

Permit No. MICA (P) 124/12/2009

DAILY *manna*

APRIL – JUNE 2010

GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Welcome again to another quarter of *Daily Manna* readings. The readings in this issue are, in many ways, most delightful and devotional. The simple reason is that we are going through the poetry of the Bible. In the Psalms, we find a treasure trove of God's promises, assurances, and words of encouragement. In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, we have a dispensary of divine wisdom. And in Song of Solomon, we have a love story beyond compare. It is our prayer that you will find great delight and blessing in reading.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you'll find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in depth study of the OT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

In His grace,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Psalm 115

LESSON

Worship only God and no one else

VERSE 18

But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

The reason why God commands us not to make graven images is mainly to prevent man from idolatry, both of himself and of others. Man has always been confident of his own abilities, often seeking to break away from God. With the same mentality, he often sets codes of conduct according to his own standards, not God's.

In this light, the Psalmist reminds us of the futility of worshipping idols. We try to make beautiful images with gold or silver but they are still non-living things. We waste our time in worshipping these things since they can neither hear our prayers nor answer us. It is no difference from worshipping a door or a pot. Neither should we worship a tree or any animal, for that matter.

We should worship God because He lives forever. He is our Creator. When we are in trouble, He is there to shield and protect us. God protects us while idols cannot even protect themselves. How many of these images and statues have already been destroyed, burnt or simply decayed?

God is always there for us when we cry to Him for help. We can be sure that He will help us. He blesses those who fear Him. Fearing God means coming to God and worshipping Him with a heart filled with gratitude and reverence. The Psalmist concludes with a call to worship and bless God forever. Be wise to heed God's words.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 107
ROMANS 1

THOUGHT

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. – Exodus 20:4

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 116***LESSON****Love the Lord our God****VERSE 1**

*I love the LORD, because he
hath heard my voice and
my supplications.*

We all know that God loves us. Not only does He tell us so in the Bible, He also shows His love to us by hearing our pleas. Why do we love God? We do because He first loved us. How, then, do we show God that we love Him?

Inwardly, we show our love by accepting Jesus as our Saviour. We take heed of His Word and abide by His commandments. We meditate upon the Bible and hide God's words in our hearts. Outwardly, we exhibit our love for God in our daily lives. If we have not changed inwardly, it will be reflected in our words and deeds. Before long, we will return to our old behaviour.

God forgives and blesses us only when we have Jesus in our hearts and call upon His name. A Christian is precious in God's sight. As humans, we understand what it means to cherish someone precious to us and often do anything we can for the one we love. What more do you think God will do for those whom He treasures? He even delivers our souls from death [v. 8]. Our souls live on forever.

Jesus promised to save us and He did so eventually by dying on the Cross. He kept His word. It is thus reasonable that we offer to Him our sacrifice of thanksgiving, calling upon the name of the Lord [v. 17]. Offering our sacrifice means obeying His Word and striving to serve Him with gratitude and joy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 108
ROMANS 2

THOUGHT

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. – Romans 12:1

BIBLE LESSON

Psalms 117–118

LESSON

God's enduring mercy

PSALM 118:8

*It is better to trust in
the LORD than to put
confidence in man.*

Today, nothing is made to last long, let alone “forever”. Our PCs, hand phones and toys fall apart after a short time. Only God is forever. Though Psalm 117 has only two verses, they are both assuring and instructive, teaching us that God’s mercy endures forever and His mercy alone deserves our praises.

This thought is again echoed in Psalm 118. We dare not trust in any other thing because none will be there for us forever. In our most difficult hour, when no one can help us, God is always there. No wonder this verse [Psalm 118:8] is placed in the centre of our Bible. God never changes [Hebrews 13:8]. He is the same today, tomorrow and forever. The Psalmist is full of praises for God because he knows God is always there for us. Even if we die physically, our souls live forever.

The Psalmist compares his uncountable enemies to the bees [Psalm 118:12]. This reminds us of the story of David and Goliath. The Israelites were terrified when they faced the Philistine giant, Goliath. But when David went before the giant and eventually defeated him, he relied solely on God as his helper. “... I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts ... This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand ...” [1 Samuel 17:45–46].

There is no safety except in Jesus. There is no victory without Christ. We have eternal life because Jesus has conquered death, and He invites us to rejoice in His victory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 109
ROMANS 3

THOUGHT

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? – 1 Corinthians 15:55

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 119:1–24***LESSON****Remember God's Word****VERSE 11**

*Thy word have I hid in
mine heart, that I might not
sin against thee.*

The unsaved or backslidden often perceive the life of a Christian as dull, without the “enjoyment” of the world. They should stop and examine if there is actually real joy in getting into debt, getting addicted to drugs and destroying their families through drinking. Broken families are often the results of such ‘enjoyment’. The world offers these people temporary joy, which actually brings permanent damage to their lives.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches us to lead a godly life, the reward of which is continuous blessing from God. Christians do not lead dull lives. We live our lives to the fullest, reaping bountiful joy from the fellowship of saints and with God. Most important of all, Christians get to enjoy eternal life.

God gives us directions in the Bible. We are to read it, treasure it and keep it in our hearts so that we will not sin against Him. But reading alone is not good enough. We should keep the commandments and instructions of the Bible in our hearts, and practise what it teaches. David had an opportunity to kill Saul but did not because he had God's words in his heart, “Touch not Mine anointed” [1 Chronicles 16:22].

