

Amor Europe  
Course for leaders of  
children and youth

# Course Devotions

for Courses 1, 2, and 3

Edition 8: August 2021

Language: English



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## Edition

**Course Devotions** is part of the **Course for Leaders of Children and Youth** which is published by Amor Europe.

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## Acknowledgements

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## ■ Welcome

You have in your hand the Devotions which accompany the Course for Children's Workers (1, 2, & 3) published by Amor Europe. We hope that with these resources you will find encouragement, inspiration, and empowerment for your work with children and young people.

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## ◆ Themes

Each of our three courses each have a distinctive theme in relation to God as revealed in the Bible. They present a growing maturity in our relationship with God as we look at the Bible together.

**Course 1 theme:** knowing God as loving Heavenly Father.

- the right starting point is knowing God as our own nurturing Heavenly Father and experiencing what it means for each of us to be God's child.

**Course 2 theme:** surrendering to Christ Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

- the right starting place is laying down our own lives and agendas in humility and surrender to Christ Jesus.

**Course 3 theme:** overflowing with the Holy Spirit's enabling power.

- the right starting place is being authentic in our own dynamic witness, full of the Holy Spirit, ready for serving others.

We are eager that all leaders of children grow wider and deeper in their own experience of God.

## ◆ What is needed?

### For the devotions

For many meditations the following will be useful:

- a music player, using a basic sound system with a quality speaker;
- large printouts of the pictures you need, mounted on a board or the wall (or else use a picture projector);

- long strips of cloth — blue to symbolise a river, and red to symbolise fire;
  - a large wooden cross;
  - other simple items, such as: a candle, a jug of water, a bottle of oil, a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, a plate or bowl or cup, a mirror, and so on (depending on the meditation).
- 

## ◆ Enter into the Devotions

Note that the devotions are not an optional extra. Although they differ slightly in style from the modules, they are integral to the course. They invite us to listen to God, and encourage us to keep our reflective prayer life, and our practical skills, and our active service connected.

One devotion should be used at the beginning of each day before you launch into running whichever modules you have selected to do.



## ■ Edition

As of 2021, the current version of the courses = **Edition 8**.

This includes: Facilitator's Handbook, Course Devotions, Course Modules, Course Picture Slides, and Course Picture Books (for participants).

## ◆ Translations

The original course (including these devotions) is written in English.

It will be helpful to translate these all into the local language prior to use. Also, ensure you use a good modern version of the Bible to ensure the scripture verses are easy to understand.

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See the note in the Facilitator's Handbook for further information.

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## ■ Course **1** Devotion **1**

### Hearing the Voice of the Father

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: When writing a book, considerable thought is usually given to the opening paragraph. The Bible is no different.

**Reference:** Genesis 1:1–3.

**Text:** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

#### ◆ Points to Focus

##### THE TRINITY

Highlight the following:

- This opening sequence introduces us to the overarching theme of the Bible, which is: God’s desire for light to come into darkness.

God desires:

- that light will come into the dark areas of my street, my town, my nation; and
- that light will come into the dark areas of my life.
- We are introduced the author of life:
  - God the Father;
  - God the Son; and

- God the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

- Can we see each person of the Holy Trinity in this passage? What is each doing?
  - *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water. ...We will consider the significance of this later.*
  - *the Father — is speaking out of heaven.*
  - *the Son — it is not so obvious at first look! The Son is the Word sent from the Father.*

## ◆ Scripture to Read

**Reference:** John 1:1–5, 14.

**Text:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Can you see what is happening here?

Emphasise the following:

Let's follow the path of light throughout God's story.

In the Old Testament, at the dawn of creation...

- In the beginning, the Father says, "Let there be light."
- The Son is concealed in Genesis 1, but he is there as God's Word which speaks creation into being.

Fast track to the New Testament...

- In the gospel of John we discover not only that the Son was present as God's Word at creation, but also that the Word now takes human form as Jesus, the Word of God made flesh.

Further to this...

- Jesus says to his disciples, "I am the light..." (John 8:12)
- Jesus goes on to say, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21)
- Jesus then says to his disciples, "You are the light..." (Matt 5:14,15)

So, we have been commissioned to be part of God's original plan (as stated in verse three of the Bible), that light will come into darkness.

## ◆ Scripture to Read

Explain: At the age of 30, Jesus walked into the river Jordan to be baptised by his cousin John.

**Reference:** Matthew 3:16–17.

**Text:** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

## ◆ Points to Focus

Emphasise the following:

- This moment marked the beginning of the most amazing three years anyone has ever lived on this earth. Three years that has turned the world upside down, so much so, that even the years are numbered after when Jesus walked on the earth.
- When Jesus was baptised, the whole of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), were involved.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

As we did before, let us consider:

- What is each member of the Holy Trinity doing in this passage?
- *the Son — is surrendering to the will of his Father, again!  
...baptism is symbolic of surrender.*
- *the Father — is speaking out of heaven, again!*
- *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water, again!*

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Why does the Holy Spirit hover over the water?

- in Genesis 8 we find that Noah sends a dove from the ark. The dove hovers over the water looking for a landing place.
- So, from the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit has been hovering over the water looking for a landing place.
- As Jesus comes out of the water at his baptism, the Holy Spirit finds the perfect landing place: a human being whose life is completely surrendered to the purposes of God!
- Three year later, the Holy Spirit found another landing place on the disciples at the day of Pentecost, and the church was born.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE FATHER

Explain: Over the next few mornings, we are going to focus on our relationship with Father.

Highlight the following:

- Think of all the times the Father could have said these words, "This is my dearly loved son, who brings me great joy." (NLT)
- *He could have said it after Jesus had healed blind Bartimaeus.*
- *He could have said it after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.*
- *He could have said it after Jesus had fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish.*

- *He could have said it after Jesus had calmed the storm*
- *He could have even said it while Jesus was hanging on the cross.*
- But the Father chose to say these words before Jesus had done anything.
- *These words are not based on Jesus' performance.*
- *These words are based on who Jesus is — he is God's son.*

Emphasise the following:

- That is how the Father feels about each one of you. The Father says:
  - *You are my dearly loved son.*
  - *You are my dearly loved daughter.*
  - *You bring me great joy.*

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to enter into the river.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the long strip of blue cloth across the floor symbolising a river.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to come into the river.

Speak these words over them:

Your Heavenly Father says to you:

- You are my dearly loved son.
- You are my dearly loved daughter.

- You bring me great joy.

## **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course **1** Devotion **2**

### The Father Initiates

---

#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- You need a robe for the symbolic action, which you can place around a person's shoulders.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: We all love a story where things get worse and worse and worse, to the point where it seems almost irrecoverable. Then something happens; there is a turning point, and from then on things get better and better and better, culminating in a great ending and a wonderful 'feel good' moment.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Let us consider:

- What do you think was the turning point in the story of the Prodigal Son?

#### ◆ Points to Focus

Explain: Interestingly, the Western Church and Middle Eastern Church have always disagreed on the answer to this question.

**IN MIDDLE OF THE PIGSTY** — Western Church viewpoint.

The words, "When he came to his senses," (Luke 15:17) are usually quoted by the Western Church as the turning point in this story. I would like to suggest three reasons why this was not the turning point:

1. Lack of remorse:



The Middle Eastern Church have always been unimpressed by what they consider to be a lack of remorse. They would say:

- there is no saying sorry;
- there is no mention of the pain the son had caused or the money he had taken;
- it seems as though the son is doing what he always does — which is trying to cut himself a good deal, and he sees in his father an easy target of someone who might be prepared to help him.

2. Inconsistent:

In Luke 15 the story of the Prodigal Son is part of a trilogy of stories, which are: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

- If the pigsty was the turning point, it would be inconsistent with the other two stories, where the turning point was the moment of 'being found':
  - a. sheep — lost / looked for / found / brought home / party.
  - b. coin – lost / looked for / found / brought home / party.
  - c. son – lost / nobody looked for him! / found his own way home! / party.

This does not fit the pattern.

- A better understanding of the story is therefore:
  - c. son – lost / daily looked out for by his father / found by his father who runs out to where he is / brought home by his father / party.
- At the end of the story the father says, "he was lost and now is found." It was not possible for him to find his own way home.

3. Insincere:

The nearest the son gets to saying sorry, is when he says, "I have sinned against heaven and against you." (Luke 15:18).

- These words are a direct quote from the Old Testament, and it's the only other place in the whole Bible where this phrase is used. In Exodus 10:16, these are the same words Pharaoh said

to Moses to get him to stop the plague of locusts. The next day, Pharaoh changed his mind!

- The listeners to this story included the pharisees and teachers of religious law, people who dedicated their lives to studying the Scriptures. They would have understood this quote as expressing the same insincerity as Pharaoh in Exodus.

#### **AT THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE** — Middle Eastern Church viewpoint.

Consistent with the other two stories:

- a. a shepherd looked for a lost sheep, found it, brought it back home, and had a party.
- b. a woman looked for a lost coin, found it, brought it back home, and had a party.
- c. a father daily looked out for his lost son, found him, brought him back home, and had a party.

