



Urgency of the times

(Luke 14:23)

4 **DAYS**

FAST & PRAYER

7.8 - 15.9 2023

NECF
MALAYSIA

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GO, COMPEL THEM TO COME IN

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, Chairman NECF



In the parable of the great banquet, the master of the house had prepared a great feast, but most of the invited guests asked to be excused giving what sounds like valid reasons why they couldn't come. Because He was determined to see people enjoy the banquet, he told his servant to find others to fill the house.

In Luke 14:23 the master said to his servants, *“Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*

What does it mean to “compel” people to come in?

First, it takes **passion**. The invitation involves more than a casual and unconcerned conversation. It does not refer to physical force, but rather a compelling through witness and persuasion. The master was zealous for the guests to come, and he expected the servant to convey this through a passionate and convincing invitation.

Clearly, the Church of Jesus Christ needs to regain her passion. We must realize that, as we share our faith, we are not speaking of current events or the latest fashion trends. We are speaking of the eternal God coming to earth to die for our sin so that we might be saved and reconciled to Him. Passion means we will do whatever it takes to extend the invitation and compel others to come. We would learn methods to share and overcome our shyness and fear, if necessary.

Second, we need to grasp the **purpose**. The servant did not search without a purpose. The master of the house had

prepared a great supper; the scrumptious food was ready, and he desired that the house be filled with guests. There had been too much time, effort, and expense put into this meal for the seats around the table to be empty.

Our command to share the good news of the glorious Gospel is not without purpose either. Like the master of the house, our Lord has made a provision for mankind. He laid aside His heavenly glories, took on humanity, bled and died for our redemption, and rose again for our justification. He paid the ultimate price, offering Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Jesus desires that the house be filled. We will one day sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. So let us, "Go, and compel them to come in."

And lastly, we need to understand the **urgency**. In the parable, there was no time to waste. The meal had been prepared and yet there was room for more guests. There was a specific time frame in which the task must be completed. Tomorrow would be too late; the servant had to find and compel the guests to attend the meal that day!

The return of our Lord is at hand. None of us is promised a tomorrow. Death is certain, and it is coming for all of us if the Lord does not return soon. We must compel everyone to come while the invitation to come and dine is being extended.

Church, let us go out into the highways and hedges of our community - with passion, purpose and urgency - to engage people where they are and as they are, with the Gospel.



FOREWORD FROM THE SG YEAR 2023

By Pr Samuel Ang, Secretary General of NECF



Whilst preparing the Foreword for this year's devotional, there was an interesting statement addressed to the civil service by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The subject was the "Culture of Content". His earnest plea was to see an implementation of change within his administration that would help to restore the nation's dignity and overcome complacency.

Similarly, we the Malaysian church have chosen this year's theme as "***Urgency of the Times***". For the last three years, the church had to face setbacks due to the pandemic and the political and economic conditions. Now, she is poised to move ahead as the nation celebrates her 60th Anniversary over the formation of Malaysia on 16th September 2023.

Our Lord Jesus did remind his disciples about the sense of urgency when he said, "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*" (John 9:4)

The Lord knew that his departure from earth was drawing near. The Light would soon be withdrawn, and darkness would reign again for a time, though not forever.

He sensed the urgency to do his earthly ministry while it was still day. He was aware that he worked under the limitations of mortality, and recognized the brevity of life. The opportunities for service and doing good would not last forever. Though Jesus faced opposition from the religious leaders in his ministry and even risked losing his life, his compassion drove him to heal the blind man mentioned in the passage.

Likewise, we too are constrained by whatever time is available to us. Whatever we have to do, it must be done with urgency. The Christian's duty is to make use of the time he has, and no man knows how much that will be in relation to serving God and his fellow-men. Let us not regret it when we discover tragically that it is too late to do anything when we have procrastinated with what could have been done.

The church did come to a standstill in the last three years. Even today, many pastors and other leaders have complained that church attendance has not reached pre-pandemic levels. There are some who continue to struggle in trying to get their members to come back to church.

Time is against us and each of us must make our life count for Jesus. We are all aware that the substance of our life is as important as its span. I pray that you will take heed as we meditate through the devotions faithfully prepared, and act with a sense of urgency. For when night comes, no one can work.

It is our greatest desire that all of us would be found faithful until the end as we hope to hear these words, *'well done good and faithful servant...; enter into the joy of your Master.'* Amen!



AN URGENCY OF TIMES FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

By Rev. Looi Kok Kim, Chairman of NECF Prayer Commission



The call to the “Urgency of the Times” is a marching order to all believers in Christ. Any distractions of the world that do not contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission (which we read about in Matthew 28:19–20) have no enduring relevance to faith in Christ. Of course, we live in a different time and something that Jesus did two thousand years ago might not apply to our current situations. But the principles underlying the Great Commission offer guidelines for His followers in every age and culture.

The parable of the great banquet as penned in Luke 14:15–24 tells of how the sullen unresponsiveness and excuses of the invited religious leaders and guests resulted in the angry homeowner sending his servant out to fill up the hall with the outcasts of society.

What point do we often miss in Jesus’ illustration? The answer is “familiarity breeds contempt.” What you have here is the essence of the New Testament discipleship in modern times. It means that the more you are exposed to someone or something, the less appreciation you have for that person, or thing and the more careless you become in that situation. The case here involves the urgency of evangelism. I believe most Christians want to be faithful servants but end up just going through religious rituals. It does not satisfy the soul. Deep down, we all desire to be part of the work that attains the power from on high, moving into society to storm the gates of hell.

But the question is – how can this happen?

There is a resounding warning for all believers today. Evangelism is seen as a church project or an event in the calendar. Year after year, it becomes a familiar project – just with different approaches. It has become a personal choice whether to participate or not. In Jesus' time, the parable of the banquet shows how the guests rejected the invitation with what we might call good reasons. The missing connection is the sensitivity of responding to who Christ is. The refusal of the invited guests is a symbol of the rejection of the Lord by the hearers. In the first place, the hearers did not capture the urgency of the times to do the job. In other words, reaching out to the lost is simply not the passion nor the priority. Evangelism is about passion and must be a lifestyle. We have to recapture these for God!

There was something moving, something stirring, and something alive in the heart of Jesus when he told the parable. If the hearers of Jesus' time had known the heart of Christ, they would have understood that the invitation to the banquet was not just a task to be fulfilled but also, so much more, a passion to be lived inside and out as a lifestyle.

This year, the 40-Day Fast and Prayer journey is a marching order that focuses on the foundational principles of spiritual alertness that will transform you in the ministry of Jesus. It is my hope that the daily reflections will serve to sound the call in the urgency of the times for spiritual awakening in the local church to intentional evangelism and, to some meaningful extent, to intercede for our nation.

Our wholehearted pursuit to know God has two important roots as we take the 40-Day Fast and Prayer journey: The Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit helps us to know the heart of God, and reading God's word daily will keep us focused and enable us to stay away from temptations.

By God's grace, let's rise up "to know God and to do great exploits" in the challenging and difficult times ahead. (see Daniel 11:32b)



GIVING TO THE NECF GENERAL FUND

By Chan Cheng Lock, Treasurer of NECF



Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On behalf of NECF, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for your financial support for the work of NECF all these years. It warms my heart to know that you are sowing into the Kingdom of God and participating in the furtherance of the Gospel of the Grace of God in many ways. Praise be to Him for helping NECF fulfil its very reason for existing, that is, “To transform the nation through the local church.”

As in the last two years, funds received this year will be earmarked for the NECF General Fund to defray its operating costs. For 2023, the budgeted expenditure is RM 728,000, out of which approximately 50% will come from bank interests and member church subscription fees which we have not increased since its inception in 1983.

Whenever NECF makes an appeal for funds, so many wonderful friends like you are always ready and willing to bless us, and all with a cheerful heart.

I am much reminded of what the Apostle Paul said about the church in Corinth about giving financial assistance to Jewish believers who were facing famine in Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 9). He was so confident about their willingness and desire to give that he felt it was unnecessary for him to even mention to the Corinth believers about the collection as they themselves had earlier taken the initiative to commit to the giving.

In the preceding chapter, i.e. 2 Corinthians 8, Paul used our Lord Jesus as the perfect model of giving. In verse 9, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* Jesus was rich before He left heaven’s glory. He became poor and assumed poverty when He became man. God incarnate! Jesus even said of Himself, *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”* (Matthew 8:20)

Isn’t it awesome? He became poor for your sake and my sake. When He took on humanity, it was a divine exchange in that we would get a share in Jesus’ eternal, heavenly riches and glory while He got a share in our poverty by becoming obedient to the cross, even death on the cross. He was buried, and Hallelujah, He rose again and is now exalted in glory.

I shall take a leaf from Paul’s concluding remark that will further motivate us to give.

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)

My prayer and benediction to one and all in the Lord:

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)



If you are prompted to give to our General Fund, you may do so by:

- **Banking in directly/transferring online to NECF's general fund account:**

Bank:

Public Bank

Account Name:

National Evangelical Christian Fellowship AC3

Account No:

3218284529

- **Scanning the Touch' n Go barcode given in this booklet, NECF website, Facebook pages, App, etc.**

Please send your bank-in slip to prayer@necf.org.
my if you do an online transfer or bank in your cash/cheque.


Receipts will only be given if requested.



DAY 1-5

Parable of The Great Supper

Luke 14:15-24



- ¹⁵ Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
- ¹⁶ Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,
- ¹⁷ and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'
- ¹⁸ But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'
- ¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'
- ²⁰ Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'
- ²¹ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'
- ²² And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'
- ²³ Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'
- ²⁴ For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'

DAY 1 | Mon, 7 Aug 2023

Come, For All Things Are Now Ready

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' (Luke 14:16-17)

This verse gives us a great picture of the abundance of eternal life that God offers freely to humankind. He gives the fountain of living water to wash away the sins of the world. As we come to His banquet table in Christ, His mercy, grace and forgiveness are made freely available to all. To sit at His banquet table and enjoy an intimate fellowship with the living God is divine soul food, like an injection of enriching nourishment for our spiritual life. The banquet is a promise of eternity with Him in heaven. He gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit who gives us peace to replace our anxiety, joy to replace our depression, power to overcome our sins, and overflowing favours for life and wisdom to make the right decisions.

Everything is now ready, all is being prepared, and man just needs to accept this invitation. The apostle Peter describes it in 2 Peter 1:3 as such: *"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue."* Long before human beings ever thought about God, He thought of us and made ample provision for our salvation. His abundant provision means that we are welcome to come to His table and eat until we are satisfied. The wedding hall is open, nothing is lacking at this banquet; it is a perfect banquet. He

has reserved a place at the banquet, paid for by the blood of His Son, Jesus, for those who believe.

