



Daily Bible readings, a memory verse and a prayer for individual contemplation
Weekly worship song, reflection and small group questions

ENCOUNTER GOD TODAY!

Living a life of purpose in these unprecedented times

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I Thessalonians 5:22 (Conscience) **Sunday 22 August**

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Matthew 6:33 the (Best Life) **Sunday 29 August**

BIBLE READING:

I Thessalonians 5:22 (Conscience) *“reject every kind of evil.”*

PRAISE AND WORSHIP:

Let's worship our God with the following You Tube song: **Make me Over** | Tonéx
<https://youtu.be/9t60fl39ly8>

Reflection **By Mr. Ntsokolo Selebe**

The Apostle Paul in this text is addressing the church in Thessalonica. The church in Thessalonica is provided as a wonderful example of a good church. In a time when so many false approaches to church growth are being embraced, we need to carefully measure what the so-called “experts” offer as a good example of a church versus that provided in Scripture. One of the chief principles is that the quality of your individual walk in Christ is not just important to you personally but contributes directly to the health of the church overall. Our responsibility for personal faithfulness extends its impact upon the corporate faithfulness of our church.

Whilst other churches of the time had to be rebuked from time to time for behavior that was not in line with the teachings of Christ. Some of these churches were known to have squabbles about the Jewish traditions. In an environment like that, everyone has an opinion about what the right practices are, versus what is not right. Many times, when such disputes and debates unravel, false teachings thrive. Those who shout the loudest, connected to the decision makers, tend to influence the order of the day, usually at the expense of the truth and right doctrines. Such an environment becomes a fertile ground for bad intentions, agendas and evil ways of relating to one another, as that is the only way to maintain self-seeking objectives and advance certain agendas - through making others look bad.

Popular

We have seen the phenomenon unfold many times, the most relevant being the Jewish people shouting the loudest to Pilate when he asked in his failure to convince them to come to the right judgment “*Who should I release between Barnabas and Jesus?*” and they shouted Barnabas! The masses wrongfully so, decided the fate of the innocent, despite Pilate having confirmed that he does not find any wrongdoing.

In addressing his fellow worshippers, Paul encourages them to preserve the good teachings of Christ as a community and not give in to the ways of the world and instructs them to “*reject all forms of evil*”. Note that Paul does not specify the types of evil, but anything that rears its head as evil, must be rejected, he says. How prepared are we as Christians today like the church in Thessalonica, to reject evil in any form? Irrespective of where it originates. Are we also trapped in the mode of accepting evil when it comes from a certain group of people and rejecting it when it comes from another group, depending on who shouts the loudest or who is in a more influential position? Where is the spirit of “Ubuntu” in all this, the fundamental teachings of Christ, love your neighbor as you love yourself?

Our nation has seen in recent months the uprisings and looting of private and public property alike, bringing the nation into disarray, as a result of defending the wrong doings of those who are in much more popular and influential positions. We have witnessed the hard work of entrepreneurs, whom God has placed in our society to provide value chain for food security and other essential services to mankind such as fuel, clothing markets etc. go up in flames. Many of which provide employment to the rising number of unemployed youth and elders who were not ready to retire, lost their jobs as a result and saw their dreams go up in flames.

The month of August coincides with the celebration of women in our nation. It is an open secret that women and children have for many years been at the receiving end of injustice and inequality. So much evil has been perpetrated against this section of our society, where they are imprisoned by the stereotypes, unhealthy expectations, and prejudice on the basis of how they dress, cannot do certain jobs, cannot take up leadership roles, mocked on their appearance (weight), being blamed when unfortunate circumstances befall them and made to believe that they were asking for it. These are examples of evil that has befallen our nation that Paul encourages us to reject with boldness and unequivocally.

Our call as the body of Christ is to discern the times and be part of the solution in the fight against all forms of injustices on the oppressed and vulnerable in our nation.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. How prepared are you to stand for what is right no matter who says it? Can you think of examples of popular opinion that you disagree with and how you are standing up against it?
2. What is your source (what informs you) to decide what is wrong and right? Do you trust it completely? Why?
3. What is stopping you from taking a stand for the truth and what is right? What circumstances hinder you or keeps you stuck (do nothing)?
4. What can we do to stand strong against the temptation of just accepting the status quo? Especially if we believe it is wrong?



DAILY BIBLE READING:

Monday

Memory Verse: Romans 12:9 *'This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it – the LORD is his name: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."* God wants us to love in a sincere and active manner that chucks away hypocrisy. He wants us to hold on tightly to what is good and be devoted wholeheartedly to one another as brethren, and not tolerate wickedness.

Prayer: Father we thank you for your love for what is good, for after you have created all things “It is good”. Help us Lord to possess genuine and authentic love to all mankind, and all your creation alike. Give us strength to detest any form of guile and deceit. **Amen.**

Tuesday

Memory Verse: Exodus 23:7 “*Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.*” God does not only want us to reject evil, but He encourages us to stay far away from it, so that we do not have to experience it, He enables us to discern right from wrong and steers us away from any kind of falsehood, so that we are not exposed and affected.