The turning point for the son, was when he his father ran out to him at the edge of the village:

- while he is was still a long way off, his father saw him;
- he was filled with love and compassion;
- he ran to meet his son;
- he threw his arms around him and kissed him;
- and at that moment, the son knew he had been found.

So, it is the father who takes the initiative:

- it is not our repentance that initiates the Father's love;
- it is the Father's love that initiates our repentance.

## **PERSONAL ENCOUNTER**

Invitation: to receive the robe.

### ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

### ◆ Symbolic Item

Use a robe to place over a person's shoulders, just as in the story the father puts a robe on his son when he finds him.

### ◆ Action to Encourage

Ask the participants to get into threes.

Each person in turn receives the robe over their shoulders. The robe is put on by another person in their group of three.

Speak the following words of blessing over the person wearing the robe:

- Your heavenly Father runs to you.
- Your heavenly Father wraps his arms around you.
- Your heavenly Father loves you.
- Your heavenly Father is proud of you.
- Your heavenly Father honours you by placing this robe over your shoulders.
- You are not a disappointment to your Father.
- You are his dearly loved son or daughter.

### ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

# ■ Course **1** Devotion **3**

## The Father Gives

---

### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- You need a ring (large) for the symbolic action, which can be placed on a person's finger.

### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: Yesterday, we looked at the turning point in the story of the Prodigal Son. We learnt that:

- the turning point **WAS NOT** in the pigsty, when the son at last came to his senses;
- the turning point **WAS** when his father, filled with love and compassion, ran out to where his son was, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The story ends with the father saying to the older son: "But we had to celebrate, and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:32)

### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Let us consider:

- At what point in the story do you think the father recognised that his son was dead, and needed to be brought back to life; was lost and needed to be found?

Allow the group to discuss and reflect on this for a couple of minutes, however do not give a definitive answer to this question at this moment.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE PRODIGAL SON

Let's go back to the beginning of the story:

**Reference:** Luke 15:12.

**Text:** The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of your estate (now, before you die).' So his father divided his property between his sons.

Take note that:

- The son is essentially saying to his father, "I wish you were dead."  
...as we have already discussed, this is how asking for the inheritance money would have been heard and understood by the father
- The father's response is very surprising, and may make us wonder whether the father was being too weak or even irresponsible in seemingly giving up so easily to his son's demands!

Let us look at the father's response in a bit more depth:

- *So his father agreed to divide his WEALTH (or property) between his two sons* (Luke 15:12).

The word translated as 'wealth,' is 'bio' which actually means 'life'.

So a better translation would be:

- *So his father agreed to divide his LIFE between his two sons* (Luke 15:12)

The father is prepared to give all that he has and is, and to lose his status in the community, and to literally divide his life between his two sons.

Let us now look at what is actually happening here:

- Effectively, the son says to his father, "I wish you were dead."
- But the father responds by saying, "Okay, I'll die for you."
- When the son said to the father, "I wish you were dead," then the father knew that it was his son that was already dead.

- The only way for the father to bring his son back to life, was send his son away to the pigsty.
- The father would then commit to daily looking out for his son, because he knew that there would be a day when he would have the opportunity to run out to his son and bring him back to life.

This is the good news of the Gospel:

**Reference:** Romans 5:8.

**Text:** God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And in Revelation 13:8 we are told that the Lamb of God was slain for us from before the foundation of the world.

As we learnt yesterday, the Father initiates.

It is the Father who takes the initiative:

- it is not our repentance that initiates the Father's love;
- it is the Father's love that initiates our repentance.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE PRODIGAL GOD

Explain: The word prodigal, means reckless, so...

- if the son was reckless in his spending,
- then the father was even more reckless in his giving!

For the son, experiencing his father running out to him, throwing his arms around him and kissing him, was far more than he could have ever hoped for or imagined. But the father just kept on giving:

- first, the robe;
- next, the ring;
- then, the shoes;
- finally, the banquet.

Yesterday, we received the father's best robe. This morning, I want us to receive the ring.

- The ring is a symbol of authority.
- *Joseph — received a ring from Pharaoh, and became the second most powerful person in Egypt.*
- *Mordecai — received a ring from King Xerxes, and became the second most powerful person in Persia.*
- The ring carries the family seal
- *It reminds us that all the resources of heaven have been made available to us.*

## ■ PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

Invitation: to receive the ring.

### ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

### ◆ Symbolic Item

Use a ring to place on a person's finger, just as in the story the father puts a ring on his son.

### ◆ Action to Encourage

Ask the participants to get into threes.

Each person in turn receives the ring on their finger. The ring is put on by another person in their group of three.

Speak the following words of blessing over the person wearing the ring:

- Your heavenly Father runs to you.
- Your heavenly Father wraps his arms around you as a demonstration of his love and faithfulness to you.
- Your heavenly Father trusts you.

- Your heavenly Father places a ring on your finger.
- You are welcomed into his family.
- Heaven's store houses are open to you.

### ◆ **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.



## ■ Course **1** Devotion **4**

### The Father Runs

---

#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- You need a large mirror for the symbolic action, which you can stand up so that people can look at themselves in it.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: When you read the story of the Prodigal son through Middle Eastern eyes, you have to conclude that either Jesus is completely out of touch with his culture, or else he is challenging the culture and is demonstrating the difference between an earthly father and our Heavenly Father.

Perhaps the biggest shock of all for his listeners, is when Jesus said , “The father ran!” In the Middle East fathers do not run, as it is considered to be undignified, as it would involve the father lifting the hem of his garment, exposing his legs, in order to run.

Helping us to understand how shocking this aspect of the story is in Middle Eastern cultures, we notice that: it was not until the year 1860 that the Arabic New Testament would acknowledge that “the father ran.”

- before then, the Arabic Bible said, “the Father went.”
- then they changed it to, “the father hastened.”
- in 1860, that the Arabic Bible finally conceded, “the father ran.”

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Let us consider:

- In the story, why did the father run?

## ◆ Points to Focus

Explain: there are three reasons why the father runs to meet his son.

1. The father ran to get there first:
  - If the community got there first, they would have dragged the son to the city gates, demanding the Kezazah Ceremony. The father knew that he must get there first in order to protect his son.

Explain the following:

the Kezazah Ceremony was a first century Jewish custom. If a member of the community lost his inheritance to the Gentiles, and then tried to come back to his home community, the following action would take place:

1. He would be taken to the city gates where the village elders sit.
2. They would break an earthenware jar in front of him, and declare that he was now cut off from the community (the word Kezazah means 'cutting off').
3. In the best case, he would then be beaten and sent away. But in worst case, which often happened at that time, he could be killed.

So, how do we know that the younger son has lost his inheritance to the Gentiles? He ends up feeding pigs. And there are no pig farms in Israel!

2. The father ran to take the shame:
  - The father would prefer the gossip in the community over the next week to be about a crazy father who exposed his legs and ran, rather than the gossip to be about a disgraced son.
3. The father ran because he was overjoyed to see his son returning home.

Explain: this is how our Heavenly Father feels about each one of us.

## ■ PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

Create this opportunity for the participants to experience their Heavenly Father running towards them.

### ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

Begin with a few minutes of just listening to the music.

### ◆ Points to Focus

While the music is still playing, emphasise the following:

- After Jesus' baptism, where he heard his Father say, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy," Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.
- Satan came to Jesus and said, "If you are the Son of God, command the stones to become bread." Satan was questioning and throwing doubt over what Jesus had heard his Father say.
- Jesus replied by saying, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds for the mouth of God." It is as if Jesus is responding to Satan by saying: "I have just heard my Father affirm that I am his dearly loved Son, so don't you dare start a conversation with me by questioning if I am God's Son."
- Ever since that moment, Satan's number one strategy against you and me is to rob us of being who we truly are, dearly loved sons and daughters of God.

### ◆ Symbolic Item

As the music continues to play, place a mirror in the centre of the room. Then emphasise the following:

When we worship and meditate on how amazing our Heavenly Father is, it changes how we see ourselves. It becomes like looking in a mirror.

- If I see God as a judge, then I see myself as the person accused.

- If I see God as distant, then I see myself as abandoned and alone.
- If I see God as disapproving, then I see myself as not being approved or affirmed.
- But when I see God as a loving Heavenly Father, I know that I am a much loved son or daughter.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Explain: As the music continues to play, position yourself to receive from your Father. You may want to stay where you are or come into the river. You may want to stand, sit, kneel, or even lay down. You may want to put your hands out in front of you in readiness to receive.

Read out the lies and truths about God the Father, with the scripture texts, as follows:

- The first leader says, "The lie is... (then state the lie), but the truth is... (then state the truth)"
- The second leader reads the relevant verses of scripture.
- The two leaders continue in this pattern, until they have read out all the lies and truths about God the Father, and verses of scripture.

Please take your time when reading this, do not rush. You need to allow space and time for people to receive from God.

## ◆ Scriptures to Read

Use this script to guide the participants to receive from God.

- It is a LIE to say: God is distant and disinterested.
- The TRUTH is: God is intimate and involved.