After you have experienced His goodness, would you go and invite others who are yet to be saved and say, “Come, for all things are now ready?”



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, I come before You with a grateful heart, for You have prepared a big banquet and I am one of Your guests. I pray for many who are yet to be invited, that they will have the chance to celebrate their eternity with You. Let me be a faithful servant who goes and invites. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Pray for sufficient resources for churches or street ministry workers throughout Malaysia. Pray also that they would be able to deliver the message of the Gospel and the love of God beyond boundaries, and help needy communities effectively.
- Pray for competent leadership and clear minds in the cabinet as it formulates economic policies and development programs that take into account the welfare and interests of all segments of society.

DAY 2 | TUE, 8 AUG 2023

Lame Excuses For A Great Invitation

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' (Luke 14:18-20)

The three excuses given in the parable are about material possessions. The invitees are busy and they schedule their events, giving priority to those that they value.

The third invitee says, *"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."* Family relationships and responsibilities get in the way. The host expects his guests to come readily and joyfully to the banquet but they refuse to attend. They are occupied with their own affairs which they deem more urgent, relevant, and significant. By attending to these, they hope to have their deeper longings met. Little do they know that the Supper would satisfy every thirst and hunger of their soul. It is written in John 10:10 that He came to give life, life in abundance.

You may wonder, "How could anyone refuse such an invitation?" It isn't just any ordinary invitation! It is a personal invitation to the banquet of eternal life. Yet Jesus clearly warns that some would refuse His invitation to the Great Supper. Today when we share the Gospel with others, we also get all the lame excuses because of wrong priorities in their lives. Let not those lame excuses make us who are

sharing the Gospel feel like failures. Whenever the Gospel is shared and rejected, know that Jesus is the Only One they rejected, not us!

Jesus is issuing His invitation, “Come, for I have prepared *everything* for you to be saved from God’s judgment and to dine with Me for all eternity.” Let’s continue to press on and present the invitation of the Great Supper to those who cross our paths.

Will you present JESUS today to the lost world?



TODAY’S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, open the eyes of those who are blinded and lost to worldly desires and riches, so that they will have a glimpse of the heavenly light, and will be touched by the Gospel of grace and mercy. In Jesus’ name, Amen.
- Pray that more believing principals and teachers would enter the harvest fields on campuses to help pioneer Christian fellowships and create and nurture disciple-making programs among believers in schools, colleges, and universities.
- Pray that the Prime Minister of Malaysia would have the wisdom to strike a balanced and pragmatic foreign policy with all international trade parties, and to maintain stability in the midst of domestic political struggles, without compromising core freedoms such as the freedom of religion.

DAY 3 | WED, 9 AUG 2023

The Master Was Angry

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room. (Luke 14:21-22)

When the master hears of the rejection of the people, He is furious. We can't blame him for being angry when he hears of this rude affront and unanimous rejection from his guests. So he tells his servant to invite the disadvantaged. It is an act that says, "I'll show them!" The host will not have an empty house at his feast. He will have guests!

The new guest list will be full of the names of those who could never repay him by inviting him in return -- the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. The fundamental message could be stated this way: the tragedy of the Jewish rejection of Christ has opened the door of redemption to the Gentiles. The blessings of the kingdom are available to all who will come to Christ by faith.

This is a picture of God. It has been preached to us that God is a God of love, and He is. We were taught that God wants to bless us, and He does. We were taught that God desires only the best for us, and He does. However, do we know that God is also a God of wrath and judgment? Those who come to Him at His invitation will experience His love and grace. Those who do not accept His call will experience His wrath. Those

who reject the invitation to the Great Supper will be denied their entrance to the Kingdom of God. It will be the greatest tragedy when the master says, *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* (Matthew 7:23)



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, forgive those who ignore or reject Your invitation. Quicken their hearts so that their minds will not be dull and foolish. It is Your desire that none shall perish but that all would be saved, and we pray for the salvation of our loved ones who are yet to know Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Malaysian social workers, many of whom are volunteers, face huge challenges, mainly with overwhelming schedules and low pay. To enable the Church to play a major role in helping the needy at large, pray for more bible-based social work training programs to equip Christians with the necessary skills and knowledge. Pray also for fruitful and mutually beneficial collaboration between churches and the Malaysian Association of Social Workers.
- Pray that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong would exercise his constitutional powers wisely and fairly, courageously and without overreaching when the need arises, for example in the appointment of the Prime Minister as well as the dissolution of Parliament.

DAY 4 | THU, 10 AUG 2023

His House Must Be Full

Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:23)

The master wanted his house to be full. We are like his servants, whose duty is to keep inviting guests until our churches are full. This work of bringing people to the Lord will not end until the Lord's house is full. Now notice some things in the passage that help us as we tell others about Christ. Why does God want his house to be full? He doesn't want any seats to be empty at the banquet table. The master also told the servant to 'Go Out'. We need to go out to harvest souls for His kingdom.

Being soul conscious should provoke us to witness. Jesus is our example of this attitude. Luke 19:10, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Do you know that God holds us accountable if we fail to witness? Paul wrote in Acts 20:26-27, *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."* Paul draws upon this Old Testament passage to declare his accountability to preach the gospel. If God places a person in my path and I fail to share the gospel of Christ and warn him of his sin, then I have to give an account on the Day of Judgment! God wants His house to be full!

May He give us a holy passion to see people come to Christ. I believe God wants to bless churches that are not ashamed of the Gospel. I believe He will bless churches that strive to preach the truth and depend solely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to bring conversion so that His house will be full.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, give us a holy passion to see people come to Christ. Give us hearts that are not ashamed of the Gospel so that we would continue to proclaim to the world that You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Pray that missions will be the heartbeat of every church in Malaysia, contributing to local, national, and world outreach either directly or indirectly. Pray that churches would create a sense of awareness and ownership among their members to participate in individual or corporate capacities.
- Pray for appropriate checks and balances to be put in place and properly administered in relation to the exercise of police powers of investigation and prevention of crimes. Pray also that the police handle cross-border crimes professionally.

DAY 5 | FRI, 11 AUG 2023

Face Judgement of God

For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' (Luke 14:24)

What did Jesus say? To people who promise to come but fail to do so, whose eyes are fixed on this world and not heaven, who profess faith in Him but don't really possess it, He said, "None of these shall taste my supper."

Though, at first, Jesus spoke in the third person about an anonymous man who prepared a banquet, it turns out to be His own feast. Whoever ignores His invitation chooses their own end—they just miss it. So it will be with God's judgment on those who reject Christ: they will never taste the joys of heaven. There is no second chance. People may not get another chance to accept Christ before their death. Hebrews 9: 27-28 says it succinctly, *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."*

For those who have responded, that banquet will be magnificent. We're going to have a glorious time BUT what about those who haven't gotten the invitation yet? The majority of the world around us is lost. Some were invited but turned down the invitation, while others have yet to hear

about it. Let's go and tell them that they are invited. How much have we done and how much has yet to be done? God is still personally, passionately, and actively extending His invitation.

What about us?



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, we pray that we would not get weary in doing good, and would not give up or give in to share the Gospel of Christ, for You have entrusted such a mandate to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Pray that church-planting endeavors would be reignited and become the passion and vision of churches in Malaysia, especially among churches with big pools of resources, so that people in remote areas will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and be discipled in the way of the Lord.
- Pray for God's protection over coastal villages and other low-lying areas, that both people and possessions would be spared from severe disasters during the monsoon season from October to March. Pray also that good drainage systems would be built in rural areas to stop flooding.



DAY 6-10

Urgency of the Times

Matthew 22:1-14

- ¹ And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:
- ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,
- ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.
- ⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' '
- ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.
- ⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.
- ⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
- ⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.
- ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'
- ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.
- ¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.
- ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.
- ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
- ¹⁴ "For many are called, but few are chosen."

DAY 6 | SAT, 12 AUG 2023

Urgency of the Moment! A Wake-Up Call!

The Bible is overflowing with reminders of the importance of recognising the urgency of our times. Every believer should be infused with a sense of urgency, realising that every moment counts. Our time is precious, and wasting it is not only against scripture but is also unacceptable. While waiting for God is necessary, it's unacceptable for God (the King) to wait for us (the invited guests)! Does our lack of urgency, discernment, and procrastination challenge God's patience?

Ephesians 5:16 reminds us to make the most of our time, because the days are evil. Colossians 4:5 instructs us to walk wisely and make the most of our time when dealing with those outside of the faith.

Jesus, our model and pattern, accomplished much in just three and a half years. Yet, some of us have been Christians for years and have little to show for it. Jesus set the example of a life lived with urgency - through prayer, reaching the lost, healing, and challenging religious hypocrisy. He rebuked the Pharisees for their inability to understand the times (see Matt 16:3). The critical questions are: can you tell time and do you have any idea what time it is?

It starts with being conscious and aware in our hearts, minds, and spirits. As Romans 13:11-12 states, *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;...the day is at hand..."*



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, give us discernment to know the times and its urgency to do what needs to be done. Refresh our vision for Your Kingdom so that we would focus on pursuing the purpose that You have set forth for us. Amen.
- Pray that churches in the same localities would continue to work together for the overall welfare of their communities and that the light of Christ would shine forth in their parishes. Pray also that churches with a surplus would lend their support to churches or ministries that are experiencing struggles in either manpower, skills, or finance.
- Landslides are one of the most common natural disasters in Malaysia, posing a great threat to life and property. Pray that preventive and safety measures would be put in place in areas that are prone to landslides, and that people would take the necessary precautions when conducting activities in these places.

DAY 7 | SUN, 13 AUG 2023

Awaken, O Sleeper!

Have you ever found yourself caught up in the distractions of life, and the things that consume your time and energy are not aligned with Christ's calling? The King called those invited to attend his son's wedding dinner, but many turned him down because they were occupied with all sorts of activities (see Matthew 14:2-5). Many who have walked with God for years can become spiritually asleep at the wrong times.

Jonah slept at the wrong time (see Jonah 1:5). Samson slept with the wrong person and in the wrong place (see Judges 16), leading to his downfall. And the disciples slept during Jesus' most critical time, failing to watch and pray (see Matthew 26:36-46).

