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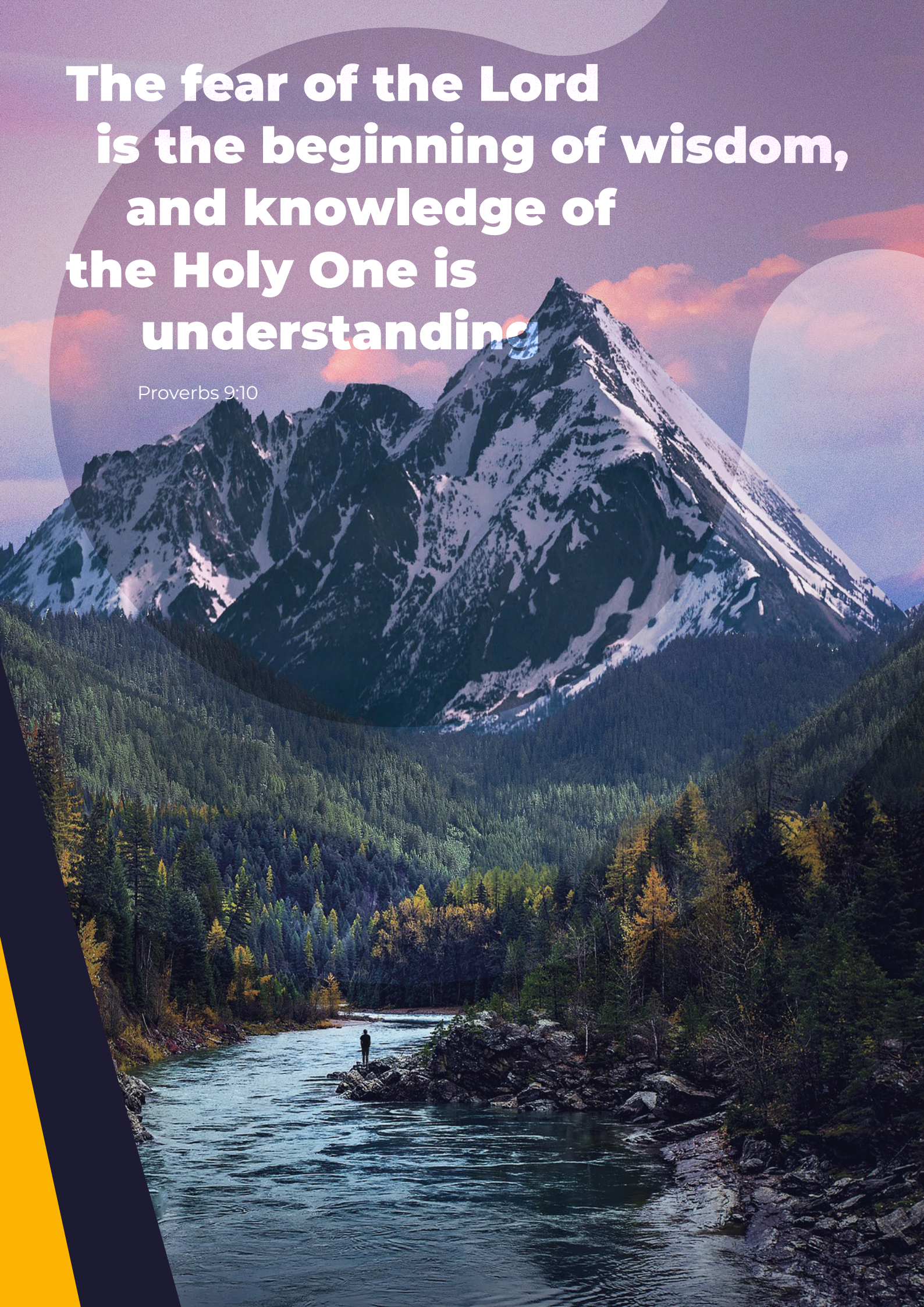


Content

- 04** | What is fasting?
- 05** | Different ways to fast
- 08** | What is prayer?
- 09** | ACTS - a prayer model
- 12** | S.O.A.P. - a bible study model
- 14** | Daily devotions

**The fear of the Lord
is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of
the Holy One is
understanding**

Proverbs 9:10



What is fasting?