God knows that our road ahead is difficult and slippery. He gives us warnings and directions to avoid the pitfalls. The Bible has all the time-proven principles to lead and guide us along life's stormy path while on earth. Our home is in heaven where we will enjoy eternity. But live a holy life while on earth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 110
ROMANS 4

THOUGHT

The Bible will keep us from sin or sin will keep us from the Bible.

BIBLE LESSON

Psalm 119:25–40

LESSON

**Choose the way that God
has prescribed**

VERSE 30

*I have chosen the way of
truth: thy judgements have
I laid before me.*

Whenever we come to a road junction, we have to choose the right path to take. Similarly, we have to make decisions at the crossroads of our lives. In such situations our choice should always be the path of truth.

But which is the way of truth? Jesus says that He is the truth and the way [John 14:6]. It is obvious then what we ought to do when it comes to choosing which road to follow in life. Always pray first before you decide. Regardless of how well we know the Bible, we still need to pray for God to lead us in the right direction. Praying means humbling ourselves before God and asking Him to take control of our lives and our plans.

When we are sick, we take our medication faithfully because we trust that the prescription is made for our recovery. We are spiritually sick because we are all sinners, and God has given us a prescription (the Bible) for our good. He wants us to live a blessed life and has recorded all His instructions for us in the Bible. Treasure the wisdom written therein. Place your trust in God and He will bless you for taking the path of truth.

God loves us even before we know the meaning of love. For this reason, He gives us eternal life through the redemption of His Son Jesus Christ. He gives us the best at all times.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PSALM 111
ROMANS 5**

THOUGHT

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? – Romans 8:32

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 119:41–64***LESSON****Choosing friends****VERSE 63**

*I am a companion of all
them that fear thee, and of
them that keep thy precepts.*

David trusted [v. 42] and loved the laws of God [v. 47]. He trusted them because they had comforted him in times of trouble [v. 50]. He expressed his love by meditating on them and obeying them [v. 48, 55]. His devotion to God's laws was such that he had no regard for those who did otherwise. In fact, he was furious with those who rejected God's law [v. 53]. For him, all who feared God and kept His commandments were his friends [v. 63].

All of us have friends. But many of these are at best classified as casual friends. As the saying goes, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." True friends are those who are on our side in times of need. But how can you tell who your true friends are in good times? This is where David's criteria of friends come in useful. Why does David use these criteria? He knew those who feared God and kept His commandments were also those who would be constrained by His love to provide the help needed in times of trouble.

Beware of people who have no regard for God's law. Not everyone you can talk to can be trusted. Choosing friends based on talking terms can spell trouble. Many have learnt their lessons the hard way. Let us learn from David.

If you want to know who can be trusted as a true friend, ask this question: Is he or she a God-fearing person?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 112
ROMANS 6

HYMN

What a friend we have in Jesus.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 119:65–80***LESSON****Afflictions are good for
us****VERSE 71***It is good for me that I have
been afflicted; that I might
learn thy statutes.*

The Psalmist acknowledged that he used to wander off until God disciplined him [v. 67]. And discipline often came to him in the form of afflictions. He recognised that he needed the discipline and that the afflictions had been beneficial for him because they taught him to pay attention to God's words [v. 71]. God's words, according to him, were better than thousands of gold and silver [v. 72].

However, while acknowledging that affliction was good for him, David did not ask to be afflicted. In fact, we find him asking to be comforted [v. 76] and be surrounded with mercies to live [v. 77] when afflicted. This is because affliction hurts and is not pleasant. Nevertheless, David knew that if he was afflicted, it was because God was disciplining, rather than punishing, him.

Many of us have gone through afflictions at one point or another in our lives. When it comes, sometimes it seems as if the weight of the whole world is upon us. And we are forced by our utter helplessness to go down on our knees. In the process, we are led to His Word and we begin to read and meditate at a frequency that we usually don't do, and with a fervour that we do not usually have.

If that is what you have gone through, you could say like David did, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 113
ROMANS 7

THOUGHT

**But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. –
Hebrews 12:8**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 119:81–96***LESSON****Surviving persecution****VERSE 87**

*They had almost consumed
me upon earth; but I
forsook not thy precepts.*

The Psalmist spoke of a time when he was under tremendous persecution from his enemies. Many of the persecutions apparently occurred without any cause [v. 86]. His life was at stake on many occasions [v. 87, 92, 95]. He sought deliverance from God but God appeared to be testing his patience [v. 84]. Nevertheless, he remained hopeful that God would come to his rescue and he continued to obey His commandments [v. 83]. He was sustained by joy [v. 92].

Persecutions made life difficult for the Psalmist. He struggled in the process. Despite the struggle, he seemed to have developed an inner strength acquired from a quiet assurance that God would eventually act on his behalf. What gave him such assurance? It was a relationship established on the foundation of a deep respect for the instructions of God, a respect that led him to understand who God is—He is good [v. 68], merciful [v. 77], loving [v. 88], eternal [v. 89], faithful [v. 90] and sovereign [v. 91].

The way to survive persecutions is to establish a right relationship with God and develop a love for His Word. Spend time meditating on them (in particular Who He is and how He deals with His people) and walk the upright path.