We need to ask ourselves if we are truly awake and alive in Christ or if we have allowed the distractions of life to consume us. We can get caught up in necessary things like work, family, education, leisure, and even ministry, which can inadvertently remove the urgency we need and dethrone Christ in our hearts.

When we prioritize the temporary over the eternal, we risk losing the urgency that God is calling us to share the gospel, to be salt and light, and to stand in the gap for a decaying society. We must keep our eyes fixed on Christ and His Word to avoid being distracted by the vanity of this world. His Word is powerful, bringing revival to our hearts and igniting an urgency for the times we live in.

What distractions hinder you from focusing on the eternal things of God and sharing the gospel with others? Take time today to deal with them.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, wake us in Your Spirit if we have fallen asleep at this moment when we are supposed to stay alert to be ready to serve Your purposes. Keep us away from worthless distractions and let our minds and spirits be filled by Your awesomeness. Amen.
- Pray that God would anoint those who minister among widows, and that the widows would experience God's gentle touch with emotional and physical healing. Pray that they will be able to break free from their financial shortages, and find means to support themselves and their families.
- The poverty rate in Malaysia has improved from 7.6% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2019 (as per the revised Poverty Line Income in 2019) with a hardcore poverty rate of 0.4%. Sabah remains the poorest state with 25.3% of the population living under the Poverty Line, followed by Kelantan (21.2%) & Sarawak (12.9%) in the 2020 statistics. Pray for political will for the federal and state governments to implement appropriate advancement and development policies and work closely with the private sector to identify the underlying factors in order to reduce poverty in the country.

Hear the Voice of the Spirit

Asbury revival: No big screens, no smoke machines, no fancy worship band, or big-name speakers! We have far too long allowed the culture of our time to dictate how we reach society. And all at the expense of ignoring the core issues of having an urgency of our times - authentic repentance.

Revival starts with us individually accepting responsibility for having a right relationship with Christ. We must:

1. Recognize our need for personal revival.
2. Repent of our sins and sinful habits- no secret idols in our hearts.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill us for revival and to be totally reliant on Him.
4. Completely surrender our will to God.

In 1 Kings 18:41, Elijah heard the sound of abundant rain, while others may have heard only the sound of dry famine wind. Perhaps we have a famine of hearing the voice of the Spirit and of obeying His word, resulting in a famine of miracles, genuine conversions, and persistent and persevering revival prayer.

We need to hear what the Spirit is saying and press into prayer, persistently. Persevering prayer breaks spiritual famine and comes from hearts yielded to God in faith and obedience.

Like Elijah, let us not give up but listen for the sound of abundant rain, and continue to pray until we see an answer from God. Do not give up but continue to listen to the Spirit's voice and press into prayer for a genuine revival.

Can you hear it?!



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, keep our ears of carnality from hearing endless demands and needs in life. Open our spiritual ears so that we hear in our spirits Your gentle calling and Your heart. Let us hear and put hope in You and expect Your wonderful deeds to be revealed. Amen.
- Pray that God would provide sufficient manpower, skills, and finance for Christian organizations and churches in their disaster relief work, and that there would be more collaboration to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the rebuilding of lives and homes.
- Pray against the systemic corruption that has long existed in both the public and private sectors. Pray for wisdom and courage for the public sector that they would not give in to corruption, and integrity for members of the public sector that they would not feel the need to solicit bribes or otherwise give any unfair advantage.

DAY 9 | TUE, 15 AUG 2023

Go to the Highways and Byways

The call to “GO to the Highways and Byways” is a reminder of the power of the gospel to transform lives and bring healing to a broken world. The gospel has the power to change hearts, heal the sick, restore broken lives, and give purpose to individuals. However, despite this incredible potential, many of us lack the conviction, courage, consistency, and boldness to share the gospel with others.

When we proclaim Christ’s invitation, we bring hope and healing to a world that is searching for answers. The problems and issues facing our society will not go away on their own. It is up to us to show others what it means to live a life of true freedom, purpose, and faith. We must share the gospel with our words and live it out in our daily lives.

The parable is a powerful reminder of God’s love and grace being offered to all people, regardless of who they are. It is not just about the end times or judgment, but a call to experience the love and joy of His presence and to enter into a deep and intimate relationship with Him.

Let us not be hesitant to share the gospel with others, embracing its power to transform lives and to bring healing to a broken world. Let us go to the highways and byways and share the good news of Christ’s invitation with boldness and conviction. It is our privilege and responsibility to share it with others.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Jesus, help us to identify our highways and byways so that we would not miss out on opportunities to share about Christ with others. It is indeed a great joy to see many come to You and receive their salvation. Amen.
- Pray that God would inspire churches, cell groups, and individuals to present the message of the Gospel in such a way that it would sound relevant and urgent to their families, neighbors, communities, colleagues, acquaintances, and others around them.
- The cost of living for the general public has skyrocketed after the pandemic and many households are finding it hard to make ends meet as a result. Pray that the government will be able to rectify this issue and reduce the burden on ordinary households, through wise economic policies, balancing the needs of both industry and workers.

Being and Doing with a Sense of Urgency

The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14 serves as a powerful allegory of God's unconditional love and acceptance, while also calling us to enter into a transformative relationship with God. However, it also serves as a warning against complacency and spiritual apathy. It reminds us of the importance of ongoing spiritual growth and transformation, and to remain vigilant in our pursuit of God.

To do this, we must prioritize God's kingdom and live a righteous life. We must share the gospel through personal relationships, evangelism, acts of kindness, and compassion to those around us. Moreover, we must make the most of our talents and resources for God's kingdom, being good stewards of what God has given us, including our time, money, and abilities.

We are also called to be prepared and watchful for the Second Coming of Jesus. This involves living a holy and virtuous life, staying informed about current events in light of biblical prophecy, and being on guard against temptation, distractions, and sin. Furthermore, we are called to live with a sense of urgency, recognizing the fleeting nature of life and the importance of being ready for eternity.

Therefore, we must prioritize what is truly important, seeking to make the most of every opportunity, and preparing for the day when we will stand before God to give an account of our lives. Ultimately, we embrace God's love and grace while striving to live a life that honours Him.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:


- Lord Jesus, teach us how to prioritize our days and resources. Show us individually what are the important tasks in our lifetime so that we could devote our effort to these. Amen.
- Pray that God would gift His Father's heart and the necessary knowledge and techniques to enable orphan' ministry workers to shelter, nurture, and raise the children biblically with faith, hope, love, and compassion.
- Pray that the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development will enhance the welfare of rural communities and build or improve the basic infrastructure of these areas. Pray also that villagers would be equipped with more skills and knowledge in order to have better earning power and job opportunities.



DAY 11-15

Understanding The Times

Romans 13:11(NIV)



And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

DAY 11 | THU, 17 AUGUST 2023

Understanding the Present Times

“And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” (Romans 13:11 NIV)

I grew up in a rural area in Sarawak where we lived in a loving community surrounded by the natural environment. Back then, life was tough and most people did not have alarm clocks. In fact, we depended on the rooster to wake us. When he crowed at 5am, it was time for me to wake up and get ready to go to school. I needed to be alert and wide awake or I would be late for school. The same goes for our spiritual lives. We need to be sensitive and hear the alarm clock (that is, the Word and the Spirit of God) , and wake up and get ready for action.

For the next five days, we will focus our devotion on understanding the times. In Rom 13:11, Apostle Paul exhorted believers to understand the present time and the urgency of spreading the Gospel. We need to understand what is going on in the world today from biblical perspectives and God’s calendar (Read about the signs of the end of the age in Matt 24). As the Lord opens our spiritual eyes to understand the present time, we need to be *alert* and *wake up* from our spiritual slumber. We need to wake up from our spiritual slumber and realign our lives, families, and churches to God’s mission and eternal purposes. Let us be like the five wise virgins who kept watch and were ready to welcome the bridegroom at any time (see Matt 25: 1-13).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Almighty God, open my spiritual eyes to understand the present time from Your eternal perspective. Help me to respond in faith and be obedient to Your revelation in the Bible. Help me to be alert and wake up from spiritual slumber. In Jesus' name. Amen!
- Pray that God would grant insights to workers in senior ministries in designing daily programs that help improve the lives of the elderly holistically, including their spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, environmental, and relational health. Pray that these ministries will successfully reach out to nearby communities.
- The high migration rate from rural to urban areas (around 75%) and the influx of foreign workers have created the problem of urban poverty (45% higher than rural poverty in 2021). This has been made worse as the cost of living rises. Pray that there would be a human voice among the authorities to advocate proper aid.

DAY 12 | FRI, 18 AUGUST 2023

Understand Our New Identity in Christ

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:12–14 NIV)

I once heard a story about a young man who went to work in a timber company. Before departing to his workplace, he asked the pastor to pray for him so that he would stand firm in his faith. A few months later, the young man came to church and the pastor asked how he was doing. The young man said, "Praise the Lord, Pastor, nobody knows I am a believer because I follow what the others around me do. I also get drunk and smoke!" The pastor felt sad and knew that he had a lot of work to disciple the young man.

After having understood the times, how should we live our lives? In Romans 13:12–14, Paul urged believers to put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (see Rom 13:13). We need to be awake and alert, behaving as those who have seen the light of the Gospel (see 2 Cor 4). We must understand the times and walk in the light as God's people.

The first step toward restoration, renewal, and revival begins within ourselves. We must personally feel the gravity of the sins we have committed and get right with God. We should no longer think about how to gratify the desires of our sinful nature but rather clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom 13:14). When pre-believers see our good deeds, they will praise our Father in heaven (see Mat 5:16). Our transformed lives will be a powerful testimony for them.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Loving Father, I ask forgiveness for the sins I have committed against You. I can't change with my own strength, but You can help me to overcome my weaknesses. Open my spiritual eyes to understand my new identity in Christ and help me to follow You wholeheartedly. In Jesus' name. Amen!
- Pray that every church in Malaysia would make Christian education a priority as they assume the role of making disciples of all nations. Pray that their educational content would make Christ their centre, the Bible their base, and discipling their members the first priority.
- Foreign workers constitute about 15% of our labour force. The December 2020 statistics show that more than 91% or 1.4 million of their accommodation do not comply with the provisions in the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990. Pray that the government will work to ensure the humane treatment of foreign workers, and that industries will provide proper housing.

