. 16-18)**

**What is the reward for the faithful servants? (vs. 19-23)**

**What happens to the lazy servant? (vs. 28)**

These servants are 'stewards.' What is a steward? A steward is someone who is entrusted to look after something for someone else. You and I are stewards of God.

## Everything is Linked

Each area of our life is connected to the other. Your inner thought life will determine how you use your time, influence, talents and energy. Ruin your body and in turn it will affect your mind. In the same way the condition of mind can make the body sick (see Proverbs 14:30, 15:13, 12:25, Ps 32:3-5).

## The Importance of the Inner Life

Our inner life is crucial. If we fill our hearts and minds with rubbish and junk then our characters and our choices will begin to reflect this input. The saying 'We are what we eat' is true – physically, morally and spiritually. So God's ideal is for our inner life to be like a pure mountain stream, not a polluted and stagnant creek. A polluted inner life makes us negative and strengthens sin's hold on us with its accompanying misery.

## Where Do I Start?

**What does Paul encourage us to do in Philippians 4:8?**

God begins his work of sanctifying in our mind and heart. Often we cannot control what initially passes through our mind – but we can control *what we choose to put into our minds and what we dwell upon*.

Scripture encourages us to fill our minds with good things. Things such as:

- Prayer, praise and worship (learning songs to God can really help)!
- Enjoy the innumerable good things in life like the wonders of creation, good friendships and helping other people.
- Most importantly study the *Gospel* and *God's Word*, and build a picture of *Jesus' character and life* that dwells in your memory and thoughts.

*Do you want the best God has to offer in life? Are you resolving to always put God first in everything? Do this in prayer now, and live knowing God is with you.*

## Day Two

### ***Giving Our Lives***

As you read this paragraph the most amazing processes are occurring in your brain. Your eyes, hands, lungs, heart and mind are all acting in harmony. You are thinking, reading, feeling, reflecting, moving, and deciding, all at once. Every one is a staggering accomplishment.

### **You are God's Masterpiece!**

**What makes David praise God? Ps 139:14-15**

The human body is an incredible work of God. Any spirituality that leads us to neglect or harm the body is not from God. God wants us to value and look after what he has made and given to us. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

### **Living Sacrifices to God**

**In view of *God's mercy* what does Paul encourages us to do in Rom 12:1**

**Rom 12:2**

Notice that the motivating force is God's mercy that we have received. The two things Paul mentions are connected. Presenting our bodies and physical life holy to God and having our minds transformed are both part of our spiritual journey with God.

### **The Enemy's Plan**

The Enemy of God and humanity knows that our minds and bodies are intimately linked and tries to destroy one through the other. The Devil tries to abuse the body so as to degrade the mind, and degrade the mind so he can destroy the body.

## God Wants To Bless

**What did God have against his ancient people? Read Malachi 3:8-12.**

God is Lord over all we possess. As an act of worship God asks us to use our money for him. We do this by tithing, giving offerings, and wisely using our resources for good. A tithe literally means a 'tenth' and indicates we should return to God a tenth of the income he has given us. It is the same amount for rich or poor. Offerings are any other amount you decide to give. Generosity is important because it reflects the very nature of God. Probably the best thing about supporting God's work is that our contribution helps others find out about God.

### **Live From Abundance**

We all struggle with selfishness and lack of trust in God. Our attitude can make a big difference. We are to live from an attitude of abundance. In Christ we have all things – the fullness of God. So we do not need to be selfish. We relate to others not to get, but to bless and love, because we have infinite love from God. For example, we forgive because we have complete forgiveness from God.

None of us need to be small-minded – God himself cares for us and envelopes us in his love. Let that love spill over into the world you inhabit! It may take a while to learn how to live in such an awesome new understanding of life and destiny, but allow God to work this positive, affirming spiritual attitude in you.

*What is your attitude to life? Is it one of positive and unselfish freedom in the love of Christ or is it centred in getting and living only for yourself? This is something we can all struggle with. Seek God now and ask for a continual and strengthening renewal of a God-aware and generous attitude.*

## Day Four

### ***The Things of Life***

If you would take one thing with you to the next life what would it be? Now think about what you *didn't* put down! When we are faced with ultimate choices we begin to realise what is truly important. Our everyday priorities should be the same as our ultimate priorities.

#### **Where Does It Come From?**

**How much of life and the things of life are gifts that we have received? Read 1 Cor 4:7**

**What principles does Paul talk about in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11? Write down what stands out.**

Life, as God intends it, is a constant flow of giving. This is a very exciting and challenging principle to learn and live. Jesus said "*freely you have received, freely give*" (Matt 10:8).