Expect persecutions when you follow the righteous path. Simply count on God to deliver you from them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 115
ROMANS 8

THOUGHT

These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. – John 16:33

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 119: 97–112***LESSON****How to meditate****VERSE 99**

*I have more understanding
than all my teachers: for
thy testimonies are my
meditation.*

The Psalmist claimed to have more understanding than all his teachers. He did not mention which particular teacher but used the word “all”. What gave him such confidence? According to the text [v. 99], he meditated constantly on God’s Word.

His confidence was built on the fact that he had with him the instructions of God. He loved these instructions. They had guided him in his dealing with his enemies [v. 98] and in his daily fight with evil [v. 101]. To him, God’s instructions tasted sweeter than honey [v. 103]. They were like a lamp that guided his feet and as a light to his path [v. 105].

Having the words of God but not spending time thinking about them is, however, of no use. The Psalmist knew it. So he spent time pondering over them. He thought deeply about them all day long [v. 97]. The Hebrew word translated as “meditation” here can also mean “prayer”. This tells us that meditation is more than just pondering. It involves a need to draw near to God.

To meditate, one needs to ponder and pray earnestly. Do you believe that the Bible is a light to your path? Do you spend time thinking over the words in it deeply? Above all, do you pray for understanding? If so, you can also claim to have more understanding than all your teachers.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 116–117
ROMANS 9

THOUGHT

**My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the
meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.**
– Psalm 49:3

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 119:113–128***LESSON****An hourly prayer****VERSE 117**

*Hold thou me up, and I
shall be safe: and I will
have respect unto thy
statutes continually.*

Hold Thou me up.” This is a prayer that reveals in the heart of the Psalmist a great sense of the need to be upheld and a strong conviction that God could do this. The Psalmist was deeply conscious of his utter helplessness. Yet he believed that the omnipotent grace of God could meet that helplessness and was confident that God would hear his cries and answer him, upholding him to the end.

If God upholds us, we shall be safe, according to the text. But safe from what? The true description of a Christian is that he walks in His uprightness. An upright man is a man who does not delight in evil. But the nature of man is such that sin comes easily. Sometimes, we break the moral law even before we know it. However, if God upholds us, we will be safe—safe from straying and from falling into temptation.

God does not delight in our fall. If we do stumble, He is quick to restore us. He does this all the time through the ministry of His Word and sometimes by chastisement. His words are like a wall of fire round about us, protecting us from lurking foes whose existence we are not even aware of.

In the hour of fainting, a gentle reminder may be graciously given. At the moment of temptation, a stern rebuke acts as a timely restraint. Eventually, we learn to respect God’s statutes.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 118
ROMANS 10

HYMN**Lord, I need Thee every hour.**

BIBLE LESSON

Psalm 119:129–144

LESSON

God directing our steps

VERSE 133

*Order my steps in thy word:
and let not any iniquity
have dominion over me.*

We will not be able to declare the goodness of God with conviction unless we have personally experienced it. Look at the life of the Psalmist. He was able to declare that the testimonies of God are wonderful, that His judgements are right, that His words are pure and that His law is the truth, because he had been walking close to God and had an intimate relationship with Him.

The Psalmist knew how to live because God’s Word has given him wisdom and understanding. He pleaded for God to teach him, for he loved and delighted in His everlasting Word. The Psalmist not only panted after God’s Word but he also kept and obeyed them [v. 129, 134]. Hence, even when he was despised or when he was in trouble and anguish, he would not give up reading God’s Word. Let us desire to lead a life as abundant and righteous as that of the Psalmist.

On the other hand, what should our attitude be towards those who do not know His Word? The Psalmist grieved for them. “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law” [v. 136]. The Psalmist’s heart was sorrowful because the people refused to obey God’s words [v. 139]. Salvation was far from them [v. 155]. They were lost and thus unable to enjoy the wonderful goodness of the Almighty God.

We should follow the Psalmist’s example. Grieve for our loved ones who are still unsaved and earnestly pray for and witness to them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:1–32
ROMANS 11

PRAYER

Lord, like the Psalmist’s plea, please direct my steps as I read Thy Word.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 119:145–160***LESSON****Keeping God's statutes****VERSE 160**

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgements endureth for ever.

How should we approach God when we are facing distressing or even threatening situations? In this psalm, the Psalmist was in deep distress. He cried to God through the night, pleading with Him to hear and save him. Though in trouble, he had faith and trust in God, and hoped and waited for God's guidance [v. 145–147].

The Psalmist cried to God to deliver him so that he could continue to follow and obey God's Word. He knew that he could trust in God. In these 16 verses, "according to" was used five times, twice as many as "according to Thy loving kindness" and "according to Thy judgement". The Psalmist had experienced and knew the faithfulness of God. "Concerning Thy testimonies," the Psalmist said, "I have known of old that Thou hast founded them for ever" [v. 152]. He based his faith on a firm foundation—God's unchanging Word.

The Psalmist also prayed for revival. Four times he asked God to revive him. He asked God to "quicken him" and give him life. He did not want to give in to his enemies' pressure or give up when in anxiety. In trouble and distress, he did not turn away from God. "Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline (turn away) from Thy testimonies" [v. 157].

Enemies are near and situations may be threatening. But God is nearer. The Psalmist had no fear, "Thou art near, O LORD; and all Thy commandments are truth" [v. 151].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:33–64
ROMANS 12

PRAYER

Lord, I praise You for You are near me; revive me so that I will not turn away from Your way.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 119:161–176***LESSON****God watching over us****VERSE 176**

*I have gone astray like a
lost sheep; seek thy servant;
for I do not forget thy
commandments.*

The Psalmist was being persecuted without cause and not by ordinary men but by those in authority—the princes and leaders of society. They had the power to forfeit his rights and assets, and cause him harm. They spread half-truths and lies about him. They wanted to break him. But the Psalmist stood firm for he feared the Lord more than his persecutors [v. 161]. He waited for God’s salvation.