In Psalm 139 it says:

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

...

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

...

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is uncaring and insensitive.
- The TRUTH is: God is kind and compassionate.

In Psalm 103 it says:

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is stern and demanding.
- The TRUTH is: God is overwhelming with love and acceptance.

In Zephaniah 3:17 it says:

The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is passive and cold towards us.
- The TRUTH is: God is warm and affectionate towards us.

In Isaiah 40:11 it says:

He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

And in 1 John 3:1 it says:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is absent or too busy for us.
- The TRUTH is: God is always with us.

In Hebrews 13:5 it says:

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is impatient and angry with us.
- The TRUTH is: God is patient with us and slow to anger.

In Exodus 34:6 it says:

The Lord is the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

And in 2 Peter 3:9 it says:

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is mean and cruel and abusive.
- The TRUTH is: God is loving and gentle and protective.

In Jeremiah 31:3 it says:

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.

And in Psalm 18:2 it says:

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God takes all the fun out of life.
- The TRUTH is: God wants the very best for each one of us.

In John 10:10 it says:

Jesus says: the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.

And in Lamentations 3:22–23 it says:

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is controlling or manipulative.
- The TRUTH is: God is full of grace and mercy.

In Hebrews 4:15–16 it says:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is condemning and unforgiving.
- The TRUTH is: God forgiving and tender hearted.

In Psalm 130:3–4 it says:

If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness.

And in 1 John 1:9 it says:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Pause.

- It is a LIE to say: God is judgemental and disapproving.
- The TRUTH is: God disciplines (guides, corrects) us out of love.

In Hebrews 12:5–11 it says:

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as a son.”

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our earthly fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.



## ■ Course **1** Devotion **5**

### Jesus retells Israel's story

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- You need pair of shoes (large, slip on) for the symbolic action, which you can place on a person's feet.

Facilitator note: Scholars see this parable of Jesus as retelling Israel's story but changing some of the facts in order to emphasise a teaching. This was a recognised teaching style used by rabbis around the time of Jesus. Four similar examples are found in the following historical records: Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, the Book of Jubilees, and Genesis Rabbah.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain the following:

- In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories or parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.
- These stories are all similar: something gets lost, someone goes looking for it, and when they find it they celebrate with a party.
  - A shepherd looks for the lost sheep.
  - A woman looks for her lost coin.
  - Nobody appears to go looking for the lost son. But when the father sees him he runs out to him.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Let us consider:

- Is the fact that no one went looking for the younger son coincidental, or is Jesus trying to make a point?
- And if Jesus is making a point:
  - Who do you think should have gone to look for the lost son?
  - And why?

Explain: To find out the answers to these questions we need to look at what happened at the beginning of Luke 15, as there is a reason for why Jesus is telling these three stories.

**Reference:** Luke 15:1–3.

**Text:** Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then Jesus told them this parable.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Pose each question, then emphasise the points that follow:

- Who was Jesus speaking to?
  - *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners.*
  - *Pharisees and teachers of religious law.*
- What were the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complaining about?
  - *Jesus was not only associating with sinners (the lost), he was eating with them (having a party).*
- What is Jesus saying to them through this story?
  - *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners — these are the younger son.*
  - *Pharisees and teachers of religious law — these are the older son.*
  - *So, not only have the Pharisees and teachers of religious law neglected their responsibility to look for the lost, they are now complaining that Jesus is associating with such people, even eating with them.*

- Why was it the older son's responsibility to go looking for his younger brother?
- *When the estate is divided between the two sons, the older son receives a double portion.*
- *The reason he receives a double portion is because he becomes overall responsible for the wellbeing of the family.*
- *So, when his young brother goes missing, the older son is responsible to go looking for him in order to bring him back.*
- *Not only did the older son not go looking, but like the Pharisees and teachers of religious law he starts complaining and refuses to come into the party!*

Explain: So was Jesus retelling Israel's story to show the religious leaders how they had neglected their duty? It seems so.

- What is the story of Israel?
- *It is the story of Jacob, who later changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Jacob's twelve sons then became the tribes of Israel.*

Make the following comparison between the story of the prodigal son and the story of Jacob.

| Prodigal Son  | Jacob  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dishonoured his father to get the inheritance</li> <li>• offended his older brother</li> <li>• ran away from home</li> <li>• returned home</li> <li>• the father ran to greet the younger son</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dishonoured his father to get the blessing</li> <li>• offended his older brother</li> <li>• ran away from home</li> <li>• returned home</li> <li>• Esau (the older brother) ran to greet Jacob</li> </ul> |
| Luke 15:20 (KJV)  | Genesis 33:4 (KJV)   |
| <i>His father saw him, and had compassion, <b>and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.</b></i>   | <i>And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, <b>and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept.</b></i>   |

Note that the words, “fell on his neck and kissed him” in this parable is a direct translation from Genesis in the Old Testament. These are the only two places in the Bible where this phrase is used. This would have been clearly understood by the Pharisees and teachers of religious law, who had spent much of their lives to studying the scriptures.

What is the main point Jesus wants us to understand today?

- Jesus, our older brother, left his Father home in order to come and look for us.
- Jesus has brought us back home to the Father, where we have received the robe and the ring,
- Today, he invites us to put on our shoes in order that we follow in his footsteps, taking the Father’s love to those who are lost.

## ■ PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

Invitation: to receive the shoes.

### ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

### ◆ Symbolic Item

Use the shoes to place on a person’s feet, just as in the story the father tells his servant to put sandals on his son.

### ◆ Action to Encourage

Ask the participants to get into threes.

While two of the three are praying, the third is to:

- Stand in the river, and ask Jesus to wash your feet.
- Step out of the river and receive the shoes of the gospel of peace.
- Receive a comissioning to take the love of our Heavenly Father to those who are lost.

## **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 2 Devotion 1

### Surrendering to Jesus

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Place a candle on a table at the front of the room.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by lighting the candle.

Explain: When writing a book, considerable thought is usually given to the opening paragraph. The Bible is no different.

**Reference:** Genesis 1:1–3.

**Text:** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

#### ◆ Points to Focus

##### THE TRINITY AT CREATION

Highlight the following:

- This opening sequence introduces us to the overarching theme of the Bible, which is: God’s desire for light to come into darkness.

God desires:

- that light will come into the dark areas of my street, my town, my nation; and
- that light will come into the dark areas of my life.
- We are introduced the author of life:

- God the Father;
- God the Son; and
- God the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

- Can we see each person of the Holy Trinity in this passage? What is each doing?
- *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water. ... We will consider the significance of this later.*
- *the Father — is speaking out of heaven.*
- *the Son — it is not so obvious at first look! The Son is the Word sent from the Father.*

## ◆ Scripture to Read

**Reference:** John 1:1–5, 14.

**Text:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Can you see what is happening here?

Emphasise the following:

Let's follow the path of light throughout God's story.

In the Old Testament, at the dawn of creation...

- In the beginning, the Father says, "Let there be light."

- The Son is concealed in Genesis 1, but he is there as God's Word which speaks creation into being.

Fast track to the New Testament...

- In the gospel of John we discover not only that the Son was present as God's Word at creation, but also that the Word now takes human form as Jesus, the Word of God made flesh.

Further to this...

- Jesus says to his disciples, "I am the light..." (John 8:12)
- Jesus goes on to say, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21)
- Jesus then says to his disciples, "You are the light..." (Matt 5:14,15)

So, we have been commissioned to be part of God's original plan (as stated in verse three of the Bible), that light will come into darkness.

## ◆ Scripture to Read

Explain: At the age of 30, Jesus walked into the river Jordan to be baptised by his cousin John.

**Reference:** Matthew 3:16–17.

**Text:** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE TRINITY AT JESUS' BAPTISM

Emphasise the following:

- This moment marked the beginning of the most amazing three years anyone has ever lived on this earth. Three years that has turned the world upside down, so much so, that even the years are numbered after when Jesus walked on the earth.



- When Jesus was baptised, the whole of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), were involved.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

As we did before, let us consider:

- What is each member of the Holy Trinity doing in this passage?
  - *the Son — is surrendering to the will of his Father, again!  
...baptism is symbolic of surrender.*
  - *the Father — is speaking out of heaven, again!*
  - *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water, again!*

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Why does the Holy Spirit hover over the water?

- in Genesis 8 we find that Noah sends a dove from the ark. The dove hovers over the water looking for a landing place.
- So, from the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit has been hovering over the water looking for a landing place.
- As Jesus comes out of the water at his baptism, the Holy Spirit finds the perfect landing place: a human being whose life is completely surrendered to the purposes of God!
- Three year later, the Holy Spirit found another landing place on the disciples at the day of Pentecost, and the church was born.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### JESUS

Explain: Over the next few mornings, we are going to focus on our relationship with Jesus.