DAY 13 | SAT, 19 AUGUST 2023

Capturing God's Heartbeat

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."
(Luke 19:10 NIV)*

When we understand the times, we will capture God's heartbeat for the world. Can we hear God's heartbeat? The greatest tragedy in our churches today is that we come so close to the heart of God in worship and yet fail to hear His heartbeat. What is God's heartbeat? The heartbeat of God is in Luke 19:10 which says, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

What is the one thing that does not happen in heaven? The answer is : *evangelism*. Our 21st-century churches spend millions of dollars on music, ambience and other temporal things and, sadly, matters that determine eternity are given much less prominence. The reality is that 2.2 billion people have *never heard* the Gospel of Jesus, and 41,000 people die every day without having heard the Good News. This is Gospel poverty - they are being deprived of the Gospel.

Luke 15:7 (NIV84) I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The whole of heaven rejoices when one sinner turns from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light. Let's pray that churches in Malaysia will capture the heartbeat of our Heavenly Father for lost souls. We are called to be witnesses for His name (see Acts 1:8).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Merciful Father, thank you for the gift of eternal life that we have through Your Son Jesus Christ. Help us to capture God's heartbeat and to look beyond the four walls of the church. Lord, ignite the fire of evangelism in us. In the Mighty name of Jesus. Amen!
- Pray that the spirit and the driving force behind mission schools would continue to make an impact on the existing 462 schools, 227 of which are in Peninsular Malaysia and 235 in Sabah & Sarawak. While most of them are partially funded by the government, pray that they will have enough funds to continue to contribute to nation-building through education.
- Pray for God's mercy, grace and deliverance for the 182,780 refugees registered with UNHCR Malaysia in 2022. 85% of these refugees are from Myanmar, approximately 50% of whom are undocumented. The vast majority, or 92% did not receive aid in any form during the pandemic. Furthermore, they live in constant fear of arrest, detention, extortion, and corporal punishment, and face restricted access to healthcare, education, and employment.

DAY 14 | SUN, 20 AUGUST 2023

Use Every Opportunity to Sow the Seed

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. (1 Corinthians 3:6–8NIV)

When we understand the times, we use every opportunity to sow the seed of the Gospel. What is the most effective form of evangelism? It is personal evangelism. Seventy-eight percent of people come to know Christ through *personal evangelism* by a friend or relative. We are the best person positioned by God to influence others for Christ because we know their culture, worldview, lifestyle, and struggles.

In 1 Cor 3:6–8, Paul uses the illustration of sowing the seed and watering the plants in growing God’s kingdom. Paul says in 1 Cor 3:6–7, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”* While people who plant and water play different roles, ultimately it is God who makes things grow. Let us be more intentional in sowing and watering the Gospel starting from where we are – in school, at home, or at the work place.

Never underestimate the value of one person brought to Christ. On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball led one of his Sunday School boys to faith in Christ. Little did he realize that Dwight L. Moody would one day become the world's leading evangelist. Our task is to lead men and women to Christ; God's task is to use them for His glory, and every person is important to God.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father in heaven, give us a heart of love and compassion for the lost souls around us. Help us to be intentional in reaching out to the people around us, starting from where we are. Let us be the hands and feet of Jesus to carry His love at every opportunity. We thank you for the privilege of partnering together with You in growing Your kingdom. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen!
- Pray for the bible seminaries in Malaysia, that they will have sufficient faculty members, with a balanced mixture of experienced and biblical local and foreign lecturers. Pray also that they will be able to implement advanced technology and training programs to facilitate the growth of theological studies, as well as produce contemporary and visionary church leaders and pastors with a kingdom mindset and perspective.
- The budget allocated for the Ministry of Health ranks second in the National Budget 2022. Healthcare expenditure is expected to double by 2028. Pray that the Ministry would create more health awareness programmes and promote healthy lifestyles among citizens. Pray also that the Ministry would find solutions to make high-end medical equipment accessible to those who need them, and that a sufficient and highly-trained medical workforce would be engaged to serve the population.

Lord, Send Out More Harvesters

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Luke 10:2 NIV)

When we understand the times, we will see the urgency in sharing the Gospel. In most churches, less than 5% of members share the Gospel with their family, neighbours, and friends. Jesus says in Luke 10:2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field". The problem is not the harvest but the lack of harvesters.

The Lord gives a solution for the lack of harvesters in the second part of the verse that says, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into His harvest field.

The Great Commission is not just for pastors, full-time workers, or evangelists. It is for everyone who calls themselves Christians - that includes you and me. The greatest disappointment for a fireman is failing to rescue a man from the flames of fire when it was in his power to do so. Likewise, the greatest catastrophe for any Christian is the failure to warn those who are heading toward the eternal flames, when it is in his power to do so. Pray that we will respond like Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:8 "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!".



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, we want to thank you that You are Lord of the harvest. We pray that You will stir the hearts of believers in this beloved nation so that we will become harvesters in God's Kingdom. Give us a heart of compassion and courage, and the anointing to share the Gospel with others. In Jesus' name. Amen!
- Pray that churches with media teams would expand and maximise their roles beyond their local church to communicate the Gospel and Biblical truths in a broader spectrum. Pray that more churches would be equipped with media presentation skills to connect with the young or unbelieving world.
- Malaysia faces both the issues of underdeveloped rural areas and overdeveloped urban areas. Pray that the authorities would have the wisdom to strike a balance between the two extremes so that development would be sustainable not only to meet current needs but also to preserve a good environment and resource pool for future generations.



DAY 16-20

Redeeming the Times

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NIV)

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is.

DAY 16 | TUE, 22 AUGUST 2023

Be Careful How You Live

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord’s will is. (Ephesians 5:15–17NIV)

The above verses read, “Be very careful how you live” and it serves as a warning to us because life is full of temptations and challenges. Paul gave this warning so that we would live carefully by paying attention to every step we take and every decision we make.

Life is like a journey. Every step will determine our direction and ultimately our future. That’s why Paul gave a stern warning to cautiously examine every step in life. We ought to pray and consider the good and bad of things before making any decisions. We should avoid making any decisions on matters that lack true purpose and clarity as well as things that cause us to doubt. There’s a great need to consider the consequences in terms of choosing our friends, life partners, and careers. At the same time, we also need to be careful about what we see, watch, read, and hear through social media and other forms of entertainment such as television, films, dramas, and music.

Let us take Paul's warning seriously and live with great care because even a single wrong step can lead to grave consequences. It affects not only our own lives but the lives of others as well because our lives in Christ is a living Gospel that tells others about the truth of God. Our lives will open doors for us to witness Christ.

How is your life today? Let us be careful how we live so that our lives match the calling of God. (see Ephesians 4: 1).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- O God, give us the strength to be careful how we live, and to live a life that is worthy of Your calling. Forgive us because we always fall short and have been reckless in our decision-making. We ask for the Holy Spirit to help us in our weaknesses and recklessness as we continue to live our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Pray that every local church would have a strong leadership team that is visionary, devoted, united, and blessed with a good combination of gifts and abilities to complement one another so that their members would be built biblically and equipped for good works.
- Pray that the relevant authorities would find ways and means to increase the food self-sufficiency rate (by factoring in issues like climate change), reduce the need for imported food, and solve the problem of labour shortages in the farming industry. Pray that, as a result, the prices of basic food would be well regulated and monitored, and that food security and the supply chain would be secured in the long run.

DAY 17 | WED, 23 AUGUST 2023

Live with Wisdom

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,” (Ephesians 5:15 NIV)

God desires us to live a life of wisdom. He provides us with seven of “His spirits” (see Isaiah 11: 2) and one of them is the “spirit of wisdom.” (see Ephesians 1: 17). Based on this truth, it’s clear that our Father in heaven desires His children to live with wisdom.

The Hebrew word for wisdom is *chochmah*, which means intelligent, wise, highly skilled in the arts, as well as possessing high morals and skills to live a righteous and godly life. The pursuit to live a truthful, righteous, and spiritual life — a God-honouring life.

According to the Bible, wisdom is true obedience to all the commands that are written in the Bible. In other words, wisdom is the combination of God’s Word with our actions. This aligns with what Jesus said, *“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.”* (see Matthew 7: 24-25)

The Psalmist David had this to say on the source of wisdom, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.”* (see Psalm 111:10 NIV)

Therefore, let us search for wisdom and understanding for wisdom is the key to success and holiness. (see Proverbs 4: 5)



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- O God, give me a heart that fears the Lord so that I can have a heart filled with wisdom. Enable me to be a doer of Your Word and not just someone who merely listens but does not obey Your commands, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Pray that churches would work towards strengthening inter-generational relationships to remove the generation gap and enhance closer interactions among their members, especially in churches where children, youth, and adults attend different services and have separate activities.
- Pray that the public education system will be in step with the times and needs of the age, and that the syllabi would be inclusive, relevant, and updated. Pray for equality among the people in the access to public education. Pray that those who serve in education would perform to their utmost excellence, and that their efforts would be highly appreciated by both schools, students, and parents.

DAY 18 | THU, 24 AUGUST 2023

Making The Most of Every Opportunity

Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16 NIV)

Time management may be one of the greatest challenges that we face. There are many things that need to be done within a limited time. Among them are essential and non-negotiable things such as sleeping, eating, working, and spending time with our family. Apart from that, many important things also require time and concentration such as exercising, resting, praying and others. Poor time management could lead to devastating consequences.

Here, Paul pointed out the reason why time management is so vital to us now that we are living in this evil age. Why is time so important? Time possesses three important elements which are life, opportunity and space.

Time is life. Every second of time represents a human's heartbeat. Every living creature has a specific life span that is determined by time. How we live our lives determines the consequences as we live out the earthly lifespan God has granted us.

Time is opportunity. Everyone is given 24 hours a day or 8,760 hours a year. Every hour is an opportunity to determine if we're going to have a good or bad future, whether we succeed or fail, whether we will be sad or happy.

Time is space. Time provides a space for us to get ready, take a deep breath, think and consider something before making the final decision. This space is important in our lives to reflect and look at a particular situation.

Hence, if we fail to make the most of our time which is the life, the opportunity and the space given by God, we would not survive in these days of evil.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Oh God, grant us understanding and wisdom in managing our time. So often have we ignored good opportunities, not made good use of the space of time, and wasted our time on worldly things. Help us, oh Lord, to make full use of every opportunity and space that is given now for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Pray that churches with food bank ministries for the poor and needy would receive good supplies to meet the needs of those they serve. Pray that God would open doors for them to minister to the recipients individually.
- The 2020 Population & Housing Census shows that 63.5% of the population practices Islam, 18.7% Buddhism, 9.1% Christianity, 6.1% Hinduism, and 2.7% other religions. Pray that religious freedom would be upheld and respected by all stakeholders and authorities and that there would be greater harmony and understanding between different religious groups.