This year, we, as OpenChurch, invite you to join us on a seven-day prayer and fasting journey. We will together seek God for this New Year and the exciting season that is in front of us. Our prayer for you is that you will experience God in a new and refreshing way.

To fast is to abstain from something that normally takes our time and attention, to create opportunity to spend time to seek God and fellowship with Him. Extra time for prayer and meditation is a crucial part of fasting.



Different ways to fast

There are many ways to fast. Jesus' fast in the desert was on water only. We recommend one of the following, as they are options that most people can manage. The aim is not to fast in a specific way, but to give as many as possible a good experience in fasting.



Daniels fast

- Fruits
- Nuts
- Vegetables
- Wholemeal

Fluid fast

- Water
- Fruit juices
- Soups
- No solid foods



Media faste

- Abstain from media such as:
- TV
- Social media
- Movies

Daniel-fast

The Daniel Fast comes from the book of Daniel Chapter 1 where Daniel and his friends request not to eat the Kings food, but instead a diet of fruit and vegetables.

What can you eat?

When you are on a Daniel fast, you eat plant based foods which are both tasty and nutritious. The following list will help you to navigate in which foods you can eat and which foods to avoid during a Daniel Fast.

Food you can eat:

Wholemeal: Brown rice, bulgur wheat, barley, millet, oats, quinoa, rye, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat products and wild rice.

Beans and legumes: black beans, cannellini beans, chick peas, kidney beans, lentils, peanuts, peas

Nuts and seeds: almonds, cashew nuts, hazel nuts, macadamia nuts, various types of nut butter, peanuts, pecan nuts, pumpkin seeds, pistachio nuts, walnuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, poppy seeds

Vegetables: all types of vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried, fluid and canned)

Fruit: All types of fruit (fresh, frozen, dried, WITHOUT added sugar, juiced and canned)

Oil: All types of oil, but use sparingly

Additional foods: Bread without yeast (whole wheat bread without yeast, sugar or preservatives. All spices and herbs including salt and pepper are permitted)

Fluids: water should be your primary drink throughout the Daniel fast. All types of water with or without fizz, bottled water or water from the tap are permitted. Juices are permitted if they are 100% fruit juices, but use in moderation, not concentrates that are diluted with water.

Food you should avoid:

Animal products: all meat, milk products, fish and eggs

Added Sugar: honey, sweeteners, brown sugar, syrup and all types of sugar.

Processed wheat, all white flour products and white rice

Processed Foods: food with artificial additives, chemicals and preservatives

Fried Foods: chips (baked is permitted)


Fats: butter, margarine, animal fat etc

Chocolate: dark, milk and white chocolate, chocolate sauce and cocoa

Drinks with caffeine and alcohol: alcohol, coffee, tea with caffeine, sodas and energy drinks.

What is prayer?

Prayer is a dialog, talking with God, where we invite Him into our daily lives and give Him room to share His thoughts with us. Prayer flows from a place of assurance that God is the Creator who has the big picture. He also has the power to help us in life. In prayer there is both a place to express our trust in God and also to express our insecurities about life's challenges.



Do **not** be
anxious for anything,
but in **every situation**,
by prayer and petition,
with **thanksgiving**, present
your requests **to God.**

Phillippians 4:6

ACTS

A prayer model

Adoration

Adoration is praise and worship. Adoration of God as our Lord means that we give Him our hearts in affectionate devotion and honour Him for His awesome power, wisdom, strength, goodness, mercy and love. *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 8:38-39*

Scriptures to meditate on:

Deut 10:20-12
Deut 32:4
2 Sam 7:22
1 Chron 16:23-25
Neh 9:5-6
Psalms 7:18
Psalms 9:2-3
Psalms 57:10-12
Psalms 63:2-8
Psalms 66:1-4
Psalms 71:14-24
Psalms 146:1-6

Pray this prayer:

You are a loving God. You are always by my side. Regardless of where I go, you are always waiting to reveal yourself to me.