Highlight the following:

- Jesus laid down the privileges of being God and limited himself to being a human. This means everything Jesus did, he did as a

human being who was in perfect relationship with his Father and was filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus went on to say that we would do the same and even greater works:

**Reference:** John 14:12.

**Text:** “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

- If Jesus needed to know God as Father and be filled with the Holy Spirit, in order to live the life he had been called to; guess what? So do YOU and so do I!
- Jesus invites us to follow him by stepping into the river so that we also may:
  - surrender our lives to Jesus;
  - hear the voice of the Father; and
  - become a landing place for the Holy Spirit.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to enter into the river.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the candle that has been lit.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to come into the river.

Invite participants to kneel in surrender to Jesus.

Speak the following words:

- Jesus we thank you that you are the light of the world. Please shine your light in us.
- Jesus we thank you that you have called us to be light. May your light shine from us.

Invite participants to lift their heads to hear the voice of the Father.

Speak the following words over them:

- You are my dearly loved son.
- You are my dearly loved daughter.
- You bring me much joy.

Invite participants to reach out their hands to receive the Holy Spirit.

Speak the following words:

- We welcome you Holy Spirit.
- Come and rest on us.
- Come and dwell in us.

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 2 Devotion 2

### The Holy Trinity

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Display a picture (or project a presentation slide) of the “Hospitality of Abraham”.
- Display a mirror on a wall or table, with a sign above it saying, “You are God’s masterpiece”.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: The word “Trinity” does not actually appear in the Bible, and it wasn’t until about the third century that the early church began to come into a fuller understanding of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, the concept of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is clearly present in scripture.

#### ◆ Points to Focus

##### THE TRINITY

Explain the following.

Firstly:

- Usually, when we explain the Holy Trinity, we begin with God being ONE, then turn him into THREE.

But, in the first chapter of the Bible, God refers to himself in the plural, not the singular:

- Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness. (Genesis 1:26)
- Maybe a better starting place for explaining the Holy Trinity is to start with God being THREE.

When you experience unity at the level that the Godhead experiences unity, you can see how the THREE become ONE.

So we discover that:

- God is family.
- We are made in God's image, and we too are made to be family.
- As family, we too are to experience oneness, as the scriptures say:
  - A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become ONE flesh. (Ephesians 5:31)

Hence we learn that:

- God is committed to family.
- When God created people on Earth, he started with a family.
- When the earth was destroyed by a flood, he started again with a family.
- When God adopted a nation, he started with a family.
- When Jesus came to earth, he was born into a family.

## ◆ Practical Demonstration

### PERICHORESIS

Explain the following.

The early church fathers used the Greek word **perichoresis** to explain their understanding of the Holy Trinity.

- Perichoresis is a 'circle dance,' often used at Greek weddings.
- It is made up from two Greek words: **peri-choresis**:
  - **peri** means 'all around', from which we get the English word 'perimeter'; and
  - **choresis** means 'to give way', from which we get the English word 'choreography'.

Demonstrate this practically as follows:

- Invite three volunteers to come to the front and take the roles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Ask the volunteers representing Jesus and the Holy Spirit to orbit around the Father. Allow them to do this for a few seconds then tell them to stop.
- Explain that this was not a very good example of a perichoresis dance, because:
  - there is no hierarchy in the Holy Trinity; and
  - the Father does not demand that everything revolves around him.

Ask the three volunteers to attempt to all orbit around the others without bumping into each other. Allow them to do this for a few seconds until they manage to get into a good rhythm.

- Thank them and ask them to sit down
- Explain that this this was a good example of a perichoresis dance.
  - each member of the Holy Trinity loving, serving, honouring, preferring and giving themselves away to the others.

## ◆ Image to Inspire

### THE HOSPITALITY OF ABRAHAM

Display or project the picture of “the Hospitality of Abraham”.

Explain the following about the picture:

- Entitled “the Hospitality of Abraham” this picture is also known as “the Trinity”. It is a 15th Century painting by the Andrei Rublev, and the original icon is on display at the Tretakov Gallery in Moscow.
- There has been a theological debate over the centuries, whether the three men (or angels) who visited Abraham in Genesis 18, were in fact Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Rublev was a monk from the Eastern Orthodox tradition at a time when people were not allowed to make icons of the Father or the Holy Spirit. He uses this story as a backdrop for his painting while clearly depicting the Holy Trinity.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Explain the following about the painting.

### 1. THE CIRCLE

- Notice how the bodies of the three characters are painted within a circle shape, to depict the perichoresis dance
- Notice how their heads are bowed out of respect and honor of each other

### 2. THE ROBES

- FATHER has a gold robe, signifying perfection, purity, and ultimate source.
- HOLY SPIRIT has a green robe, signifying new life.
- JESUS has a blue robe, signifying that just as the sea reflects the sky, so Christ reflects God in humanity.

Note that Jesus places two fingers on the table as if to say, "I'll bring you back together".

### 3. THE SETTING

- At first glance, the tree and building in the background seem to suggest that this is a painting of the Holy Trinity after creation.
- However, perhaps it is more likely that this is meant to be a painting of the of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit discussing and planning the creation. So the tree and building would be part of what they can see and imagine.
- Also in Genesis 18, the three visitors come to Abraham at his dwelling beside the trees of Mamre, so these might be what the picture shows.

### 4. THE CUP

- This is the CUP OF SUFFERING.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God was not caught off guard, having to come up with a plan 'B.' This always was plan 'A.'

Remember Revelation 13:8 reminds us that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world.

Father Son and Holy Spirit sit around a table with a cup of wine and discuss whether to go ahead with creating humanity, knowing that if they decide to go for it, it will cost them dearly. This is because love costs!

- **LOVE IS COSTLY!**

It will cost the Father — who will go through the pain of losing his only son.

It will cost Jesus — who will lay down his life for humanity.

It will cost the Holy Spirit — who will promise to be everywhere and see everything. This includes every painful experience — every woman who is raped, every child who is abused, every man who is murdered.

**Reference:** Psalm 139:7–10.

**Text:** Where can I go from your Spirit. Where can I flee from your presence. If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

- Amazingly, Father, Son and Holy Spirit came to the decision that this was a price worth paying, to bring us into their family.

For the joy set before him, he endured the cross... (Hebrews 12:2).

## 5. THE MIRROR

- Can you see the small oblong on the side of the table? It looks a bit like a power socket — unlikely in a 15th Century painting!

The oblong is covered with glue, suggesting that Rublev had stuck an object onto his original painting. It is believed that Rublev stuck a mirror onto his painting.

- What does this mean? It tells us:  
— there is a space for someone else at the table;



- we are invited into the family of God;
- we are invited to join with God in the perichoresis dance!

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to see ourselves in the mirror as God sees us.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the mirror with the sign which says “You are God’s masterpiece.”

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to face the mirror with the sign above it.

Read the following passage of scripture.

**Reference:** Ephesians 2:8–10.

**Text:** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. **For we are God’s masterpiece**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Use the following words to guide the participants through a process of reflection and encounter:

- I want you to close your eyes and imagine the Father sitting in his armchair in front of an open fire in heaven. Above the mantelpiece hangs a painting of you. You are his masterpiece.
- How will you respond?
- You may ask the Father, “How can you call me your masterpiece, when you know everything about me — all my faults and failings?”
- But then you notice – the Father hasn’t finished yet. His paints are open, and his brushes are still wet.

- You are invited into the family of God, not because of the good things you have done, but because of what Jesus has done for you.
- When you feel ready, walk over the mirror, and take a closer look at God's masterpiece. Sign your name on a sticky post-it note and stick it on the wall next to the mirror.
- In doing this you indicate that you say "yes" to his invitation to be part of God's family.

### ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 2 Devotion 3

### The Words of Christ on the Cross

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Place a cross at the front of the room.
- Place a cup and a jug of water on a table in front of the cross.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: When Jesus was crucified, he doesn't die instantly. It is along painful death lasting many hours. During this time, Jesus speaks out loud several times, as recorded by the gospel writers.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Jesus spoke from the cross seven times in total.

Ask: what are the seven things that Jesus said?

1. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."  
— Luke 23:34.
2. "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."  
— Luke 23:43.
3. "Dear woman, here is your son." "Here is your mother."  
— John 19:26–27.
4. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"  
— Matthew 27:46.
5. "I am thirsty."  
— John 19:28.

6. "It is finished."  
— John 19:30.
7. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."  
— Luke 23:46.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### **FORGIVENESS, HOPE, AND COMFORT**

Explain the following.

Jesus was crucified at 9 in the morning (according to Mark 15:25). From then up until 12 noon (midday), Jesus continues to do what he has consistently done throughout his three-year ministry: he puts the needs of others before his own needs.

Jesus brings forgiveness, hope, and comfort to those who need it.

- **FORGIVENESS** — to those who crucified him:  
"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."  
— Luke 23:34.
- **HOPE** — to the thief next to him on the cross:  
"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."  
— Luke 23:43.
- **COMFORT** — to his mother and closest friend, John:  
"Dear woman, here is your son." "Here is your mother."  
— John 19:26–27.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### **ABANDONMENT AND THIRST**

Explain the following.