One who keeps God’s Word will have peace and nothing can cause him to stumble [v. 165]. All his ways—his thoughts and his doings—are before the Lord. God watches over him. When we are under persecution, we may be tempted to bend and compromise. But remember that all our ways are before the Lord [v. 168].

Concluding this longest psalm in the Bible, the Psalmist expressed his deep desire to walk closely with God and praise Him. He asked God to give him a divine understanding of His Word. He had chosen His precepts. He would use his lips, his tongue and his life to praise God. Yet in all these, the Psalmist was mindful that he was still a weak human, prone to go astray like a lost sheep, losing his direction and his fellowship with God. He asked God not to forget him but seek him in times like these and bring him back to His bosom.

Jesus said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” [Luke 19:10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:65–88
ROMANS 13

PRAYER

Lord, I pray that I will be sensitive to Your voice and always seek You when I am lost.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 120*

LESSON

**Seeking the Lord's help in
distress**

VERSE 1

*In my distress I cried unto
the LORD, and he heard me.*

This psalm is the first of 15 “Songs of Degrees” or, better translated, “Songs of Ascents”. Four suggestions have been made with regard to the meaning and application of the word “ascents”. It could refer to (a) the ascension of God’s people from Babylon to Jerusalem after the captivity (cf. Ezra 7:9 for such usage); (b) the 15 steps of the temples on which worshippers sang these hymns; (c) the trips that every male had to make to Jerusalem for the three great annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles [Deuteronomy 16:16]; or (d) a literary reference, that is, these psalms are written in well-denoted ascending moods or thoughts.

The Psalmist was in deep trouble and surrounded by unfriendly and wicked people. Mentally, he was attacked by the lies, slandering and false accusations of his enemies. Physically, he was away from home and his neighbours were notorious and brutish. The tribes of Mesech and Kedar were well-known for their brutality and plundering ways. The goodwill of the Psalmist in seeking to live in peace and friendship was not appreciated and they were hostile to him.

The Psalmist chose to do the right thing—he cried to the Lord. In his deep distress, he looked to the Lord. He knew that his Lord was near him and would hear his cries. And God heard him.

Verses 3–4 constitute a warning to deceitful people. God will deal with them sternly, sending down sharp arrows with great and lasting heat and fire.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:89–120
ROMANS 14

PRAYER

**Lord, I thank You for I know You hear me
whenever I cry to You.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 121***LESSON****Absolute assurance
on God's unfailing
protection and security****VERSE 8**

*The LORD shall preserve thy
going out and thy coming
in from this time forth, and
even for evermore.*

This is one of the most assuring psalms. As we sojourn in this world, where does our help come from? This is the question the Psalmist asked. This world is full of tumult and trouble, and we constantly encounter uncertainties and disturbances. Facing these, the Psalmist looked upward to his God, the Almighty Who made heaven and earth.

God is ever near us, watching and protecting us. He is our shield, protecting us from attacks from all sides. Nothing can hurt us, neither in the day nor at night. He will not allow our foot to slip for He keeps our steps as firm as a rock. He will not allow evil to beset us. He will keep us even from our own fleshly desires. We have the absolute assurance from our Lord of His unfailing care and protection. This is most wonderful and assuring.

The Lord is our keeper. The word “preserve” is used thrice in this psalm. C. H. Spurgeon once said, “Three times have we the phrase, ‘Jehovah shall keep,’ as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole church is assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus assured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed.”

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:121-152
ROMANS 15**

PRAYER

Lord, we praise You. Every day we rest in Your assurance that You will always keep watch over us. Thank you, Lord.

BIBLE LESSON

Psalm 122

LESSON

Delighting in God's house

VERSE 1

*I was glad when they said
unto me, Let us go into the
house of the LORD.*

David was delighted when his friends invited him to go to the house of the Lord. This was his expression of joy and delight as he looked forward with great anticipation to worship God. He did not find it burdensome or dreary. It reflected his love for God and His sanctuary.

The Jews loved Jerusalem. It was a place of importance in the life and faith of God's people. They travelled great distances to the house of God to worship and praise Him. Everyone rejoiced when they set foot in the Temple. Do we feel the same for our place of worship?

Our Lord Jesus wept for Jerusalem and prayed for her people. He knew that the day of desolation would soon befall the city. He had compassion for His people who would not turn from their evil ways. How do you feel about the house of God and His people? Do you look forward to meeting God's people in His house each week? Do you pray for them and for peace and harmony?

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" [Hebrews 10:25]. Do we share David's joy in worship?

O the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in pray'r, and with Thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 119:153-176
ROMANS 16

THOUGHT

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. – Psalm 27:4

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 123–124***LESSON****The Lord on our side****PSALM 124:1**

*If it had not been the LORD
who was on our side, now
may Israel say;*

Deliverance is of the Lord. The Jews realised this and acknowledged the fact that “if it had not been the Lord who was on our side”, they would have been eliminated long ago. It was the hand of the Lord that caused the difference between deliverance and disaster. The saving hand of God was clearly seen when the Israelites were cornered at the edge of the Red Sea, in the national deliverance from Haman’s plot to exterminate the Jews, and throughout the history of Israel, even today.

“Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” [Psalm 124:8] is the humble and grateful confession of the Jews. They gave all glory to the Lord for their mysterious and miraculous deliverance. David echoed the same sentiment in Psalm 121:2 when he wrote, “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” He was delivered many a time from the persecutions of Saul and the conspiracy of his son, Absalom.

The apostle Paul also testified of this fact in Romans 8:31, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” The Lord is on our side. How truly comforting and reassuring indeed! Our God is not only the Creator of the universe, He is also our Protector and Sustainer. He watches over us and provides all our needs.

“The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” [Psalm 118:6]

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 120–121
I CORINTHIANS I**

MEDITATION

... he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. – Zechariah 2:8

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 125–126***LESSON****Be thankful****PSALM 126:3**

The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

Freedom at last, and home sweet home to Jerusalem. The Jews were filled with great jubilation upon hearing this great news, which was too good to be true. It felt like a dream. They could only attribute this miracle to divine intervention. The exiled Jews were laughing and singing with joy in their hearts as they looked forward to seeing their homeland. The heathen saw the joy in their faces and knew that this was possible only because of their God's great power and goodness [Psalm 126:2].

Scripture records for us many instances of the great things that God had done for His people. Samuel preached about it as he exhorted the Jews to fear and serve the Lord in thankful remembrance of His manifold blessings [1 Samuel 12:24]. David thanked the Lord for what He had done for him and for the redemption of Israel [2 Samuel 7:21, 23]. Mary sang when she realised that she was favoured by God to be chosen for the miraculous Virgin Birth [Luke 1:46–54]. The healed demoniac spread news of the Lord's healing throughout the city [Luke 8:39]. The Jews received special grace from God, Who redeemed them from Egyptian bondage and Babylonian captivity.

We who are spiritually redeemed by His precious blood have all the more reason to “give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever” [Psalm 107:1]. So let the redeemed of the Lord echo, “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 122–123
I CORINTHIANS 2

THOUGHT

Gratitude is the hallmark of remembrance.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 127***LESSON****God in everything we do****VERSE 1**

*Except the LORD build
the house, they labour in
vain that build it: except
the LORD keep the city, the
watchman waketh but in
vain.*

This psalm stresses the importance of God in our lives—be it in the building of a house or raising a family. In order to be successful or victorious, we need to involve God in all our undertakings. If God is not acknowledged in our plans, there will be no blessing. Human effort is futile without God. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” [Zechariah 4:6b]. Remember, man proposes but God disposes.

The Psalmist inculcated the lesson of dependence on God for success in everything. Jesus warned in John 15:5b, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” Everything will come to nought if there is no divine blessing. Yes, we have to work hard and plan well, but we must begin by seeking direction from the Lord.

The Lord was with Joseph [Genesis 39:2] and that was the reason for his success and prosperity. He was mindful not to offend God in all his doings. Daniel purposed in his heart to stay faithful to God. He slept peacefully with full assurance that the Lord would reveal Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The Apostle Peter sang in praise of God while in prison, as he trusted the Lord for deliverance.

Parents should not forget God in raising their children. They are a gift and a heritage [v. 3], so bring them up in the fear of the Lord. It is imperative for them to succeed spiritually. Most importantly, lead them to the saving knowledge of the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 124–125
1 CORINTHIANS 3

THOUGHT**Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 128***LESSON****Blessings of a godly family****VERSE 1**

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

Psalm 128 supplements the previous psalm, which states the principle for raising a godly family. The Psalmist reiterated the importance of giving God top priority in all that we do. The fear of God is the cornerstone of all blessedness [v. 1]. This is a reverential fear to please and not to offend—an anxious desire to obey our Lord and Master in full submission to His will.

Verse 1 promises divine blessing if we walk in His ways. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” [Psalm 1:1]. To walk in God's ways is to be under His protection, provision and approval. A God-fearing person will be blessed in his life, and will bring blessings to his wife and children.

The head of the house must work diligently to provide for the family [v. 2]. He will find joy in deeds that are blessings from and ministries for the Lord. God will bless the labour of his hands and he will enjoy the fruits of his labour. There will be domestic bliss with his wife as a homemaker. His children will be by his side and he will live to enjoy his posterity.

The beauty of the house is order;
The blessing of the house is contentment;
The glory of the house is hospitality;
The crown of the house is godliness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 126–127
1 CORINTHIANS 4

MEMORISATION

But godliness with contentment is great gain. – 1 Timothy 6:6

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 129***LESSON****Faith amidst trials****VERSE 2**

*Many a time have they
afflicted me from my youth:
yet they have not prevailed
against me.*

This psalm was most probably written after the Jews had returned from their captivity in Babylon. The Psalmist sang of the trials of Israel, the interposition of the Lord and the unblest condition of Israel's foes. It is a rustic song, full of allusions to husbandry.

"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth" is repeatedly reiterated to assert its truth and express the vehement affection that comes with it. Israel in her youth had been oppressed by Pharaoh in Egypt as well as by the Canaanites, Philistines, Ammonites, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Romans. However, none was able to cut them off from being a nation.