DAY 19 | FRI, 25 AUGUST 2023

Redemption of Time

Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16 NIV)

The phrase “Making the most” here also means to redeem or to reclaim. It’s usually used in the context of business when you buy something back and retrieve what was lost. This term can be used when you are describing the redemption of a time that has passed. Even though you cannot go back to the past, you can use this opportunity and space that is present now to do what could not be done in the past. For example, not giving tithes, doing good to others, or telling others about Christ.

In this matter, God gives us the opportunity to redeem something that has failed or was lost and allows us to redeem it with this current opportunity. “The days of evil” here means we have the opportunity to use our lives, opportunities and space to do the will of God and enter into His will while we’re on earth.

That’s why our time on earth is a battle to fight against all kinds of evil. That’s also the reason why Christ came “to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” (Galatians 1: 4) With this understanding, the redemptive work of Christ links closely to the action of redeeming the time we have wasted and used for evil. The “redemption of time” can take place because the redemptive work of Christ has been completed. That’s why we can now choose to make good use of every given opportunity to fulfil God’s desires and will.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Oh God, I know that we can't go back to the past. I have missed out on many opportunities to change and to do good. Praise God for today's reminder that God is always giving us the opportunity to redeem the time that was lost. I pray that I will not waste the time that I have and will use it to do the will of God in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Pray that the concept of discipleship will be implanted in the minds and lives of young children even as they attend Sunday school. Pray that the children will cultivate a heart for the lost and needy, and that they will grow up with a burden for the nation and its people.
- Pray that all ethnic groups in Malaysia would relate with one another with love, peace, and harmony, and that none would stir up issues that might cause racial sensitivity. Pray that political parties would not use racial issues to create unnecessary tension among the people.

Live According To God's Will

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Ephesians 5:17NIV)

The most important thing in life is to understand the Lord's will. To understand the purpose of our life on Earth and the truth of eternal life. On the other hand, when we live outside the will of the Lord, it's a sign of foolishness and a waste of life.

The question that arises now is this: how can I understand the Lord's will?

Understanding and identifying the will of God in this evil age is extremely difficult. The main mission of the devil is to cause us to go astray while he hides the purpose and plan of God from us.

God said to Adam and Eve, *"but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."* (Genesis 2: 17)

Let's see what the devil said to Eve, *"You will not certainly die."* (see Genesis 3:4) God said, *"You will certainly die."* But Satan said, *"You will not die."*


God's will for them was not to eat the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, but Satan the evil one asked them to eat it to gain God's wisdom.

The question is: how can I know the will of God? The answer is already given in the Bible which is our life manual. In it, we can find everything that is needed to live in God's will.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Father, give us the strength to catch and understand Your will in our daily lives. Give us the sensitivity to hear Your voice through the Bible and the Holy Spirit so that we do not turn our ears to other voices. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Pray that there would be greater synergistic efforts among youth ministry workers in churches or Christian organizations so that concrete strategies can be gleaned to groom youth leaders more effectively and with greater impact. Pray that youths will possess a burden to share their testimonies with friends.
- Both the pandemic and endemic periods have taught us many precious lessons as individuals, families, communities, and a nation. Pray that we would continue to uphold, and not neglect, what we have learned, such as proper self-care, health consciousness, and family values even as we come out from the difficult situations.



DAY 21-25

Church, Awake

Ephesians 5:14



Therefore He says:

"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

DAY 21 | SUN, 27 AUGUST 2023

Awake from Sleep Mode

Awake, you who sleep, (Ephesians 5:14a)

Computers have a function called sleep mode whereby, after a certain period of inactivity, power is cut off from the part of the system not in use. At the same time, minimum power is supplied to the areas needed for it to maintain data. Though, on the exterior the computer looks like it has been switched off, it actually is not because its internal system is still running. By touching a key or clicking the mouse, the computer is awakened.

Similarly, many Christians are functioning in sleep mode. Although they professed the Lordship of Christ, they are not active in His purpose. They may come alive only in church events but will switch off after the events are over. These believers need constant touch or else they will go into the sleep mode.

Paul sternly warned the church at Ephesus, *“awake, you who sleep.”* Apparently, the church went to sleep after the initial success of Paul’s ministry in the city.

What caused the church to lose the fire and enter into sleep mode? In verse 8, Paul applauded the believers for coming out of darkness and moving into the light. However, they failed to maintain the momentum to walk in the light and so slid back into darkness.

Compromising with the world causes believers to let their guard down and let darkness sneak in. Because of this, believers must be vigilant against a compromising spirit by adopting an uncompromising prayer life. Jesus said *“Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”* A strong prayer life sustains awakening and prevents the sleep mode from being triggered.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, I confess my sin of compromising with the world. I submit to Your Word to not love the world or anything in the world. If I love the world, then the love of the Father is not in me. I desire to be awake to Your love, alive to Your purpose, and active for Your use. Help me build a strong prayer life to sustain my personal awakening and not fall into sleep mode again. Amen.
- Pray that couples, parents, and children would be greatly blessed under family programmes and ministries in their respective churches or para-churches. Pray also that the families of these ministry leaders would be built solidly upon godly principles and stand out as role models.
- Pray that the Judicial system and all Courts from the Federal Court down to the Subordinate Courts would function in a fair and just manner in handling criminal and civil trials. Pray that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Prime Minister, and the Conference of Rulers would have wisdom in the appointment of the Chief Justice as well as judges at all levels. Pray for greater transparency in the process of selection of such judges.

DAY 22 | MON, 28 AUGUST 2023

Arise from Dead Works

Arise, from the dead. (Ephesians 5:14b)

Paul knew all about dead works because, prior to his conversion, he was in the thick of it. He said to the church at Philippi that if anyone had any reason to hope that he could save himself, it would be him. If others think they could be saved by what they are, certainly he could because he was circumcised on the eighth day after birth. He was born into the pure-blooded Jewish tribe of Benjamin. He was a member of the Pharisees who demanded the strictest obedience to every Jewish law and custom. So sincere was he that he persecuted the Church thinking he was pleasing God. Paul could not have been more wrong.

Any works that people do to find acceptance by God and go to heaven are dead works. It does not matter how good their works are, they will not be good enough to be accepted by God because they are the works of our hands – the works of self. They are dead works.

Often, dead works appear good from the outside but they are not – due to corrupted hearts. For example, Ananias and Sapphira wanted a reputation as a generous couple but did not want to make the necessary sacrifice. They thought they could get away with their lies, but God did not think it was a trivial matter. Thus, theirs was a dead-end.

Believers should repent from dead works and let the blood of Christ cleanse their conscience to serve God in purity. The outcome would be good works that bear fruit.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, I confess my sin of dead works. I have served with ulterior motives, for vain glory, for the praise of men, and for selfish gain. I have also placed my trust in my works instead of resting in Your grace. I acknowledge that my salvation is the gift of God, not of works. I am Your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Amen.
- Pray that God would use the various healing and deliverance ministries to help many who are spiritually oppressed. Pray that discipleship processes would be available subsequently to help groom these seekers of God to grow holistically as believers in Christ.
- Scams (in forms such as emails, calls, online business platforms, banking, and investment schemes) have become prevalent and have caused great harm to the general public. It is subtler and harder to prevent than traditional crimes like robbery and theft. Pray that people would be aware of these deceitful tricks and schemes, and that the authorities would find means to curb such activities.

DAY 23 | TUE, 29 AUGUST 2023

Advance with the Light

Christ will give you light. (Ephesians 5:14c)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the disciples “You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (see Matthew 5:14,16)

Light is an important symbol of Jewish culture. It is depicted by the Menorah, a sacred candelabrum with seven branches used in the temple in Jerusalem. It is an oil lamp that was supposed to burn continually to give light to the place day and night. It was meant to be an everlasting light.

The Jews understood that they were chosen to be the light unto the nations. The mandate was declared by Isaiah, “*I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles.*” (Isaiah 42:6)

Although Israel had the calling of God and the symbol to remind them of their sacred duty to guide the world from darkness into the light, they failed. Hence, the mandate was transferred to the Church.

If the Church wants to fulfill the mandate, it must walk in the Light. In fact, the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, is the light of the world (see John 8:12). Apart from Him there is no one else. Whoever walks with Him does not walk in darkness but will have the light of life to shine. May the Church fulfill its calling by advancing with Light and shining brightly in the world to finish the Great Commission.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, I confess I am the light of the world. I have the light of life in me to shine brightly before the world to bring glory to Your Name. Help me to be like the Menorah, continually burning day and night as the everlasting light for Your glory. Help me to finish my part in the Great Commission. Amen.
- Pray that all prayer movements or ministries in Malaysia would perceive and receive one another as complementary partners in Christ, and serve to bring forth the glory of God with love and compassion for the nation.
- Malaysia has become a source, transit point, and destination for human trafficking in the forms of forced prostitution or labour. A syndicate in Cambodia is under suspicion for about 150 missing Malaysians, causing untold pain and loss to the victims and their families. Pray that young people would be vigilant while searching for job opportunities, and that they would not be lured by promises of unrealistic incomes.

DAY 24 | WED, 30 AUGUST 2023

Aware of the Hour

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16)

The Bible on numerous occasions mentioned the importance of time. Paul told the church at Ephesus to walk carefully, not as fools but as the wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. What was his reason?

The Gospel was spreading rapidly in Ephesus and the church was gaining many new believers. However, beneath the surface, trouble was brewing against the church by the worshippers of the Greek goddess known as Diana the Great. The goddess was popular, and people from around the world came to visit her temple which was central to the economy of the city.

In the early days of Paul's ministry, he was able to deal with idolatry in Ephesus. However, over time the church lost its fervency and so Paul wrote to warn the believers to make good use of the time because evil forces dominating the city were making a comeback. It was vital for the church to be aware of this danger of the hour.

Sadly, the church did not heed Paul's warning. They also did not heed the warning by the angel of God to repent from forsaking their first love (see Revelation 2:4). In the end, they lost not just their prominence, but also their Christian testimony which could otherwise have influenced others for Christ.