Between 12 noon and 3 in the afternoon a darkness came over the land (according to Matthew 27:46). The overarching theme of the Bible, of light pushing back the darkness seems under threat. For the next three hours it is looking as though darkness will finally triumph. Satan is there waiting for

Jesus to be given into his hands as the Son of God hangs there on the cross and his life begins to drain from his body.

As the darkness descends it is though Jesus himself descends into the depths of fallen humanity, taking on himself our sense of being separated from God. It is from this place that Jesus finds words to articulate what he is experiencing.

Jesus identifies with the sense of abandonment and thirst in humanity.

- **ABANDONMENT** — the pain of feeling separated from Father:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

— Matthew 27:46.

Abandonment is the greatest and most fundamental pain of humanity. We were made to be in relationship with God.

- **THIRST** — the dissatisfaction with what is, and desire for more:

“I am thirsty.”

— John 19:28.

Thirst to know God, is the greatest and most fundamental desire of humanity. From deep inside there is a longing to be reconnected to our Father.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### **VICTORY AND RESTORATION**

Explain the following.

As Jesus dies he calls out from the cross a final two times.

Jesus declares victory over Satan, sin, and death, and restoration with the Father.

- **VICTORY** — Jesus has accomplished everything he came to do:

“It is finished.”

— John 19:30.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it (see: John 1:5).

- **RESTORATION** — Jesus is restored to the Father:

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

— Luke 23:46.

Satan thought that Jesus had been given into his hands, but in a dramatic final twist in the story, Jesus entrusts his spirit into the hands of his Father.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to reflect upon the words of Jesus from the cross.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

In the following actions, the cup and jug of water are used.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Pour water into the cup, and read out loud the following scripture verses.

**Reference:** John 7:37–38.

**Text:** Jesus says: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

**Reference:** John 4:13–14.

**Text:** Jesus says: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Invite participants to engage in the following three actions:

1. Come and drink from the cup and then kneel in the river.

Take a few moments to reflect and give thanks for Jesus our example:

- Jesus who FORGIVES me,
  - Jesus who reawakens HOPE,
  - Jesus who brings COMFORT.
2. Remain kneeling and cross your arms over your chest.
- Take a few moments to reflect and give thanks for Jesus who identifies with us:

- Jesus who feels my pain and knows what it is to be ABANDONED,
- Jesus who understands my THIRST.

Read out loud again these scripture verses:

**Reference:** John 7:37–38.

**Text:** Jesus says: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

**Reference:** John 4:13–14.

**Text:** Jesus says: “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

3. Uncross your arms as a sign of freedom and breaking of chains.
- Take a few moments to reflect and give thanks for Jesus our saviour and deliverer:

- Jesus who brings VICTORY,
- Jesus who RESTORES us to the Father.

Read out loud these scripture verses:

**Reference:** 1 Corinthians 15:54–57.

**Text:** “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Reference:** Romans 5:10.

**Text:** For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.



## ■ Course 2 Devotion 4

### The Bride of Christ

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Display a picture (or project a presentation slide) of the “Hospitality of Abraham”.
- Place a bottle of red wine and a glass on a table at the front of the room.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain: As Jesus and his disciples sat around the table for what is now called ‘the last supper,’ Jesus was looking forward to another supper — the wedding supper of the lamb.

Read the following passage of scripture.

**Reference:** Revelation 19:6–7.

**Text:** Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

As part of preparing himself and his disciples for what was about to happen in the next 24 hours, Jesus set his focus and his disciples’ focus on what was beyond the cross.

As it says in Hebrews:

**Reference:** Hebrews 12:2.

**Text:** For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame...

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE WEDDING PROPOSAL

Explain: The words Jesus used when sharing the cup could only have been understood by his disciples as a marriage proposal.

**Reference:** Matthew 26:27–28.

**Text:** Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

There are three stages to a Jewish wedding: the Match, the Betrothal, and the Consummation.

#### 1. THE MATCH

- If a boy sees a girl that he would like to marry, he talks to his father.
- If his father agrees, his father meets with the girl’s father to discuss whether this is a match.
- If the two fathers agree that it is a match, they discuss the ‘mohar’ (the bride price).

#### 2. THE BETROTHAL

- Father and son go to the girl’s house, taking with them a scroll, cup and some wine.
- The father and son sit around a table with the girl and her parents.
- The boy writes his wedding vows on the scroll, called the ‘ketubah’.
- He then pours some wine into the cup, takes a sip and passes it across the table to the girl.
- If she chooses to drink from the cup, from that moment the couple are betrothed.

“Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

— Matthew 26:27–28.

- The boy gives his wineskin to the girl and promises to not drink any wine until their wedding day.

"I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

— Matthew 26:29.

- During the betrothal period, which is usually up one year, the boy goes back to his father's house to prepare a place for his bride.

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

— Matthew 26:27–28.

- If the boy finds out that his betrothed has been unfaithful – he has the option of going to his father and saying, "let this cup pass from me".

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

— Matthew 26:29.

### 3. THE CONSUMMATION

- The actual wedding takes place when the boy's father decides that the time is right.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

— Matthew 24:36.

Jesus uses the closest and most intimate relationship we as human beings understand, the relationship between husband and wife, to describe his relationship with us.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to accept the betrothal covenant with Jesus.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

In the following actions, the bottle of wine and the glass are used.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Pour wine into the glass, and read out loud the following scripture verses.

**Reference:** 1 Corinthians 11:25.

**Text:** In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Explain that when we drink from the cup we are saying "yes" to Jesus.

- We are saying "Yes" to his invitation to lay down our lives in surrender.
- We are saying "Yes" to dying with him and to sharing in his cup of suffering.
- We are saying, "Yes" to his resurrection life rising up in us.
- We are saying "Yes" to his invitation to be his Bride.

Invite participants one by one to say "yes" to Jesus by drinking from the cup.

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 2 Devotion 5

### The Incarnation of Christ

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.

You will also need for the personal encounter time:

- a candle;
- a mirror with a sign above saying, "You are God's masterpiece";
- a cross;
- a jug of water and a cup;
- a bottle of red wine and a glass;
- the presentation slide for this session  
— translated into the local language.

Facilitator note: The presentation slide shows an image of the cross with the following words:

- CHRIST — who has brought us FORGIVENESS, HOPE, and COMFORT.
- CHRIST — who identifies with our sense of ABANDONMENT and THIRST.
- CHRIST — who has won the VICTORY over sin and death and RESTORED us to the Father.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Explain the following:

INCARNATION means 'embodied in flesh' or 'to take on flesh'. So the incarnation of Christ is the invisible God making himself known in our time

and space world. Not simply so that we can know about God, but that we can truly know, encounter, and experience him in person.

CHRIST is not a half of Jesus' name — like a surname or family name passed on from your parents! Not at all. Rather, it is a title given to Jesus. It means "anointed one", recognising Jesus as the Messiah, sent from God.

The Bible speaks of three incarnations of Christ on earth:

- CHRIST in creation;
- CHRIST in Jesus; and
- CHRIST in you, the hope of glory (see Colossians 1:27).

From the beginning, God's plan was that the whole of creation would be in harmony with Jesus, that we would experience Jesus in and through his creation, so that the whole world would display the glory of God.

## ◆ Points to Focus

These are the three incarnations of Christ spoken of in scripture.

### 1. CHRIST IN CREATION

- CHRIST — who was involved in creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

— John 1:1–3.

- CHRIST — who is visible through creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its

circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.  
— Psalm 19:1–6.

## 2. CHRIST IN JESUS

- CHRIST — who has brought us FORGIVENESS, HOPE, and COMFORT.
- CHRIST — who identifies with our sense of ABANDONMENT and THIRST.
- CHRIST — who has won the VICTORY over sin and death and RESTORED us to the Father.

## 3. CHRIST IN YOU

Christ in you, the hope of glory.  
— Colossians 1:27.

- CHRIST — who has ascended to his Father, shines down on you and calls you to be light.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
— Isaiah 60:1–3.

- CHRIST — who rises up in you to do the same works and even greater works than Jesus.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.  
— John 14:12.

God's plan and desire is the same today as it was in the beginning.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.  
— Habakkuk 2:14.

Explain: This morning we are going to spend some time encountering Christ in creation, encountering Christ in Jesus, and encountering Christ in us, the hope of glory.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to encounter Christ in creation, in Jesus, and in us.

### CHRIST IN CREATION

Facilitator note: allow several minutes for this exercise.

Instruct the group to go outside (without talking) to encounter Christ through his creation:

- Focus on one small part of God's creation. It doesn't matter how small or insignificant it might seem.
- Appreciate it. Consider its journey, how it got here, the contribution it has made to creation.
- Speak to it. Express your gratefulness for what it is and for the contribution it has made.
- Allow it to speak to you. Ask it if there is anything it wants to say to you, and then listen.

Facilitator note: while the group are outside, set up the room as described below. Then after several minutes, invite all back inside.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Set up all the symbolic items that have been used this week.

- a candle (light it);
- a mirror with a sign above saying, "You are God's masterpiece";
- a cross;
- a jug of water and a cup;



- a bottle of red wine and a glass;
- the presentation slide for this session (projected onto a wall).