The church has undergone numerous trials through the ages. The affliction began early—"from my youth"—and continues to today. The Church of Christ is built upon a rock, and even the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The earliest years of Israel and of the Church were periods of trial. Babes in grace are cradled in persecution. No sooner is the man-child born than the dragon is after it.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" [1 Peter 4:12-13].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 128-129
I CORINTHIANS 5

THOUGHT

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. – Micah 7:8

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 130–131***LESSON****The horrible depths of sin****PSALM 130:1**

*Out of the depths have I
cried unto thee, O LORD.*

Psalm 130 is one of the seven Penitential Psalms. Of all the psalms that are called Penitential [Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143], this is the chief. The Psalmist here expressed His desire towards God, his repentance before God, his attendance upon God and his expectations from God.

This psalm carries a deep sensitivity to sin. When measuring sin according to divine purity, the Psalmist was plunged into an abyss of humiliation and despair. He saw himself as unworthy of any favour from God, only deserving His displeasure and wrath.

The most horrible depth into which a man's soul can descend is sin. Sometimes we begin the descent on a gradual slope, but slide swiftly to suddenly reach great depths. Sin is like a bottomless pit, and one who plunges into it experiences everlasting accumulation of speed and perpetual laceration. Oh, depths below depths! Oh, falls from light to gloom, from gloom to darkness!

What can we do? We can simply cry, cry and cry! But let us cry to God. In the greatest depths, it is our hope that God can hear our cries. A prayer reaches out from the depths of sin to the heights of heaven. He who prays in the depths will not sink further. He that cries out of the depths will soon sing in the heights.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 130–131
1 CORINTHIANS 6

THOUGHT

Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. – Matthew 1:21b

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 132***LESSON****The resting place of God****VERSE 8**

Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

Some scholars are of the opinion that this psalm was penned by Solomon, while others ascribe it to David. But what we know for sure is that it was sung at the dedication of the Temple. The Psalmist's desire was for God to come and take possession of it. With these words, he concluded his prayer. He pleaded David's piety towards God and God's promise to David.

For a time, the Ark of God was at Bethel, before being at Mizpeh. After that, it was at Kirjath-jearim for another 20 years, followed by three months in the house of Obed-edom, before it was finally brought to its final resting place. In all ages, the Ark in the Temple symbolises the presence of the Lord. The Ark and the Temple have long since passed from Zion and found its fulfilment in the Christian Church.

We need this abiding presence of God in the church. There is no age that needs to be more impressed with this truth than the age we are living in now. We are apt to vaunt about our ministries—our high technologies, our efforts, our sacrifices. However, although we may perfect our church with all our works, if God is not the object of our first desire and the Head of our church, it is but a dead organisation full of dead works.

We need to be on guard most jealously lest we replace God in our lives with other things. His presence is all we need to make ourselves strong and our work effective for Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 132
I CORINTHIANS 7

HYMN

We love the place, O God, Wherein Thine honour dwells; the joy of Thine abode all earthly joy excels.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 133–134***LESSON****True unity****PSALM 133:1**

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

David wrote this psalm. It is a short but sparkling song of joy, stemming from the union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. There might be an allusion to the divisions in the family of Israel, on their strife on who should be the first to bring back David after his son Absalom's rebellion was quelled and thus show the greatest zeal and loyalty to the king on his ascension to the throne of the whole nation.

Nowhere has the nature of true unity—the unity that binds men together, not by artificial restraints but as brethren of one heart in the Lord—been faithfully described. Nowhere has it been so gracefully illustrated as in this short ode. True unity is, as we are taught here, a holy thing. It is sacred oil, a rich perfume that, flowing from the head to the beard, and from the beard to the garments, sanctifies the whole body. It is the sweet morning dew that lights not only on the lofty mountain peaks but also the lesser hills, embracing and refreshing all.

Unity will, in time, make its way from a few to the whole, especially from the leaders in a church to all its members. Yet, it is also a personal matter. Each should realise it and, by love and wise conduct, spread it.

We are different and may disagree in many things but in things essential, let us have unity, in things non-essentials, liberty, and in all things, charity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 133–134
I CORINTHIANS 8

THOUGHT

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement. – 1 Corinthians 1:10

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 135***LESSON****Three-fold praise****VERSE I**

*Praise ye the LORD. Praise
ye the name of the LORD;
praise him, O ye servants of
the LORD.*

This psalm is a Hallelujah psalm. It was intended for use in a temple service. It begins and ends with “Hallelujah” and is an exhortation of praise to God on account of His name, nature and perfection as well as His works of creation, providence and grace, many of which are enumerated.

The reason why the Holy Spirit repeatedly inculcates the duty of praise is so that we may not undervalue its necessity or grow careless in this devotional exercise. It also implies, according to John Calvin, an indirect censure of our tardiness in proceeding to this duty, for He would not reiterate the admonition were we ready and active in the discharge of it.

Do not only magnify the Lord because He is God. But study His character, His doings, and thus render intelligent and appreciative praise. Sincere praise to God exalts and exhilarates the spirit of him who presents it. It strengthens his faith, increases his strength and transforms him in the image of God. It is heaven on earth to be praising God.

We do not praise enough; we cannot praise too much. We ought to be always praising, answering to the command given here—praise, praise, praise. Let God have the praises of our spirit, soul and body. For the past, the present and the future, let us render three-fold hallelujahs to the three divine Persons in the Godhead, who are each to be praised, the Father for electing grace, the Son for redeeming grace, and the Spirit for regenerating and sanctifying grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 135

I CORINTHIANS 9

PRAYER

Oh my God, I will praise and extol Thee with my heart and mouth to the utmost of my power. Oh, that without the interruptions which eating, and drinking, and sleeping require, I could apply myself to this heavenly calling!