The Church in the present time faces a similar attack from evil forces bent on destroying. The ungodly culture of the world is infiltrating the Church at an alarming pace. We must not repeat the failure of the church at Ephesus. We must be aware of the hour we are in. We must use the time we have to advance the kingdom of God and stop evil forces from infiltrating churches and dominating cities.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, I confess I have used my time foolishly. I have also forsaken my first love. I repent and ask You to help me overcome the temptations the evil culture of the world presents to me as well as the attacks of the evil forces. I want to redeem myself by wisely using the time I have to win souls. Amen.
- Pray that counseling courses and ministries offered in churches or Christian organizations would be strongly Bible-based and Christ-centric so that the restorative process would ultimately lead people to God and to their identity in Christ.
- Pray that green product development and industry in Malaysia would continue to grow and expand in order to minimise waste and pollution. Pray that the education sector and social media would help create environmental consciousness to cultivate generations with environmentally responsible behavior.

Abound in the Holy Spirit

Instead be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18b)

Spiritual thirst - the deep longing for something to satisfy inner cravings - is a prevailing factor in humans. St. Augustine once prayed, "Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee." Until we drink from the Living Fountain, no matter what we drink or how much we drink, we will never be satisfied.

Paul told the church in Ephesus "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18). Apparently, wine caused the believers to over-indulge, leading to wasted and unproductive lives. Whether it be wine or any type of alcohol or for that matter anything that has the power to control and harm believers, these are stumbling blocks the church must deal with.

Paul's prescription for such excesses is the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Since God gives the Spirit without limit (see John 3:34), the church must abound more and more in the Holy Spirit and walk closely with Him. The Spirit of God must be central in the church.

During the Welsh Revival in the early 1900s, it was reported that taverns closed and alcoholism dropped drastically. Instead, people lined up to enter church buildings to have a taste of a different type of spirit - the Holy Spirit. Powerful happenings erupted in the revival meetings that would often go on until the early hours of the morning.

God wants to do this again – to pour out His Spirit upon all people. There is nothing more satisfying to souls than to drink from the Living Fountain. Out of their hearts, Jesus said, will flow rivers of living water (see John 7:38).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Heavenly Father, I confess my spiritual dryness. Thank you for the Holy Spirit and help me keep in step with Him. Help me to pray in the Spirit always. I also pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all people. May the church abound more and more in the Spirit. Amen.
- Pray that women ministries in churches and para-churches would be biblical, contemporary, and relevant to the needs of women with different backgrounds. Pray also that the ministries would equip women believers to make a lasting impact in their marketplaces and communities.
- Pray that the Government comprising of various political blocs will have a growing consensus in their vision, purpose, and goal of making Malaysia great as they partner in providing leadership for the nation.

The page features a decorative background on the left side with several dried, pressed leaves in shades of green and brown. A thin, light purple flourish is positioned below the title and above the scripture text.

DAY 26-30

The Harvest Field

Matthew 9:35-38

- ³⁵ *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*
- ³⁶ *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*
- ³⁷ *Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*
- ³⁸ *Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

The Mandate of Evangelism

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. (Matthew 9:35)

Jesus himself set a crucial and wonderful example for us in the evangelistic works of the Kingdom. He traveled to various towns and villages to do the will of the Heavenly Father. He was greatly aware of the purpose of His calling.

Likewise we, as disciples today, should know our own calling and mission. We should be willing to travel the extra mile to proclaim the Gospel at all costs for His sake. The mandate to proclaim the Gospel should be the obligation and responsibility of every believer in Christ for this is our very privilege and duty.

The Church's existence, as a whole, has value and meaning only in the Gospel of Christ. Indeed, it exists to carry out the proclamation, sharing, and practising of the Gospel, an indispensable task that should be prioritized in the ministries of every church and upheld as a necessary and urgent task.

The Gospel is all about teaching and preaching the Good News and meeting the needs of society and its communities, including healing of all kinds of diseases. The Gospel is the Good News given by God to mankind. Indeed, it is the power of God to save all who believe. (see Romans 1:16)



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Pray that we will fully understand that the Gospel is indeed God's power. Pray also that we will appreciate, undertake and implement the mandate of evangelism by sharing it wherever we go, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Almighty Healer for the world, as only the Gospel of the Kingdom could enable believers to receive their eternal hope.
- Pray that men ministries would meet the needs of men, and groom them to function well in their God-given roles as individuals and caretakers of creation and leaders in their families.
- Pray for a strong sense of national identity among all Malaysians so that the people would see one another as a cohesive whole regardless of an individual's unique tradition, culture, language, and religion.

DAY 27 | SAT, 2 SEPT 2023

The Vision of Evangelism

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

Our insights for the future, the burdens laid on our spirits, and the tasks entrusted to us by the Lord are considered visions. Visions move us forward and this includes the vision to preach the Gospel earnestly, for the Gospel gives us inner hope and empowers those who evangelize.

Such is the wonderful promise of God. By believing in Jesus, we have eternal life. It means that when we believe in the Gospel and call on the name of the Lord, we are saved and receive eternal life! When we fully capture the vision and value of evangelism, we would then appreciate the preciousness and salvation of souls. Peter once said, *"...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*

What do you see in the world today, brothers and sisters? Do you see spiritual things or secular materials? Do you seek eternal contentment or temporal enjoyment? Are people entering heaven or going to hell? We are seeing the continuing decline of humanity as we indulge in sin. We are desperate and helpless. Thank God that the power of the Gospel is available right now to offer faith and hope to the world! So, every one of us needs the Gospel. The Bible specifically reveals the promise that God *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Tim 2:4)



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Pray that God would open our eyes to see the needs of people, for they are like lost sheep who need the Shepherd. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and touch us, and give us hearts of compassion, so that we would start searching and caring for the weak, the lost, and those who have yet to hear the Gospel, and lead them to the Lord to receive His mercy and guidance.
- Pray that special children ministries would have sufficient resources to cater to the needs of special children. Pray for more volunteers to be equipped and trained to provide assistance to special children in their churches.
- The abolition of vernacular schools has been a hotly debated topic for years, and has been exploited by politicians for their political gains. Pray against such selfish agendas and that the authorities would recognise the important role of vernacular schools as a platform to provide a well-rounded education to persons from all backgrounds.

DAY 28 | SUN, 3 SEPT 2023

Workers of the Gospel

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37)

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. (2 Timothy 4:2)

There are many places to spread the Gospel but not enough harvesters. Churches everywhere need workers. Why is there such a shortage of workers? Could it be because churches do not train workers, or because the harvest fields are too large for us to cater to their needs? Our plans always seem to lag behind as the world changes. It is time for churches, bible seminaries, and para-churches to work in synergy to solve this problem in God's Kingdom.

In addition to having sufficient manpower, there is also an immediate need to equip them well. Instead of serving independently, individuals with the necessary academic qualifications and skills who are currently serving in the fields must train a new generation of evangelistic workers. It is necessary to devise a long-term plan for training and equipping manpower in the harvest field.

The proclamation of the Gospel should not be done by some full-time workers alone, but by all believers in Christ. They must take up this mandate and be witnesses for the Lord

in their respective living environments and workplaces, and preach the good news of the Kingdom boldly. Those who proclaim the Gospel must always be filled by the Spirit and be passionate to do so, offering themselves fully for the Lord in different seasons, by glorifying God and edifying others in their evangelistic efforts.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- May God cause an awakening in us so that we would not merely be occupied with internal activities in the Church, but be convicted about the works of the Gospel for the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Pray that we would be trained well, and rise up with a sense of mission and urgency to preach the Good News in the harvest fields, so that people might come to comprehend its essence.
- Pray that God would continue to protect those who have overcome their addictions and that He would empower them to be witnesses of Christ. Pray for the many people who have entered the ministries for drug addicts that they would continue to point others to Jesus and be a blessing to those who are in bondage.
- The unemployment rate in Malaysia is about 3.6% (Dept of Statistics Malaysia, Oct 2022). The 2020 statistics show that 202,400 fresh graduates are jobless, and the trend has been increasing over the past few years. Pray that our younger generations would increase their proficiency in English, as well as technical, soft, and digital skills. Pray also that they would be realistic in their salary and job expectations.

DAY 29 | MON, 4 SEPT 2023

Harvest Fields for Proclaiming the Gospel

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35)

The Body of Christ does not receive enlightenment merely from good and strong teaching of Christian doctrine, but also through instructions of systematic Christian education. Far more important than this, we should be trained to become witnesses of the Gospel in our marketplaces. We should not merely shine in church but beyond the four walls of the Church.

In fact, the marketplace is one of the best harvest fields. Because of this, God’s children should exert their influence there as the salt and light of the world. Other fields where the Good News can be proclaimed are places where people need help and companionship. These could be places like hospitals, senior citizen homes, orphanages, or wherever we find poor families or underprivileged communities. Anyhow, wherever there is a need, there is a potential for a harvest field for the Good News.

The scriptural meaning of Acts 1:8 tells us that the fields for the Good News are not merely limited to our city (Jerusalem), but should extend to our state (all Judea), and even to the ends of the earth (or all around the world). Everywhere is

a field for the Good News. As long as you make an effort to preach the Gospel wherever you are or go, it would be your harvest field. This includes the utilization of media to reach a wider audience across distances without any limit.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Pray that we would leave our comfort zones and get to know the needs of others, by listening to their hearts' cries, and introducing the Good News to those who desire salvation. We can start with our families, and then schools and marketplaces, and ultimately to the people or groups we are unfamiliar with so that they, too, will taste the goodness of the Gospel.
- Pray that businessmen ministries would be fruitful channels of the Gospel and for winning souls for Christ. Pray also that they would see beyond their current ministry capacities to make a greater and lasting biblical impact in their communities.
- Pray that the Election Commission of Malaysia would function as a non-partisan entity, providing a fair and free election system for voters by constantly reviewing and making changes in the division of constituencies should the need arise.

DAY 30 | TUE, 5 SEPT 2023

Prayer for Evangelism

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. (John 9:4)

The proclamation of the Good News and leading people to Christ are core tasks found in the Great Commission of the Church, for only the Gospel of Christ can give the ultimate hope to people. The Gospel is the power of God, and it saves all who believe in it. So every disciple should seek the Lord earnestly, and never stop praying for lost souls. We ought to ask the Lord of the harvest to give the Church extra love for souls so that people would diligently preach the Gospel and those who believe would experience the goodness of God.

Evangelism is about spiritual warfare. The aim is to rescue people from darkness and sin, and lead them into God’s Kingdom of light. It’s only when we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, storm Heaven with prayers and go forth fearlessly and passionately in spreading the message of salvation that people can be delivered from the power of Satan. Without prayer, there can be no harvest of souls.