## CHRIST IN JESUS

When the group return, give them the following instructions:

- Walk around the room (without talking). Look at and reflect upon the symbolic items to encounter Christ in Jesus.
- You may choose to stop at one place and simply focus on one aspect of Christ in Jesus.
- Or you may decide to walk to several places, reflecting on various aspects of Christ in Jesus.

Allow several minutes for the group to walk around the room (without talking), and to encounter Christ through Jesus.

When the time seems right (after several minutes have passed), bring the group back together and ask them to sit on the floor.

- Invite anyone who would like to, to express what they experienced.

## CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory

Explain: In the first chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy, Ezekiel has a vision of Jesus. This is how Ezekiel responds:

**Reference:** Ezekiel 1:28 to 2:2.

**Text:** This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

Ask: Can you see the parallel between Ezekiel's experience and Jesus' baptism?

- Ezekiel's response to having a vision of Jesus was to fall face down on the ground.
  - this is surrendering to Jesus.
- Ezekiel heard a voice saying to him, "Stand up, son of man"
  - this is Hearing the voice of the Father.

- The Spirit came into Ezekiel and stood him on his feet.  
— this is becoming a landing place for the Holy Spirit.

Notice how when the voice from heaven said, “Stand up, son of man,” Ezekiel, didn’t actually stand up! Instead, the Holy Spirit came into him and stood him on his feet.

So from this we learn that...

- the resurrection life we have in Jesus, is not:  
— us picking ourselves up and doing things for God.
- but, the resurrection life of Jesus is:  
— us surrendering to Jesus;  
— the Father speaking words of life over us; and  
— the Holy Spirit accomplishing in us the Father’s calling.

Having encountered Christ in creation and Christ is Jesus, let’s respond to Jesus by lying face down on the ground

Read out loud the following words:

- CHRIST in creation — at every sunrise and at every sunset; in the highest mountain and the tiniest insect; the whole of creation bringing glory to its Creator.
- CHRIST in Jesus — the one in whose footsteps we walk and whose example we follow; humbling ourselves, dying to ourselves, in order that we may be raised to new life with him.
- CHRIST in you the hope of glory — shining on you; shining through you; rising up in you; transforming you into the person you were always meant to be.

Pray the following prayer:

- JESUS — we lie on our faces before you. We are so grateful for who you are and all that you have done for us.
- FATHER — cause us to hear your voice speaking to us from heaven.
- HOLY SPIRIT — we invite you to come into us and fill us with your life, your love, and your power. Accomplish in us, all that the Father is calling us to be.

## ◆ **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 3 Devotion 1

### Holy Spirit as a Dove

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Put up on the wall a picture of a dove flying.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by lighting the candle.

Explain: When writing a book, considerable thought is usually given to the opening paragraph. The Bible is no different.

**Reference:** Genesis 1:1–3.

**Text:** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

#### ◆ Points to Focus

##### THE TRINITY AT CREATION

Highlight the following:

- This opening sequence introduces us to the overarching theme of the Bible, which is: God’s desire for light to come into darkness.

God desires:

- that light will come into the dark areas of my street, my town, my nation; and
- that light will come into the dark areas of my life.
- We are introduced the author of life:

- God the Father;
- God the Son; and
- God the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

- Can we see each person of the Holy Trinity in this passage? What is each doing?
- *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water. ... We will consider the significance of this later.*
- *the Father — is speaking out of heaven.*
- *the Son — it is not so obvious at first look! The Son is the Word sent from the Father.*

## ◆ Scripture to Read

**Reference:** John 1:1–5, 14.

**Text:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Can you see what is happening here?

Emphasise the following:

Let's follow the path of light throughout God's story.

In the Old Testament, at the dawn of creation...

- In the beginning, the Father says, "Let there be light."

- The Son is concealed in Genesis 1, but he is there as God's Word which speaks creation into being.

Fast track to the New Testament...

- In the gospel of John we discover not only that the Son was present as God's Word at creation, but also that the Word now takes human form as Jesus, the Word of God made flesh.

Further to this...

- Jesus says to his disciples, "I am the light..." (John 8:12)
- Jesus goes on to say, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21)
- Jesus then says to his disciples, "You are the light..." (Matt 5:14,15)

So, we have been commissioned to be part of God's original plan (as stated in verse three of the Bible), that light will come into darkness.

## ◆ Scripture to Read

Explain: At the age of 30, Jesus walked into the river Jordan to be baptised by his cousin John.

**Reference:** Matthew 3:16–17.

**Text:** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE TRINITY AT JESUS' BAPTISM

Emphasise the following:

- This moment marked the beginning of the most amazing three years anyone has ever lived on this earth. Three years that has turned the world upside down, so much so, that even the years are numbered after when Jesus walked on the earth.

- When Jesus was baptised, the whole of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), were involved.

## ◆ Questions to Reflect

As we did before, let us consider:

- What is each member of the Holy Trinity doing in this passage?
  - *the Son — is surrendering to the will of his Father, again!  
...baptism is symbolic of surrender.*
  - *the Father — is speaking out of heaven, again!*
  - *the Holy Spirit — is hovering over the water, again!*

## ◆ Points to Focus

Ask: Why does the Holy Spirit hover over the water?

- in Genesis 8 we find that Noah sends a dove from the ark. The dove hovers over the water looking for a landing place.
- So, from the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit has been hovering over the water looking for a landing place.
- As Jesus comes out of the water at his baptism, the Holy Spirit finds the perfect landing place: a human being whose life is completely surrendered to the purposes of God!
- Three year later, the Holy Spirit found another landing place on the disciples at the day of Pentecost, and the church was born.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

Explain: Over the next few mornings, we are going to focus on our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Each morning we will reflect on a different symbol of the Holy Spirit. Today we have the picture of a dove.

Highlight the following:

- The Holy Spirit is hovering over the water this morning.
- The Holy Spirit is not just looking for a landing place.
- The Holy Spirit is looking for a dwelling place, where God can live by his Spirit:

**Reference:** Ephesians 2:20–22.

**Text:** You are fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to become a landing place for the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the picture of the dove flying.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to come into the river to:

- Surrender to Jesus.
- Hear the voice of the Father.
- Become a landing place for the Holy Spirit.

Invite participants to kneel in surrender to Jesus.

Lead the participants in a prayer of surrender.

Invite the participants to lift up their heads to hear the voice of the Father.



Speak these words over them:

Your Heavenly Father says to you:

- You are my dearly loved son.
- You are my dearly loved daughter.
- You bring me great joy.

Invite the participants to reach out their hands to receive the Holy Spirit.

Speak out the following:

- We welcome you Holy Spirit.
- Come and rest on us.
- Come and dwell in us.

## **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 3 Devotion 2

### Holy Spirit as Water

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Place a glass and a jug of water on a table at the front of the room.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by pouring some water into the glass.

Explain: Yesterday we reflected on the truth that the Holy Spirit is not simply looking for a landing place. Rather, the Holy Spirit is looking for a dwelling place, where God can live by his Spirit.

This morning we will explore the Holy Spirit as a river of living water.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Invite responses to the following question:

- What is the significance of WATER as a symbol of the Holy Spirit?

Some possible responses:

- *Water washes and cleanses (Naaman in 2 Kings 5).*
- *Water quenches our thirst (John 7:37).*
- *Water flows like a river (John 7:38).*
- *Water refreshes the earth, like rain and dew.*

#### ◆ Points to Focus

**THE RIVER FLOWS FROM THE TEMPLE**

Explain the following:

Both as individuals and together, we are a temple for the Holy Spirit.

- Individually:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...  
— 1 Corinthians 6:19.

- Together:

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.  
— Ephesians 2:21–22.

Ezekiel has three different visions of God's temple.

1. In first vision of the temple, Ezekiel sees the glory of God leaving the temple because of the people's idolatry.  
— Ezekiel 8 to 11.
2. In Ezekiel's second vision, he sees the glory of God coming back into the temple. The glory of God comes in 'like the roar of rushing water'.  
— Ezekiel 43:2.
3. In Ezekiel's third vision, he sees the river flowing out from the temple. It is a river that brings life, nourishment and healing.  
— Ezekiel 47:1–12.

We are the temple and the Holy Spirit is the river.

- Before the river can flow from us, the river needs to flow into us.
- We cannot give away something that we have not first received.

Other people will catch hold of who we are, rather than what we say we are.

- We could call this 'the law of mumps and measles' (two childhood diseases): If I tell you that I have mumps, when I actually I have measles, what are you most likely to catch from me? You will (of course) catch measles.

So, people catch more what we are than of what we say!

In Ezekiel's vision of a river flowing from the temple, there are different depths of water:

- ankle–deep water;
- knee–deep water;
- waist–deep water; and
- water to swim in, too deep to stand.

These depths represent four levels of surrender. The deeper we go into God’s river, the more it releases the Holy Spirit to:

- flow in us; and
- flow from us to others.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to invite the Holy Spirit to flow in us and through us.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the a long strip of blue cloth across the floor symbolising a river.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to STAND in the river.