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 136***LESSON****God's enduring mercy****VERSE 1**

*O give thanks unto the
LORD; for he is good: for his
mercy endureth for ever.*

This psalm describes God's mercy and enduring, steadfast love for all His people. The simple, recurring refrain, "for His mercy endureth forever", in every verse is a reflection of the Lord's grace upon His children. Verses 1–9 focus on God as the Creator of the universe. Following that, verses 10–22 remind us of what He has done for Israel. Verses 23–26 end with a general call of thanksgiving to God for His blessings to all.

The Israelites went through both good and bad times in Egypt. Pharaoh treated them well in the days of Joseph but after his death, the new king of Egypt mistreated and oppressed them [Exodus 1:8–11]. God soon intervened and delivered His people out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

It is always easy to praise and thank God when everything is going well for us. The challenge comes when things go awry. How God dealt with Israel's enemies gives us hope that He will also see us through our trials. No matter how difficult your situation may be right now, do not despair. God's mercy endures forever.

How do you react to adverse circumstances in your life? Trials either make us bitter or better persons. Do you react bitterly by querying, "Why me, Lord?" or do you react positively by trusting in God for the outcome? Looking back on God's providence for Israel will give us hope in God to overcome our own trials. Count your blessings in spite of the testing.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 136
I CORINTHIANS 10

REMINDER

**Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul.
Thank You, Lord, for making me whole.
Thank You, Lord, for giving to me
Thy great salvation so rich and free. Amen.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 137***LESSON****Keeping a consistent testimony****VERSE 4**

*How shall we sing the
LORD's song in a strange
land?*

The historical setting—the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.—is the cause of grief for the Psalmist here. The Jews who were carried off to Babylon felt cut off from their holy city of Jerusalem [v. 1–6]. The Psalmist then pronounced a curse on Babylon, praying that God would not forget the treachery of their enemies. Whoever conquers Babylon would be blessed [v. 7–9].

We read of the Jews in exile in Babylon. Their sorrow can be felt in these words, “We wept ... we hung our harps ...” Adding insult to injury, they were asked by their captors to sing one of the songs of Zion. Their reaction was described in verse 4. They could not sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land, especially if it was sung to gratify the curiosity and amusement of their enemies.

Paul and Silas sang in a prison cell in Philippi. Saints suffering for the cause of Christ could say, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” [James 1:2]. They were persecuted for their testimonies for Christ. In contrast, the Jews were exiled in Babylon because of God’s judgement on their sins. Hence, Israel could not sing among idolaters.

Let us learn from this sad psalm of Israel’s plight in a foreign land. Wherever we are, do not give anyone any cause to find fault with us. May our Christian testimonies for our Lord Jesus honour Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 137
I CORINTHIANS 11

PRAYER

O Lord, help me to maintain a consistent testimony for You always.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 138***LESSON****Help for the humble****VERSE 6**

*Though the LORD be high,
yet hath he respect unto
the lowly: but the proud he
knoweth afar off.*

This psalm of David is full of praise for God from verses 1 to 5. Answered prayers naturally result in joyful responses. Verses 6 to 8 refer to God's separate dealings with the humble and the proud.

God's judgement upon the proud is clearly seen in Scripture. The best illustration is that of Lucifer. "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" [Isaiah 14:13–14]. These five "I will's" in ascending level of arrogance reveal Lucifer's pride.

Thank God that He is never too busy for His children. Our Lord is always nigh to every believer who humbles himself before Him. Just remember that He is only a prayer away. Such comfort cannot be experienced by those who trust in their own strength. The proud do not have the assurance of being revived and strengthened by the Lord.

What is your situation in life now? Are you struggling to make ends meet or are you comfortably well-off? What is your immediate response when you are slighted by the proud? Do you find comfort and seek help from your parents, teachers or friends? There is nothing wrong with any of these responses. However, let us in all things remember to go straight to the Lord in prayer for help and deliverance.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 138
I CORINTHIANS 12

MEDITATION**Read 1 Peter 5:6.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 139*

LESSON

Abhorrence of sin

VERSE 22

*I hate them with perfect
hatred: I count them mine
enemies.*

This psalm contains theological truths about God's attributes. Verses 1–6 list examples of God's omniscience in our daily living. Coupled with this truth is the detailed description of God's omnipresence in verses 7–12. His omnipotence is then revealed in the vivid description of the birth process in verses 13–16.

Considering all these attributes, only God-fearing believers can respond like how the Psalmist did in verses 17–24. He looks at sin the way God does—with abhorrence. We also see much soul-searching as David asked God for cleansing of sin in the last two verses. As the universal Judge, God alone has the prerogative to exercise judgement on mankind. God will judge and slay the wicked for their sins. Vengeance rightly belongs to Him because He is the true and righteous Judge [Romans 12:19].

Can hatred ever be right? Perfect hatred is felt by the Psalmist here. David stated his feelings very strongly against those who hate God. "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil ..." [Psalm 97:10a]. The utter abhorrence of sin results in righteous indignation and holy hatred. Every child of God must hate what God hates. We must be careful of the company we keep. Stay away from those who like to ridicule God.