Confession

Confession is asking forgiveness and turning away from your sinful ways. God is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins. Through confession and repentance we become more like Jesus. When you confess your sin in a specific area, then pray for God to transform you to the opposite (e.g. pray for joy instead of depression)

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." - Romans 12:2

Pray this prayer:

God, help me to renew my mind and may you change my desires so they become what you desire.

Scriptures to meditate on:

2 Sam 24:10
Psalms 25:6-7
Psalms 32:3-5
Psalms 38:18-19
Psalms 51:3-12
Psalms 103:8-14
Psalms 130:1-4
Jonah 2:1-10

Thanksgiving

Thank God for all He has already done in your life and meditate on the many blessing you have in your life. Thank Him for His faithfulness in keeping His promises to you, your family, and your friends regardless of the circumstances. *"You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."* - Psalms 118:28-29

Pray this prayer:

Thank you God for your faithfulness in keeping your promises to me. Thank you for all the blessings you have shared with me.

Scriptures to meditate on:

2 Sam 22:48-50
1 Chron 16:8-12
1 Chron 16:23-26
Psalms 23:6
Psalms 50:14
Psalms 50:23

Supplication

Pray that God will give you your heart's desires and that His will may come to pass in your life. Pray that it may be your heart's desire to follow His Word and His counsel.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
- Hebrews 4:16

Pray this prayer:

I give you my will that it may be in line with yours God. Give me your heart's desires, so that they may bring about your purpose for my life.

Scriptures to meditate on:

1 Chron 4:10
2 Chron 20:9
Psalms 18:16-19
Psalms 62:7-8
Psalms 116:1-7
Psalms 119:169-170
Psalms 142
Psalms 143:7-12
Matt 6:9-14
Rom 15:30
Eph 3:14-21
Phil 4:6-7

S.O.A.P.

How to use!

We use the SOAP method as a guide to our bible reading and journaling every day. You will need a bible, a pen and a book to write in.





Scripture

Open your bible at your reading for the day. Take time to read and pray that God will speak to you. When you are done, look for which particular verse spoke to you specially and note it down in your journal.

Observation

What is God saying to you through this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you.



Application

Do what you have read and think about how you can apply it in your personal life. Maybe it is advice, encouragement, a new promise or a correction in a specific area of your life. Write down how you can apply this scripture in your life today.

Prayer

It can be as simple as asking God to help you to put the scripture into practise, or prayer a prayer for greater insight into what He wants to reveal to you. Remember prayer is a conversation, so make sure you listen to what God has to say and remember to write it down.



Ephesians 4:2-6

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Connected - with a greater reality

In a hectic world where the zeitgeist dictates individualism, and stress often characterizes our everyday life, today's scripture reminds us of the importance of cultivating values such as humility, friendliness, patience and love. These timeless values not only form the foundation for harmonious communities, but they are also the key to maintaining the unity and peace that the Holy Spirit wants to create between people.

To understand life and live with meaning and the experience of perspective, we must understand the purpose of our existence. One of the most central points in this regard is knowing how you are connected, with whom and why. The anchor point in our existence and coexistence has to be something bigger if it is to be sustainable and meaningful.

This is where the Holy Spirit comes into the picture. The Holy Spirit gathers us to what comes from the heart of God. God calls us to be connected to Him and His greater reality. It is a call to think more deeply about our relationships, our priorities and our faith. The unity and peace that can bind us together and inspire us to put aside our own needs for the community is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

Living for oneself is possible in limited quantities. But it is not healthy, because we are made for something else. We are created for unity and to be connected in community. Let the fruit of a life with the Holy Spirit have a large place in your life and everyday life. Then you get an unshakable connection with both God and the people around you. Then generations will meet crosswise and with respect. Cultures will enrich each other. The past and the future will be seen in a different light, and the church will become a beacon that guides people to hope, freedom and the heart of the Father. It will be the happiness of the city!

Thought of the day

In a world characterized by individualism, it is important to cultivate values such as humility, friendliness, patience and love. This is the foundation for harmonious communities and the unity and peace that the Holy Spirit wants to create among us.