Read the following passage:

**Reference:** Ezekiel 47:1–3.

In my vision the man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side. As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his

hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep.

Use this imagery to highlight the following:

- Imagine you are standing ankle deep in the river.
- Reflect on that moment when Jesus got up from the table, wrapped a towel around his waist, filled a bowl of water and began to wash his disciples' feet.
- Allow Jesus to wash your feet.
- Remember that before we can wash the feet of others we must first allow Jesus to wash our feet.

Read the following passage:

**Reference:** Ezekiel 47:4a.

He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep.

Invite participants to KNEEL in the river.

Use this imagery to highlight the following:

- Imagine you are knee deep in the river.
- Remember that Jesus went on to say, "In the same way I have washed your feet, you are to wash each other's feet."
- We kneel in humility as servants.

Pray this short prayer:

- We surrender to you Jesus.  
We let go of our PRIDE and SELF-CENTEREDNESS.  
We receive your heart of COMPASSION for others.

Read the following passage:

**Reference:** Ezekiel 47:4b.

He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was up to the waist.

Invite participants to SIT in the river.

Use this imagery to highlight the following:

- Imagine you are waist deep in the river.
- Relax and enjoy sitting at your Father's feet.
- Reflect on that moment when Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus while Martha was busy and stressed.
- Remember Jesus said, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Pray this short prayer:

- We surrender to you Jesus.  
We let go of STRIVING and STRESS.  
We receive your PEACE.

Read the following passage:

**Reference:** Ezekiel 47:5.

He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in — a river that no one could cross.

Invite participants to LIE DOWN in the river.

Use this imagery to highlight the following:

- There comes a point in our journey with God where we have to take our feet off the bottom and dare to flow with where the river takes us.

Pray this short prayer:

- We surrender to you Jesus.  
We let go of FEAR and CONTROL.  
We give you permission to take us where you want us to go.

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

# ■ Course 3 Devotion 3

## Holy Spirit as Oil

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### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Place a bowl and a bottle of oil on a table at the front of the room.

### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by pouring some oil into the bowl.

Explain: This morning we will explore the Holy Spirit through the biblical imagery of oil.

### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Invite responses to the following question:

- What is the significance of OIL as a symbol of the Holy Spirit?

Some possible responses:

- *Oil was used to anoint kings and priests.*
- *Oil was burnt in lamps to give light.*
- *Oil was used to make someone beautiful (Esther 2:12, Matthew 6:17).*
- *Oil was used for healing (Luke 10:34).*
- *Also, oil was used in food preparation, and as an offering.*
- *Oil symbolises joy (Hebrews 1:9).*

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THREE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF A HEBREW BOY

Explain the following:

There were three crucial events in the life of a Hebrew boy growing up, occasions when he became the centre of attention:

1. CIRCUMCISION — at 8 days old.
  - Circumcision means 'Covenant Child'.
  - Was Jesus circumcised?  
Yes, Jesus was circumcised when he was 8 days old,  
— Luke 2:21.
2. BAR MITZVAH — 13 years of age.
  - Bar Mitzvah means 'Son Accountable'.
  - From this time, the son becomes accountable for keeping the law of Moses.
  - The son also becomes an apprentice in his human father's business.
  - Did Jesus have a bar mitzvah?  
The Bible doesn't say, but something did happen in Jesus' bar mitzvah year. Jesus goes missing. When his parents find him, he says:  
"Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" (NIV)  
"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"  
— Luke 2:49 (NKJV)
  - So, from this moment on, Jesus became an apprentice in his Heavenly Father's business.  
We don't hear anything else about Jesus until he is 30 years of age.
3. HUIOTHESIA — 30 years of age.
  - Huiiothesia means 'Son Placement'.



The word appears five times in the New Testament and is only used by the apostle Paul. Huiiothesia has often been translated in our Bibles as the word 'adoption'.

Some theologians believe the Paul was referring to the Roman form of adoption. However, other scholars believe that Paul was referring to a first century Jewish ceremony at which a father would transfer his authority to his son.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY CEREMONY

Explain the following:

The proper age for this ceremony was when the son was 30, but it was always at the father's discretion — when he felt it was the right time. In fact it didn't even have to happen at all if the father didn't feel his son was ready

- If the son was 30, it is most likely that the father would be getting close to 50 years of age.
- In a culture where life expectancy was significantly lower, the father would need his son to take a greater responsibility in the family business.

How did the ceremony happen?

- The father would book a venue and invite prominent people from the community to the ceremony.
- At the ceremony, the father would put his hand on his son's head and say, "This is my son, I am pleased with him. Today, I bestow my powers and authority on him."
- Everyone at the ceremony knew from this moment on that if they saw the son in the marketplace they could treat the son as though they were dealing directly with the father.

In the Bible 30 years is considered the age of maturity.

At the age of 30:

- David became king (2 Samuel 5:4)

- Joseph was taken from prison and presented before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46).
- Ezekiel became prophet (Ezekiel 1:1).
- A Levite would start his priestly ministry (Numbers 4:3).
- John and Baptist came out of the wilderness and began baptising people (Luke 3:3).
- Jesus was baptised (Luke 3:21–23).

## ◆ Points to Focus

### **JESUS' RECEIVES THE FATHER'S AUTHORITY**

Explain the following:

Jesus had served his apprenticeship and had come to maturity. It was now time for the Father to bestow his powers and authority on him.

As Jesus came up out of the water and the Holy Spirit came on him in the form of a dove. It is as though the Father reaches down from heaven and placed his hand on Jesus' head.

- Jesus is affirmed by his Father:  
 "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."  
 — Luke 3:22 (NLT).
- Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit:  
 the power and authority of the Father are bestowed on Jesus.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### **SOMETHING THAT ONLY YOU CAN DO**

Our Heavenly Father is looking for sons and daughters who have come to maturity, in order that he can bestow his power and authority on them:

- Each of us have a unique calling from God.
- There is something that you are called to, that no one other than you will ever be able to do.

- The question is: to what extent are we prepared to embrace God's calling on our lives?
- Remember that when the angel appeared to Mary and told her she would have a son, she responded by saying:  
 "May your word to me be fulfilled."  
 — Luke 1:38.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit on our lives.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

in the following actions, the bottle of oil and the bowl are used.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Give the following directions:

- As the music plays, take a few moments to reflect on what God has called you to do and be.  
 You may have a sense of what this is. Or you may not have a sense of what this is. This is OK.
- The most important question is:  
 Will you say, "Yes," to what God is calling you to in life?
- Invite participants to make a response to God by:  
 Coming into the river, and kneeling as act of surrender.

Anoint each person with the oil by dipping a finger in the bowl with the oil, and marking a cross on their forehead.

As you do this for each person, say the following words to them:

- "Receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit to live the life to which you have been called."

### **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 3 Devotion 4

### Holy Spirit as Fire

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of red cloth on the floor to symbolise a river of fire.
- Place a candle on a table at the front of the room.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by lighting the candle.

Explain: This morning we will explore the Holy Spirit through the biblical imagery of fire.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Invite responses to the following question:

- What is the significance of FIRE as a symbol of the Holy Spirit?

Some possible responses:

- *Fire burns on the altar for the burnt offerings (Leviticus 6:12–13).*
- *Fire ignites the incense, releasing fragrant smoke (Leviticus 16:13).*
- *Fire provides warmth and light.*
- *Fire burns up rubbish.*
- *Fire refines silver or gold, making them pure (Malachi 3:2–3).*

Read the following verse:

**Reference:** Luke 3:16.

"I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Ask: What is the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire?

Emphasise the following:

- The disciples experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire on the day of Pentecost.

**Reference:** Acts 2:1–4.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

- Notice how on the day of Pentecost there were two different symbols of the Holy Spirit:  
FIRE — which we will look at today.  
WIND — which we will look at tomorrow.

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WILDERNESS

Explain the following:

We are refined by the fire of the Holy Spirit as we travel through the wilderness:

- We all go through times of wilderness, where life is difficult:
  - The people of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness.
  - Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness.
- Often when times are tough, when life is difficult, the Holy Spirit does his best work in us:
  - The work of refining us.

— The work of producing fruit in our lives.

- Following his baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness.
  - Notice how Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1).
  - Jesus then left the wilderness full of the POWER of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14).

## TEMPTATIONS IN THE WILDERNESS

Whereas the people of Israel struggled for 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus overcame in just 40 days.

### 1. FIRST TEMPTATION

- ISRAEL — complained about the manna from heaven (Numbers 11:6).
- JESUS — was content to go without bread.

As the apostle Paul later says:

**Reference:** Philippians 4:12.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

### 2. SECOND TEMPTATION

- ISRAEL — bowed down to a golden calf (Exodus 32).
- JESUS — refused to bow down and worship Satan, but said: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matthew 4:10).

### 3. THIRD TEMPTATION

- ISRAEL — tested God in the wilderness by deliberately falling into sin (see Hebrews 3:7).
- JESUS — refused to deliberately fall from the temple, but said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matthew 4:7).