#### **Beware!**

**What trap does Jesus warn us about? Luke 12:15**

In our western society this is a real danger. A competitive consumerism can suck the spiritual life out of us. Jesus warns us not to let money be our master instead of God (Matt 6:24). Love of money can make us neglect not only God but also our families.

## Looking After Body and Mind

The world is full of addictive substances that destroy our health and/or cloud our moral decisions.

- *Smoking* kills innumerable people each year. It is a slow form of suicide. What terrible things we do the body God has given to us!
- *Alcohol* is a terrible drug. Around half of all serious crimes are committed under its influence. What unimaginable suffering it causes! One glass begins the process of altering our brain function. Alcohol affects not only the physical coordination but also the frontal lobe of the brain where people make moral choices. Even when Jesus was suffering on the cross he rejected the intoxicants they offered him to dull the pain (Mark 15:23).

- *Illicit drugs* have numerous documented bad affects.

God doesn't want his children enslaved to addictions (Eph 5:19; Gal 5:1).

## Health

God is concerned with our health. God hates suffering. In the Old Testament God gave laws to help reduce disease. For example God gave laws emphasising cleanliness, laws for quarantine, and told his people to avoid eating animals that we now know are more likely to carry various diseases (Lev 11). The acronym *NEWSTART* sums up a basic starting point for caring for our health.

**N= Nutrition.** Eat the best, predominantly fruits and vegetables. Avoid junk food, fatty and sugary foods. Bad diet is one of the major causes of disease and death in the Western world (heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes etc).

**E= Exercise.** The body 'rusts' without it! Many people are miserable and sick, physical, mentally and emotionally because they don't exercise.

**W= Water.** Inside (drink plenty of it) and outside (be clean)

**S= Sunshine.** Enhances our moods, gives vitamin D (don't get burnt)

**T= Temperance.** Moderate use of the good and stay away from the bad

**A= Air.** Breathing properly is very important and so is the quality of air

**R= Rest.** Get enough sleep and have periods of recreation

**T= Trust in God.** Don't worry, trust in God and be positive (Matt 6:25-34)

*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31). What areas of mind and body do you need to present to God?*

## Day Three

### ***Living For Christ In Our Relationships***

Because we have been created with freedom each one of us has been given by God an incredible power in other peoples lives called '*influence*.'

#### **Loving Relationships**

**What things ruin relationships? (Col 3:8-10)**

**What are the qualities of loving relationships? (Col 3:12-15)**

Sin causes unimaginable pain to God as He beholds its effects on the state of human relationships – prejudice, selfishness, manipulation and hatred. Abuse of any kind against anyone has absolutely no place in the life of a Christian. Love is to be extended to family, friends, strangers, enemies; and in words and in actions (Exod 20:12-17).

#### **What is Jesus' Version of the Golden Rule?**

**Write down Matt 7:12**

#### **Values, the Heart and Sexuality**

Lets look at one area of our life where values, the inner world and our outer life meet very directly: our bodies, our sexuality and others.

**What does Jesus say in Matthew 5:27-30?**

## **A Higher Standard**

Jesus is talking about looking at someone for the purposes of lusting. Temptation is not sin, rather giving in to the temptation is sin. We must reject it and not play with it. Is this an impossible standard? Would you expect Jesus to say any different? God created both sex and the desire for it, but he intended it to always be in the context of love and respect. Lust is the opposite of love and respect. It turns people into things with no value. It degrades the thinker. God seeks to enshrine in our hearts a profound respect and honouring of the opposite gender and ourselves.

## **The World and Sex**

The world goes to two extremes with regards to sex. 1) On one hand sex is the world's obsession. It is worshiped like an idol. People try and find meaning in it. 2) On the other hand, and at the same time, it is degraded and emptied of any moral, spiritual and relational significance. It is a 'mere' physical act (with virtually anyone). This leads to profoundly shallow lives, mistreatment of others, and a lot of confusion and pain! True meaning is not in sex, or another person, only in God. The answer to emptiness and loneliness is not sex or even marriage – but real friendship with God and others. One is complete in God whether single or married.

## **God's Value**

Our true 'obsession' should be real love and holiness, not sex. Sex is a sacred gift from God. God's standard for sex is a *committed, loving, monogamous marriage relationship between a man and a woman*. All sexual immorality (sex outside marriage, adultery, homosexuality, incest, pornography, paedophilia etc) is a violation of God's ways.

## **Breaking into Freedom**

Keys to breaking and staying free from lust and sexual confusion include:

- See people as God sees people, not as things
- Replace lust with a deeper love of God and respect for others
- Stop all immorality and avoid places or things that encourage lust
- Developing a new positive view of sexuality as something more than the act of sex
- Finding wholistic healing if we have been damaged sexually
- Walk in God's forgiving and empowering grace found in Jesus!