Prayer of the day

Heavenly Father! Today let us experience the meaning of being connected to you. We pray that we may be bearers of the values that come from you, so that we remain one and so that the world will understand that Jesus Christ is God's savior!

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Malachai 4:6

He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.

Connected across the generation gap

Almost 20 years ago, I wrote a small book called "The Caleb generation, the church's heirloom silver". The idea of the book was to make clear the enormous importance God attaches to the older generation. The book was a call to them not to withdraw or retire themselves from the fantastic dream that the church has in our time.

At the same time, I wanted to describe how much it is on God's heart that the generations serve together and what enormous fruit it can bring, but also how great the consequence is when it does not appear. That is what Malachi chapter 4:6 is about.

The Bible is full of examples of both outcomes. I'll start this devotional off in a small book in the Old Testament, namely the Book of Esther, which describes in the most beautiful way what it can look like when it is possible to get the generations to see the value in each other and to serve together. Historically, we are approx. 475 years before our era in the great Persian Empire, where the Jews are in exile.

The Book of Esther tells how an elderly gentleman named Mordecai adopts a little orphan girl named Esther. The book describes how the little girl, who started her life as an orphan, miraculously ended up becoming queen of the Persian kingdom.

The book is also a story about how God uses Esther and Mordecai to save the Jewish people from an impending genocide. Because Esther has become queen, she is finally in a position where she has the opportunity to respond to the terrible message that the entire Jewish people will be exterminated on one and the same day. But her courage fails her, probably because of her young age, and she is hesitant and reluctant, and doesn't quite know how to handle the situation.

Here the elderly gentleman Mordecai comes to her aid, as God gives him a prophetic word that it is precisely for a time like this that God has given Esther royal dignity. The prophetic word gives Esther courage and clarity on how to respond, and miraculously God uses these two to save the Jewish people from being exterminated.

In this way, the book of Esther becomes a fantastic example that when the generations turn their hearts towards each other and learn from each other, it becomes a strong bulwark against the plans of the evil one.

Thought of the day:

Esther might have become queen without Mordecai's help, but she could never have become the deliverer of the land without him.

Prayer of the day:

Heavenly Father, we ask that you will give us fresh revelation about how we can appreciate this for the generations that have gone before and that will come after us. We pray for the older generation in our church that you will fill them with strength, wisdom and prophetic spirit as you filled Mordecai.

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Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth and tell a story. I will speak about things that were hidden. They happened a long time ago. We have heard about them and we know them. Our people who lived before us have told us about them. We won't hide them from our children. We will tell them to those who live after us. We will tell them what the LORD has done that is worthy of praise. We will talk about his power and the wonderful things he has done.

Connected Through an Eternal Connection

"History is who we are and why we are the way we are." states the American historian David McCullough. What has happened tells us who we are and at the same time tells us why we are just them - and no one else. As God's church we have a long and rich history, dating all the way back to the morning of Pentecost when The Spirit fell (Acts 2) and since that day the Church of God has preached the message of an eternal connection - an open way between God and man. We have been entrusted with a message which, in addition to historical events, also rests on three essential points: a connection to the depths of history depths, a connection to the reality of today and a connection to the hope of the future.

The depths of history: Since the birth of the church, it has been one of the central players in world history. From the early Christian communities to the time of the Reformation and right up to the modern age, the church has shaped our culture, morality and society. All over the world, church buildings, art and Christian teachings bear witness to the church as a living and vital part of history. The author of Hebrews encourages us to look to the many heroes of faith who have shaped history (Heb. 11). Abraham, Gideon, Moses and many others carried visions given by God and their faith led to actions that were engraved in the pages of history.

Today's reality: We carry that legacy with us into our times. To be a bridge between God and man in a world marked by change. Paul concludes chapter 2 of Ephesians by describing the church as a building built on a solid foundation laid by the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the paramount cornerstone. A building that every believer by virtue of Christ has become a part of and through which the wisdom of God is now expressed. As a church in our city, we are not just a part of history, but a timeless communicator of God's unchanging truth about salvation and reconciliation.