Explain the following:

Throughout the temptations, Satan taunted Jesus with the words, "If you are the Son of God..."

- Why do you think Satan used these words?
- *Jesus had just come from his baptism where he heard his Father say, "This is my dearly loved so who brings me great joy".*
- *Satan was attempting to rob Jesus of the words he had heard from the mouth of God.*
- What was Jesus' response?
- *"People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)*
- *For Jesus, holding onto and feasting on the words of his Father, was more important to him than eating bread.*

From that moment on, Satan's number one strategy against humanity has been trying to get us to believe that we are less than who God says we are.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire is God's promise to you that whatever trials, hardships, and suffering you might experience in life, the Holy Spirit will do these three things:

- Be with you and never leave you

**Reference:** Psalm 139:7–10.

Where can I go from your Spirit. Where can I flee from your presence. If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

- Refine you like silver and purify you like gold

**Reference:** Zechariah 13:9.

I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'

- Produce his fruit in your life

**Reference:** Galatians 5:22–23.



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

## ◆ Practical Demonstration

### BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Explain the following.

Perhaps you are wondering: How can I be baptised in the Holy Spirit?

There are three things we need to do.

#### 1. ASK

**Reference:** Luke 11:11–13.

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ASK him.

#### 2. WAIT

**Reference:** Acts 1:4–5.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but WAIT for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

#### 3. RECEIVE

Ask for a volunteer for this practical demonstration.

Ask the volunteer to pass you a bible. Say, “please give it to me,” but when they offer it you, do not take it from them.

Now ask the participants the question: Why have I not got what I asked for?

- Is it because it wasn’t given?
- Or is it because I didn’t receive it?

Explain: We must place ourselves in the posture to receive.

- It is helpful to physically put our hands out.

- It is even more important that we are putting our hearts in an attitude open to receive.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the candle that has been lit.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Invite participants to stand and put their hands out to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

- Invite the Holy Spirit to come.
- Wait.
- Encourage those who are standing to receive.

Next, invite participants who know or feel they are currently going through the wilderness, to come into the river (to stand or kneel on the strip of red cloth).

- Read the following scripture over them.

**Reference:** Isaiah 43:1–3.

But now, this is what the Lord says — he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."

## **Closing Pause**

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.

## ■ Course 3 Devotion 5

### Holy Spirit as Wind

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#### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Lay a strip of blue cloth on the floor to symbolise a river.
- Put up on the wall two pictures: an eagle soaring high, and a sailing boat out on the water.
- You need to have a balloon ready to place on a table at the front of the room.

#### ◆ Opening Intro

Begin the devotion by placing the balloon on the table (do not inflate it yet!). Simply stretch it out a few times, and place it on the table.

Explain: This morning we will explore the Holy Spirit through the biblical imagery of wind.

#### ◆ Questions to Reflect

Invite responses to the following question:

- What is the significance of WIND as a symbol of the Holy Spirit?

Some possible responses:

- *Wind can be like a powerful hurricane.*
- *Wind blows away the chaff (the husks), leaving the kernels of wheat.*
- *Breath gives all creatures life.*

Explain: This morning we will be looking at two aspects of the Holy Spirit being likened to wind:

1. The breath of God.

2. A mighty rushing wind (or a sound like the blowing of a violent wind).

## ◆ Points to Focus

### THE BREATH OF GOD

Explain the following:

For many of us (not all) it can be easier to understand and relate to Father and Jesus than it is to relate to the Holy Spirit.

- We can relate to Father because we have all had a father (even if for some this has been painful)
- We can relate to Jesus because he became human.
- The Holy Spirit however, can be more difficult for us to comprehend as the Holy Spirit doesn't have form.

Notice how the two most intimate relationships we experience as human beings, are used to describe our relationship with Father and with Jesus:

- Husband and wife — we are the bride of Christ.
- Parent and child — we are God's children.

Our relationship with Holy Spirit is even closer than these.

Whereas we have used EXTERNAL relationships (his children and his bride) to describe our relationship with Father and with Jesus, our relationship with Holy Spirit is an INTERNAL relationship.

## ◆ Practical Demonstration

Pick up the balloon from the table, and blow into it to inflate it. Tie it to keep the air in.

Emphasise the following:

- When my breath is breathed into the balloon:
  - the balloon changes shape; and
  - my breath takes on form.

- When we allow God's breath to come into us:
  - we are changed; and
  - we give the Holy Spirit a form.

In so doing we become the hands and feet of Jesus on Earth.

## ◆ Points to Focus

Explain the following:

We were made to be filled with the Holy Spirit (the breath of God).

**Reference:** Genesis 2:7.

Then the Lord God formed a human from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living being.

**Reference:** John 20:21–22.

Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Emphasise the following:

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force.

- The Holy Spirit does not take us over by force.
- The Holy Spirit comes where the Holy Spirit is welcomed.

The Holy Spirit is a person with whom we can have a relationship.

In the scripture we find personal references, personal attributes, and personal actions of the Holy Spirit.

- Personal references to the Holy Spirit:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

— John 16:13.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us.

— Romans 8:26.

- Personal attributes of the holy Spirit:
  - the Holy Spirit searches: 1 Corinthians 2:10.
  - the Holy Spirit knows: 1 Corinthians 2:11.
  - the Holy Spirit grieves: Ephesians 4:30.
  - the Holy Spirit determines: 1 Corinthians 12:11.
- Personal actions of the Holy Spirit:
  - the Holy Spirit speaks: Acts 13:2.
  - the Holy Spirit testifies: John 15:26.
  - the Holy Spirit teaches: John 14:6.
  - the Holy Spirit intercedes: Romans 8:26.
  - the Holy Spirit guides: John 16:13.
- The Holy Spirit is distinct from his power:
 

The Holy Spirit is not a power but the Holy Spirit has power.

  - the Holy Spirit and power: Acts 10:38.
  - the power of the Holy Spirit: Romans 15:13.

## ◆ Scripture to Read

### THE MIGHTY RUSHING WIND

Remind everyone: Before Jesus ascended to heaven he said to his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..." (Acts 1:8).

Ten days later it happened...

**Reference:** Acts 2:1–2.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

The prophetic action which Jesus had performed when he breathed on his disciples (in John 20:22), now became a reality as the breath became like the blowing of a violent wind, and Jesus' disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said:

**Reference:** John 14:12.

“Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Yesterday we looked at how the Holy Spirit produces fruit in us. The Holy Spirit also gives gifts which enable us to operate in the supernatural.

**Reference:** 1 Corinthians 12:7–10.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12 ends with an encouragement for us to earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.

## ◆ Image to Inspire

Point to the pictures on the wall and explain: We are now going to consider two pictures.

### 1. A SAILING BOAT

- There is a big difference between rowing and sailing:
  - rowing is what I can achieve in my own strength;
  - sailing is about catching the wind of God’s Spirit in my sails.
- It is time for us to put our oars away, to stop rowing and to learn how to sail.
- Put your sails up and turn them to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit.
- Learn to cooperate with the wind of the Holy Spirit and allow him to lead you.



## 2. A SOARING EAGLE

- An eagle is a heavy bird. It is unable to fly high simply by flapping its wings.
- An eagle is reliant on the wind thermals (air currents) to lift it.
- When an eagle catches the wind thermals, it can fly higher than any other bird.

**Reference:** Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV).

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

Note that the word 'wait' in this passage is not a passive waiting, like waiting in a queue at doctor's surgery. It is a ready alert waiting packed with anticipation and expectation. It is like the kind of waiting you would do when you have setup an ambush. It is full of energy poised and bursting to be released.

## ■ Personal Encounter

Invitation: to wait for the breath and wind of the Holy Spirit.

## ◆ Music to Play

Select a piece of relaxing, calming music.

## ◆ Symbolic Item

Focus on the inflated balloon, and also on the two pictures of the soaring eagle and the sailing boat.

## ◆ Action to Encourage

Guide the participants through the following meditative reflection.

Encourage participants to wait.

Encourage participants to become aware of their own breathing.

Say the following words:

- We thank you Holy Spirit that you have been hovering over the water looking for a landing place, a dwelling place.
- Come Holy Spirit and land on us, and dwell in us.

As you breathe in:

- invite the Holy Spirit (the breath of God) to come into you.

As you breathe out:

- ask the Holy Spirit to flow from you to others.

Invite participants to raise their arms like a sail.

Say the following words:

- Holy Spirit, as I put away my oars, come and fill these sails with the wind of your Spirit.

Invite participants to stretch out their arms out like an eagle.

Say the following words:

- Holy Spirit, give me the courage to launch out in faith and catch the wind thermals of your Spirit. Bring me to new heights.

Invite participants to place their hands out in front of them to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Say the following words:

- Holy Spirit, I receive every gift you want to give to me. Teach me how and when to use these new gifts.
- Holy Spirit, what gifts are you giving me today?
- Take a moment to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

Encourage the participants to wait and listen.

## ◆ Closing Pause

After a few moments for quiet prayerful reflection, draw the devotions to a close. Give the participants a three minute break before beginning the first module for today.



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