Prayer: Lord we pray for the spirit of discernment, let it grow in us, and let it teach us and help us to dissect the false teachings. We pray for everyone who is indirectly affected by our decisions or our moments of weakness. **Amen.**

Wednesday

Memory Verse: Luke 3:22 “*and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’*” Our God is a good filled with righteousness and Glory. His constant will and wish for our lives is that we should be right with Him. We should appear pleasing to Him like a sacrifice with a good aroma. May we be well pleasing to His heart so that he may take delight in us.

Prayer: Lord just like your Son Jesus Christ; we would like you to be well pleased and delighted with our lives and how we relate to others. **Amen.**

Thursday

Memory Verse: 2 Cor 6:1 “*As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.*” It is a good virtue to remain pure and sincere in the eyes of God and people. The word of truth should not depart from our lips guided by the Holy Spirit to remain in genuine love. Love conquers evil. Hence Jesus said people shall know that you are my disciples when you love one another. The truth of God’s word gives us power to withstand and speak against any form of evil and injustice perpetrated against His people.

Prayer: Good Lord, our everlasting Father we pray for love and sincerity. For we believe that love and truth is the most powerful weapon we possess to withstand the evil ways of the devil. We pray for the spirit of truth to immense and engulf us in our daily walk. **Amen.**

Friday

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:13-14 “*Salt and light* ¹³ *‘You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.* ¹⁴ *‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.’* Jesus teaches and encourages us to choose the narrow gate, the road less travelled by many, for many are deceived by the tricks of the evil one. Choosing the narrow gate of love and truth means standing alone in the midst of injustices cushioned in traditions, culture, and societal norms that are harmful and favors one section on the society over the other.



Prayer: Lord today we choose the narrow gate. We choose to be unpopular; we choose to be steadfast in truth. Help us and strengthen us to stand even in adversity, even if we stand alone, and guard us from destruction and eternal loss so that Your name may be glorified. **Amen**

Saturday

Memory Verse: Isaiah 33:15 “*Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil.*” Rejecting evil does not come easy. It is a deliberate and purposed action to walk righteously, speaking in integrity. It is about rejecting any forms of gains from unfair practices at the expense of others. It’s about breaking free from being lobbied to disadvantage others and smear campaigns against our fellow brethren. It is about stopping our ears from hearing gossip, bigotry, discrimination and other forms of evil. It is about avoiding any place, any platform and channel that perpetrates evil upon the people of God.

Prayer: Holy Spirit take place in our lives and continue to guide us into the right path. As You did with the first Apostles, give us Power, give us transformation, give us boldness to stand for what is right and not what seems to be right depending on profiles and stature of those who are more connected to the rulers and those vested with powers to make laws. Let your light shine upon your people now and forever more. **Amen.**



It is important for parents to take time to lead the conversations of family time and to be honest with their children in these conversations.

BY JENNY BLAKE – CHILDREN’S PASTOR
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Sunday 22nd August

Pray daily: Set up family time for prayer and devotions and stick to this arrangement. All devotions should always begin by with a prayer. Ask a family member to pray or one of the children.

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:22 Allow children/teens to read out loud for the family.

Activity/Family Moment: What does 1 Thessalonians 5:22 mean?

Avoiding the appearance of evil, or abstaining from every form of evil, means to live in God’s light by the power of the Holy Spirit. We "take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

We should not worry about what others think of us but rather be concerned about our own walk with Christ.

How do we know if something is good and if something is bad?

Continue reading to the end of verse 24. It states that the one who calls is fruitful. Does this remind us of the fruit of the spirit? What are they? (Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, & Self-Control).

Activity: Doodle challenge

- Pair up. Each pair needs a piece of paper and a pen.
- Have one person stand with their backs to you. Stick your piece of paper to their back, and their piece of paper on a wall or solid object in front of them.
- Draw or write out a fruit of the spirit. One line at a time (if you are writing love, draw one-line down wait for your partner to draw then finish the ‘L’ with the second line, wait for partner continue until the word is complete).



To make this more complicated have the whole family in one line, see if the person in the front of the line get the word or picture that the person at the back started with. (See picture right as a demonstration.)

THURSDAYS IN BLACK

During Women’s Month, we would like to stand and support the women in this country and in our congregation by wearing the “**Thursdays in Black**” button and wearing black on Thursdays for the month of August.

PLEDGE: *By supporting ‘Thursdays in Black’ I stand:*

- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form,*
- In solidarity with 1 in 4 women worldwide who face violence in their lives.*
- In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual v.*
- For awareness and information about the challenges of gender-based violence.*
- In the hope that a different reality is possible.*

By making this pledge I undertake to stand up and make a difference in the world where I live, work and play. (<https://www.thursdaysinblack.co.za/about-0>)

CHALLENGE: Join us by wearing black along with your small group, family, or colleagues every Thursday and send us a photo of yourselves to kerryw@bmc.org.za so we can stand together during the month of August.