The hope of the future: With that truth we connect people's past and present with the future that God has for every person. Paul describes us as ambassadors for Christ with the message that we are all loved and accepted by God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Millions of church builders have been on that mission throughout history and laid the stones we are now building on. A foundation that the generations after us will continue to build on. We can shape the present and future of this world by being the salt and light that Jesus spoke of. It may feel insignificant at the moment, but every stone laid in that building helps to influence the next generation. Daily, your life and mine can testify to the eternal connection God has with this world through his church.

Thought of the day:

God has entrusted us to be His church in our time and build on what has been entrusted to us. Today, let us help proclaim that the kingdom of God has come near.

Prayer of the day:

Thank you God that today we can convey your salvation and reconciliation to people around us. Give us grace and strength to fill the place that is ours in the time we live. Help us when we feel powerless in that task and fill us with joy at the role we are entrusted with.

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Jeremiah 29:7

Also work for the success of the city I have sent you to. Pray to the LORD for that city. If it succeeds, you too will enjoy success

The connection between city and church

– Our city, our responsibility

If we look at the life and work of Jesus, we see how he again and again turns things upside down. Before his work on earth, the place where you could meet God was in the temple. It has undoubtedly excluded a lot of people. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Jesus takes God out of the temple and out to people in their everyday life and the circumstances they were in. He meets people who had never dared to set foot in the temple, for various reasons e.g. the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus the tax collector and the woman who had suffered from bleeding for 12 years.

Jesus heals people in the streets, he preaches the word outside the temple. He shows mercy and speaks truth in a language that people can relate to, even in their own neighborhood. Jesus shows great love for people whom many do not count as anything. Jesus shows us that we as a church have a social responsibility. This can take the form of Christmas help or a network for needy families. It's about taking responsibility.

We must always remember that the church is not a building, but that we are the church, since the Spirit of God dwells in us and not in the temple. We have a responsibility to pray for our city - to pray that God may be known (not that OpenChurch may be known) and that God may meet people in their everyday lives. Here you and I can play an important role, since we can become the link between God and people. After all, we have colleagues, neighbours, friends, fellow students, sports friends etc. and there is always something we can do to help if we just keep our eyes and heart open.

We represent the kingdom of God where we are and can therefore ask God to give us new opportunities every day. Because we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ we are allowed to see ourselves as those who build a bridge between city and church (2 Cor 5:20-21).

Thought of the day:

As ambassadors, we represent the Kingdom of God to our city and are encouraged by the Bible to be a blessing factor in the city we are placed in. When the city is doing well, we are doing well.

Prayer of the day:

Lord, teach me to see people around me with your eyes. To be bold in reaching out and helping where I can. To dare to step in when it is possible for me to give my help. Give me wisdom to share with others today.

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Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Connected across borders - Come as you are!

The Christian community can set people free. It can transform people's lives. Every time I've gone astray, 9 times out of 10 God has helped me through other people. The church and community also have the potential to destroy people's lives when we act against God's will.

Throughout time, people have felt distant from God when the Christian community has failed to express the side of God that reaches beyond borders and takes care of "the stranger, the widow and the fatherless" (Deuteronomy 10:18).

The truth is that the vast majority of those who went from church outsiders to church regulars did so because they met God's heart expressed through another person's hospitality and care. The title "come as you are" is not a scripture taken directly from the Bible, but then again. Because when we read the Bible, we clearly notice that the Christian community creates relationships. It does so whenever a person is open to meeting God in community. This meeting can transform everything.

Today's verse is familiar to those of us who are familiar with faith. Jesus says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." We all carry burdens and grow weary. Therefore this invitation is something that is addressed to everyone and a handout we all need to accept.

Throughout the Bible, it is a theme to take care of the stranger and the one who is having a hard time. The church's task has always been to create a place where those who are strangers or feel alienated can be connected. The Gospel proclaims to the world: "Come as you are and experience God's power to transform every situation and every relationship."

Thought of the day:

The Christian community is called to be bridge builders between people, regardless of how alienated they feel in relation to God or other people.