The Children of God should proclaim the Gospel by warning and teaching everyone with wisdom, and gradually lead them into a real relationship with Christ as they enter into His presence.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:


- Ask God for wisdom, power, strategies for evangelism, and intercessory teams so that, through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can co-labour with the Lord and fight with Him as we seek opportunities to share the Gospel where we live and work so that the Gospel would be spread far and wide.
- Pray for churches and Christian organizations ministering to the disabled such as those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. Pray that these ministries would help believers to better understand the disabled so that these individuals would be accepted well in their communities and receive proper assistance whenever the need arises.
- The top three issues faced by Malaysian women are sexual harassment, violence, and the sexualisation of women on social media. Pray that proper values of respect and gender equality would be imprinted in the minds of the younger generations through home, school and social education.



DAY 31-35

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20



- ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*
- ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*
- ²⁰ *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

DAY 31 | WED, 6 SEPT 2023

The Great Commission

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,"
(Matthew 28:19a)*

"If you make disciples, you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples." ~ Mike Breen, Building A Discipling Culture ~

Today we shall begin a five-day devotional centered around the Great Commission. These were some of the last words that Christ gave to His disciples before ascending into the heavens. They were important words. Powerful words that ensured the Gospel would be passed down from generation to generation until all things are reconciled in Christ. And they are no less important for us today.

There are four verbs in the Great Commission - "Go", "Make disciples", "baptising", and "teaching". Yet a quick look into the Greek text would tell us that only one is in the imperative (meaning a command), i.e. make disciples. The other three are in the form of Greek participles, describing aspects of the process. Hence, the Great Commission summarised in one word: Discipleship.

This was (and is) the way of Christ. He was not commanding his disciples to do anything He himself had not done before. During his short time on earth Christ made disciples. He invited people into his life, prayed for them, taught them, and loved them to the point of death. Jesus only had three years of

ministry. The urgency was there. The clock was ticking. And yet he made time to make disciples. Making bigger, better and more attractive churches isn't going to cut it. Making disciples in accordance with Christ's words is the only way forward.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Lord, forgive us for making excuses instead of making disciples. Even as we profess to be followers of Christ, let us look to the life of Christ as our prime example. May His priorities be our priorities that we may know what is truly urgent and important in this life that we have been given. Amen.
- Pray for ministries to the poor in places such as the inland and slums. Pray that people there would be receptive to the Gospel sown in their hearts and that they would find the Gospel the ultimate means to bring them out of their struggles and pains.
- The number of single parents, especially single mothers due to the death of spouses, divorce, or abandonment, has been on the rise. In 2021, there were 235,240 single mothers or about 1.7% of the Malaysian population. Pray for those who are facing difficulties in raising their children single-handedly and also for the children who grow up in single-parent families, that their needs would be met holistically.

DAY 32 | THU, 7 SEPT 2023

All Authority!

*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
(Matthew 28:18b)*

“Submission to the will of God means cooperation with God in the moment-to-moment activities that make up our daily existence.” ~ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* ~

Authority is a powerful thing. A small-sized policeman can stop a five-tonne lorry with the mere raise of a hand. Why? Because he comes not in his own authority but the authority of the entire state and its laws. Jesus knew that the “Great Commission” would come with “Great Opposition”. Making disciples would be tough work. After all, He did tell his disciples that he was sending them out as sheep among wolves. Wolves eat sheep for breakfast. Not very comforting.

This is why right before telling them the mission, Christ precludes it with an assurance that “all authority in heaven and on earth” has been given to Him. Apart from Christ we will be eaten up by the world, but with Christ we have nothing to fear for He has overcome the world.

We do well to remember that all means all. All things in heaven and on earth are now subject to the Risen King. Nothing is left out. Let us therefore submit ourselves and invite His rule into every part of our life. When we offer our lives to Him, nothing is ever wasted. And it is only when we bring our “all” to Christ that we can have the grace and authority to accomplish the Great Commission. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Lord Jesus, we remember again that You alone have been given the highest place “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” Thank you that we have nothing to fear because we belong to You. Amen.
- There are currently 613 new villages (or *Kampung Baru*) under the Ministry of National Unity. Pray that evangelistic works in these new villages would bear much fruit, and that God would anoint the workers of His Kingdom as they reach out to souls.
- Malaysians have witnessed how individuals such as activists, journalists, and opposition leaders who voiced their opinions against the authorities had been arrested, investigated and prosecuted under the Communications and Multimedia Act and Sedition Act. Pray that the current government would allow different opinions to be heard and considered, and thus create more room for democracy to progress.

DAY 33 | FRI, 8 SEPT 2023

Baptised into Christ and Community

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19b)

“Everyone says they want community and friendship. But mention accountability or commitment to people, and they run the other way.” ~ Timothy Keller ~

In the Great Commission, Christ included only a few crucial elements – one of which is baptism. Of all the things he could have picked, Christ chose to include this public expression of one’s faith. Baptism was to be a mark of His disciples. Why is baptism so important? If you read the Epistles you would see that baptism effectually forms the identity of the believer by leading the person to identify with two things.

The first thing we identify with is Christ Himself (see Gal. 3:27). Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and resurrected. When we undergo the waters of baptism, we proclaim that very Gospel with our own lives. We say to the world that we too have been buried with Him through baptism into death and are now risen into a new life in Him (see Rom. 6:3-4). This union with Jesus becomes our core identity.

But the second thing we identify ourselves with in baptism is the larger body of Christ. i.e. the church and other believers. Scripture says, “we were all baptised into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). This tells us that we are called to follow Christ within the context of a Christian community. Meaning, our love for God

cannot be separated from the love we have for one another (see 1 Jn. 4:20). It is only in a spiritual family, with Christ as the head, that we learn true discipleship.

We belong to God and we belong to one another. This is who we are. And this is how the world will know who we are (Jn.13:35).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Lord, let me be reminded that "I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." Thank you for giving me a spiritual family. Give us a deep love for each other and compassion for those around us. Amen.
- Pray that funds and manpower would be available for migrant ministries in churches and Christian organizations. Pray also that they would be able to contextualize their evangelistic and discipleship programs to help the migrant communities for concrete growth and breakthroughs.
- Reports of domestic abuse increased drastically by 42% with 5,260 cases in 2020 and 7,468 in 2021. Since 2015, around 5,000 cases had been recorded yearly. Pray that the Domestic Violence Committee (JMKRT) would address this serious issue by working closely together with government agencies and non-governmental organisations to help the victims as well as their families.

DAY 34 | SAT, 9 SEPT 2023

Teach the Word

“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;” (Matthew 28:20a)

“The Word of God is the primary means for Disciple Making.” ~ Benny Ho, Towards A Disciple Making Church ~

There are a few big questions that a person needs answers to in order to live a full life. Left unanswered, the soul withers. Here we see the wisdom of God whereby the Great Commission sheds light on these crucial questions.

The first question is *“Who am I?”* This has to do with our identity. The second question is *“Whose am I?”* This has to do with our need for community. As we have seen yesterday, the Great Commission answers these two questions well. Our identity is in Christ; our community is among His people. The third question is *“What is my purpose?”* This has to do with our calling. The Great Commission tells us making disciples is central to our call.

This should lead us to ask *“How then do we make disciples?”* Christ gave us the answer - by teaching His commands (and by extension the whole of God’s Word). This responsibility to teach is given to all - not just the pastors and priests. And we all can because we are all capable of growing in knowledge and obedience to the Word. Through Scripture, every person, regardless of age or background, can know God and lead others into that wonderful knowing.

The matter of the fact is everyone is being disciplined - either in the ways of the world or the ways for God. Only by returning to the Word, can the Church be prepared for the end-time onslaught of deception of ways that seem right, but in the end lead only to death (see Pr. 14:12).



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Heavenly Father, may we never lose wonder that, through the Bible, we have access to Your very Words. Help us to practice the discipline of solitude - to get alone with You and Your Word each day. Teach us to teach it, for many times we know not how, "but our eyes are upon Thee". Amen.
- Pray that God would heal and deliver gamblers who are undergoing the rehabilitation process and those who have been restored. Pray that God would keep them away from bad influences, and also that His light would shine through them to their families and communities as they testify about the overcoming power of Jesus' blood.
- Domestic workers who are employed in isolated and confined environments are often unpaid, overworked, locked up, raped, trafficked, and even abused to death. Pray that they would know their basic rights and have avenues for moral support and assistance, or even rescue when needed.

DAY 35 | SUN, 10 SEPT 2023

The Great Promise

*“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:20b)*

“The true well-being of the church: when she cannot count on anything anymore but God’s promises.” ~ Johannes Hoekendijk ~

The Great Commission ends with a Great Promise. Jesus assured His disciples that He will be with them until the very end. We are living in that promise. He has never left us nor forsaken us. He has been faithful even when we were faithless. He has been our ever-present help in times of trouble. And he will continue to be with us, until “the end of the age.”

Even as we know the urgency of the times, we need to hold these two truths together: Firstly, that Christ is with us and, secondly, that the end of the age is upon us. If we focus only on the former, we can end up with an apathetic sense of false security. If we focus only on the latter, we can end up in apocalyptic fear-mongering. Neither extremes are helpful for the church.

But held together we find ourselves in the centre of God’s will. We can go forth, urgent but not in a rush, toiling but not restless, serving faithfully but not frantically. And we can because we know that God has a plan, God has a purpose, and God will fulfil it according to His Word. In quietness and trust is our strength (see Isa 30:15). Rest assured Christ will build His church. He loves His Bride and will return for her. Till then, make disciples.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Dear Lord, You have told us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Give us the conviction and grace to follow through with Your commands for “only the believer is obedient, and only he who obeys believes.” Amen.
- Pray that churches would assume the responsibility for the education of the Orang Asli, and make schooling an attractive prospect for them. Pray also that the Orang Asli children and youths would meet God personally as they study.
- Malaysia was ranked the 12th easiest-to-do business country in the world by the World Bank recently. Yet its foreign direct investment dropped from RM17.3 billion in 2021 to RM12.3 billion in 2022 because of bureaucratic and regulatory issues, a rise in labour costs, and political instability. Pray that God would restore the nation’s fortunes and that our government would execute good strategies to attract foreign investors.



DAY 36-40

Serving with a Perspective of the End

Matthew 24:14



And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

What Matters the Most: Loving the Body of Christ

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:7-10)

It would be all too easy for us to get lost in this life if our worldview as Christians does not include perspectives such as eschatology (that concerns matters like the end times, judgment, and our destiny) nor have the accountability to guide us as we prepare ourselves and others for eternity.