Prayer of the day:

Jesus let us experience that you are in our midst. That you are in the middle of the community where everyone is welcome. Jesus, let us experience how you bind us together across cultures, nationalities and language barriers. But also for those who feel alienated and alone, we pray that they may find you in the community. Amen.

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Luke 24:32

They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

Connected in prayer

Do you also know periods when the fuse gets shorter, the laundry pile gets higher and everyone around seems to get a little more annoying? For me, these are some of the indicators that I am not feeling well inside. It makes me look for reasons and ask questions. Often I also begin to panic a little. It is gradually recognizable, and I practice catching it in advance. I have found that my life is balanced by the question; "How in love am I with Jesus?"

After the resurrection, two disciples were joined by Jesus on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35). They were in an emotional mess. They searched in vain for answers, but the one they used to ask was dead. As the resurrected Jesus walked with them, he began to put the events into perspective. When they recognized Jesus at the evening meal, it was not the answers that filled them, but rather their experience of hearts burning in the company of Jesus. His presence made their hearts glow anew.

Their conversation with Jesus connected them to him, just as we are connected to Jesus today through this conversation. A conversation-community of prayer - whether it is in the form of a walk, kneeling, a written note, raised hands in praise or over a cup of coffee with Jesus. Prayer has many expressions and lives both in everyday life, in devotional time and together with other Christians.

The prayer connects my heart to Jesus and it creates change. Thanksgiving gives new perspective, worship puts God first, prayer for help places burdens in God's hands, and in His presence, it's as if my own heart dries up. I fall in love with Jesus and that love connects me with him.

When Peter and John first had to defend the events of Pentecost, the Jewish leaders wondered how ordinary men could speak with such courage. The conclusion was simple: they had been with Jesus! (ApG. 4,13) Prayer fills us with a faith that gives us a boldness we would not otherwise have had. Everyday boldness. Faith for our city. A boldness and faith to step into all that God has for us as a church. It challenges each of us to be in love with Jesus and to stand together in prayer!

Thought of the day:

Our hearts are transformed in the fellowship and conversation with Jesus. Prayer helps to set the tone in our own lives and for us as a community.

Prayer of the day:

Jesus, right now I take time to be with you. Let my heart glow anew. Help me seek communion with you in all challenges.

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John 13:34-35

I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.

Connected - Through Discipleship of Christ

At first glance, this well-known Jesus quote points to the relationship between Christians. But is that the whole point of view? Of course, the text talks about the connectedness between Christians, but we also get an insight into the purpose of this connectedness. Love is the language that connects us to each other and the world around us. Love is - just like hate - an international language that can be understood by everyone and spoken by anyone who wants to. Following Christ is done by connecting with each other and the world in love.

It might sound rather rosy and cliché. Therefore, the reader must be aware that today's text is the prelude to the crucifixion, the failure of the disciples and the betrayal of Christ. And Jesus, who is familiar with it all, tries in advance to take the sting out of the disciples' internal power struggles and reproaches. Jesus' statements are not rosy... they are blood red. But without accusation.

We are all invited to participate in that sequel. In other words, striving to show charity to one another (Rom 12:10). It speaks a language that most people can understand. Even by all of us who have given up on relationships, yet choose to love again, to trust again, to give again. Because the alternative is not better.

I think the reason John 3:16 has so little impact in the world is because we forget 1 John 3:16 - "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; so we also owe to give life to the brothers".

Being a "fellow-walker" with another person in faith and life is the most valuable thing we can give another person. In OpenChurch, we in Herning, Copenhagen and Ndola have come together to highlight three ways in which this can happen. We pray that many will find opportunities in the future to make use of the three faith-journey tools that we will introduce to the church in 2024. One tool supports one-on-one conversations about faith and themes from the Bible. Another tool supports micro groups of three people who read the Gospels to see who Jesus is. A third tool is already familiar to many: connect groups, which talk about faith and life and pray together.

Thought of the day:

We connect with each other as Christians - but also with our fellow non-Christians - when we follow Jesus.

Prayer of the day:

Heavenly Father, help me to follow Jesus, so that it connects me both with you, with your church and with the world to which you have sent us.

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Experience God
imitate
Jesus