Serving with a perspective of the end would come with a sense of urgency that arises when we seriously perceive the promise and warning of the Second Coming of Christ.

Peter the apostle gave a brief eschatological exhortation to us, *"And above all things have fervent love for one another."* Though we have many assignments to carry out, the most important thing would be to love and protect the parts of Christ's Body. Apostle Paul told us in 1 Corinthians that the greatest of all is love. The Lord Jesus also taught that the foremost thing is to love God and others.

In order to do that, we need to be serious, watchful in our prayers, and guard our hearts. Only by doing so will we be able to edify others for we need to build ourselves up before we could even start building others up in their most holy faith. So let's guard our hearts, and love and forgive others. One of the simplest ways to show God's love in action and in turn show our care is by being hospitable without grumbling. We can be welcoming and attentive when they arrive at our

church, and even go the extra mile by inviting them over to our homes for a meal. With practical ways such as these, we can do our best to edify the body of Christ.

The focus of revival is not on miracles (though these are works of God). Its emphasis is on aligning man's hearts with God's throne. In a true revival, we would confess our sins and return to Him with gratitude and commitment, ever ready and willing to be sent by Him to serve. The focus of end-time ministry is on loving one another.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, help us to always remember Your example and instructions in washing Your disciples' feet on the night You were betrayed and how You prayed for their unity. Search our hearts and see if we have lost our first love for You and forgotten how You love Your Church. Help us to love fellow believers in action and not in words only. May You enable church leaders to create a loving atmosphere that facilitates open communication, acceptance, and forgiveness for one another, as well as make a continuous effort to maintain unity in the Spirit. Amen.
- Pray that God would empower churches and Christian organizations that handle LGBT groups with strength and wisdom to journey with the groups. Pray also that they would provide guidance and impart knowledge for churches at large to embrace the groups with the love, compassion, and truth of Christ.
- There were a reported 1.2 million civil servants in 2022. Pray that the existing officers and staff would be equipped with greater competency and efficiency, and that their minds and spirits would be reformed to serve the nation wholeheartedly, even as many suggest a proper downsize to cut down the national budget.

DAY 37 | TUE, 12 SEPT 2023

Faithful & Wise Servants Who Love His Household

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (Matthew 24:45-47)

If we read the verses in 1 Peter 4:7-10 carefully, we will notice a special phrase, “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” The Lord Jesus does not assess His servants based on the length of their service nor the positions they hold. Instead, he looks at whether they have taken good care of His household and given them “food” at the proper time.

Let me further explain that phrase ‘food at the proper time.’ God entrusted us to manage His house, and He has endowed His house with a manifold of gifts. We must discover these gifts in our churches so that they can manifest and flourish as we accomplish the tasks in God’s household.

We must humbly admit that it is not enough to just carry out our duties faithfully. For us to be God’s good steward, we need wisdom, excellent management skills, and love for everyone in God’s household. “Wisdom” means understanding, and insight into the times and things to do, which might include taking care of the needs of the little ones in the house of God

in their growing seasons and providing them with timely and practical help. (Song of Songs 8:8-9)

Service to His Church faithfully and throughout his lifetime seems to have been God's commission to the Apostle Peter. For Jesus said to Peter, *"Do you love me more than these.... Feed my sheep."* (John 21:15-17) May we come to comprehend the heartbeat of our Master, and receive His compliments at the end.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, may we love You and the sheep in Your house. Let us not focus on ourselves but on all the needs in Your house. We pray that we will become wise servants and feed Your sheep with love. Amen.
- Pray for greater partnership between local churches and mission organizations in preparing and sending missionaries. Pray that programs designed by the mission organizations would create within participants the burden to carry out the Great Commission.
- Malaysia has 20 public universities, 21 private universities, and more than 400 colleges to provide higher education for citizens as well as foreign students. 44% of Malaysian youth enrolled in these colleges and universities. Pray that the tertiary education programs offered would be relevant and valuable to all students.

Be Prepared with the Oil: The Wise Virgins

But the wise ones took oil in flasks along with their lamps. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. (Matthew 25:4-5)

We Christians mostly all agree – nobody knows when the Lord will return. The parable of the Ten Virgins raises two main concerns about His return: (1) The bridegroom is arriving late and the virgins fall asleep while waiting for his arrival; (2) Whether they have prepared their oil to ensure that their lights would still be burning when the bridegroom finally arrives.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 says, *“The end of a thing is better than its beginning.”* The Lord’s warning for the end times is that we must finish well. He wants to see us faithfully keeping watch, serving Him, and waiting for His return on His Second Coming.

Days of waiting for the return of the Lord is not merely a long watch, but also a journey full of twists and turns, ups and downs. We might eventually become drowsy and fall asleep because of the long hours of waiting. As the voice calls out upon the arrival of the bridegroom, the virgins are awakened. They get their lamps ready and return to their duty. What’s fearful is that some among us might be weak in our flesh even though our hearts are willing and lose our passion and willingness to serve God. We could be those virgins who were not prepared with the oil, leading to snuffed-out lamps of ministry and resulting in us missing out on heavenly rewards after the Lord’s return.

Let's not be drowsy while we still can reignite our first love for God, because the midnight cry is loud and clear (see Matthew 25:6-7). Let's be ready with our oil, and fight a good fight with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Let's run our race and look forward to receiving our crowns of righteousness.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, may You pour down Your new oil and new anointing so that we will continue to light up our lamps and wait for Your return. Draw us near to You daily, and help us to be vessels that are full of the power of God's love so that we can face challenges in our ministries. May You awake Your people so that we would all respond to the voice that calls out as You return soon. Amen.
- Pray for churches and Christian organizations that work among teenage pregnancy groups. Pray that they would have the wisdom to guide these teenagers through the journey, and that their work would serve as a blessing to the immediate families of the teens as well.
- Stringent foreign worker policies and the depreciation of the Ringgit have made Malaysia unattractive for foreign workers, resulting in a shortage of labour in all industrial sectors. Pray that the government and industry players would work out plans that encourage the engagement of both the local workforce and the proper acquisition of foreign workforce to avoid operational disruptions.

Witnesses to the World: The Vision of the Gospel

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

Will the end come after the Gospel has been spread to the entire world? Hasn't the internet accomplished that task? How will the end come to earth? The end that's mentioned in the Bible has nothing to do with the end of the world, but with the coming of the Lord with His great power. The world will go through a transition from an era of man's rule to another era when the Lord will rule and reign over the whole earth.

The Good Tidings (or the Gospel) of the Lord does not strictly mean just any kind of "good news." It is specifically the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not just broadcasting our verbal message but being holy witnesses, testifying to the Christian life we should be living in Christ Jesus with the seal of His Heavenly authority and power. The power of the Lord Jesus is to transform this world, and it is accomplished through those witnesses who are empowered by and obedient to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

The Lord has given us the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. Let's call out to God and receive the outpouring of His power as we follow His leading (Acts 1:8).

The receivers of this power are given the responsibility to be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth. For the apostles of the day, the ends of the earth meant the furthest places from Jerusalem. In today's context, it is every single corner of

the world. The goal of the Gospel is that it must be preached to the whole world bringing the hearers to salvation through Jesus Christ.

The emphasis of the end-time ministry is on witnessing for the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. These are the glorious days that are full of hope. The power of the Holy Spirit shall come upon us, and we will be sent to be the witnesses of the Lord everywhere in the world so that all nations will have a foretaste of the power of the coming Heavenly Kingdom.



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, may You anoint us with the power of Your Holy Spirit. May You broaden our eyes to see the vision of the Gospel being preached to the whole world. May we be Jesus to all we meet, enabling us to be Your faithful and fruitful witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit. Compel us to go and make disciples in all nations until we welcome Your return! Amen.
- Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would continue to exert its influence and outreach, especially among the youth and young adults through various sports ministries operated under churches or Christian organizations.
- The Department of Statistics classifies Malaysians into 3 income groups: T20, M40, and B40. In 2019, the distribution of the income share saw 46.8% of the population in the T20 group, 37.2% in M40, and 16% in B40. COVID-19 has widened the gap further between the haves and the have-nots. Pray that states with the highest B40 groups such as Kelantan, Sabah, and Perak would find means to reduce the wealth disparity.

DAY 40 | FRI, 15 SEP 2023

Be Ready to Suffer: At All Cost

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Revelation 12:11)

It is a glorious act to witness for the Lord. The Lord exhorts us to be faithful unto death in Revelation 2:10. The Lord demands that we serve *at all costs* in the end times.

Abraham obeyed God and was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. God then fulfilled His eternal promise to Abraham by sending Jesus His One and Only Beloved Son, to die for us. Jesus the Savior sacrificed Himself on the Cross *at all costs*. Not only did He redeem us from the penalty of our sins, He also fulfilled the New Covenant, bringing us into His eternal Kingdom. Now is the time for His chosen people to witness for Him *at all costs*. As the end approaches, we are not even to love our own lives as we strive to accomplish the task that He has entrusted to us.

Do you remember the Lord's instructions to follow His call by carrying our own crosses? (see Luke 9:23) The sacrifices that we make in our lives for the sake of serving should be considered a norm. If we often choose to turn down or give up serving God because it is not convenient or is difficult, we miss training our attitude to serve unto death. Do not allow any person or thing to corrode our determination to submit to God and give Him our lives, lest we lose the glorious reward in the end. If we endure, we will also reign with Him. (see 2 Timothy 2:12)



TODAY'S PRAYERS:

- Lord Jesus, enable us to see the eternal reward so that we would not hesitate to give ourselves to You as we confront the light afflictions which are but a moment. Teach us to carry our crosses each day as we follow You so that we would serve You faithfully unto death in this world that is full of choices and temptations. Amen.
- Pray for retreat centers that are open for retreats and meetings for the Christian communities. Thank God for their generosity and hospitality, and pray that God would provide for them so that they can continue to function at their full capacity to bless the churches and Christian organizations at large.
- Pray for greater cooperation and collaboration between the federal and the state governments, especially among states that are far below the overall development level of the country. Pray that sufficient funds would be allocated to these states so that better infrastructure can be built to mitigate development hurdles.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Go, Compel Them to Come in

Foreword from the SG Year 2023

An Urgency of Times for Spiritual Awakening

Giving to the NECF General Fund

Day 1-5 Parable of the Great Supper

Day 6-10 Urgency of the Times

Day 11-15 Understanding the Times

Day 16-20 Redeeming the Times

Day 21-25 Church, Awake

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Day 31-35 The Great Commission

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