This introspective psalm is very thought provoking. It causes us to examine our own thoughts and motives. Is sin pleasurable? How do you feel after you have yielded to its temptation? Thank God for His assurance of forgiveness and for cleansing us from unrighteousness [1 John 1:9].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 139
I CORINTHIANS 13

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be more sensitive to sin.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 140***LESSON****Confidence in deliverance****VERSE 12**

*I know that the LORD will
maintain the cause of the
afflicted, and the right of
the poor.*

The historical context of this psalm explains David's prayer for God's deliverance from his enemies. He finds his encouragement in God alone [v. 1–7]. Here, we read of David's imprecatory plea for the destruction of his persecutors [v. 8–13]. He was referring to his enemies, especially Doeg the Edomite and his evil deeds [1 Samuel 21–22]. Doeg was the one who betrayed David to King Saul. He was also commissioned to kill the priests of Nob. Such men were the likes of David's foes.

David's only recourse was to seek refuge in God. Sometimes we wonder whether we should pray a prayer like the one found in verse 10. At first reading, it sounds harsh and judgemental. However, let us remember that our God knows the end from the beginning. Those who plot evil and imagine mischief in their hearts will definitely be judged by our righteous Lord.

"Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves" [v. 8] is a timely reminder for all of us—the wicked will not prosper. It also warns us that those who achieve much may exalt themselves. Man's promotion and status come from the Lord only. You may feel despised and rejected because of your educational level or financial standing but do not despair. God does not forget the down-trodden who are neglected by society.

We can find comfort in verse 12, especially if we live blamelessly, soberly and righteously in the strength of our Lord Jesus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 140

I CORINTHIANS 14:1–25

PRAYER

Help me to rest in Your keeping grace.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 141***LESSON****David's cry for help****VERSE 1**

*LORD, I cry unto thee: make
haste unto me; give ear
unto my voice, when I cry
unto thee.*

David was in distress when he penned this psalm. He was then suffering from Saul's persecution and the cunning ambitions of Saul's men. David cried unto God, instead of turning to men. His praying denoted his desire, hope and expectations from God, and his lifting of hands in prayer signified the lifting of his heart towards God.

In light of his perilous circumstances, David prayed that God would guard his mouth from venting words of evil, keep his heart from weaving works of evil and restrain him from the allurements of his enemies to sins.

David also desired to be told of his faults [v. 5]. We should learn to receive the reproofs of the righteous rather than fall under dreadful judgement as a result of being left alone in sin. Though reproofs cut, the hurt is meant to cure, and therefore is much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy [Proverbs 27:5–6]. Let us learn from David's example. Reject all flattery, and renounce waywardness and obstinacy, lest we become unreceptive to corrections, which are often remedies for our vices.

Despite overwhelming difficulties, David's eye was always on the Lord. Instead of trusting his own cleverness and courage, he always looked to the Lord for deliverance. Are you keeping your eye resolutely on the Lord?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 141

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–40

THOUGHT

Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice; it is the offering up of our soul and our affections to God.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 142***LESSON****David's prayer in the cave****VERSE 1**

*I cried unto the LORD with
my voice; with my voice
unto the LORD did I make
my supplication.*

David wrote this psalm when he was hiding in a cave. He was very distressed—being the object of an extensive manhunt by Saul. Refused asylum in Philistia, he had no home and very few friends. He had caused the murder of an entire family of priests in his flight to Gath.

Once again, David cried unto the Lord. He was not ashamed to admit the fear that was in him and his need for help. Let no man think it any disparagement when he cries to God during affliction. Like David, we can lay our complaints before God and share with Him when we are in trouble. Similarly, we can take comfort in knowing that in the midst of our grief and fear, God knows our path [v. 3].

David was disowned and deserted by his friends. When he was made an outlaw, everyone shunned him. In his loneliness and in the darkness of the cave, David said to God, “Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living” [v. 5]. He trusted God not only in delivering him from his persecutors but also in bringing him safely out of the cave as well as from all his perplexities [v. 6–7].

May we not keep our troubles to ourselves, aggravating them by dwelling on them alone. Let us learn to cast our care upon God Who cares for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 142

I CORINTHIANS 15:1–19

THOUGHT

**All the way my Saviour leads me,
What have I to ask beside?
For I know whatever befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 143***LESSON****David's recognition of
God's judgement****VERSE 1**

*Hear my prayer, O
LORD, give ear to my
supplications: in thy
faithfulness answer me, and
in thy righteousness.*

Although David's enemies were wicked and their persecution as unjust as it was cruel, he recognised the just judgement of God. Knowing that no man was righteous before God, David humbly begged that God would not judge him according to his sins, but would show him mercy instead. David acknowledged his sins before God as a condemned suppliant.

David bemoaned the feebleness of his spirit and heart. Overwhelmed with grief, David turned to the Lord and remembered the days of old. He was awed by the power of God and was aware of His presence. May we be encouraged to know that God will enable us to surmount all our anxieties if we are willing to turn towards Him and His favour.

In verses 7–12, David prayed for three things: (a) the manifestations of God's favour towards him, as he prayed for the Lord to hear him, to keep His eye on him and to keep His face turned towards him so that he would not die a tragic death; (b) the operations of God's grace in him to show him the right steps to take in this crisis; and (c) the revelation of God's providence for him to deliver his soul from its troubled state.

If even David could find refuge nowhere else than in prayers for pardon and mercy, who would presume to come before God, trusting in his own righteousness and integrity?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PSALM 143

I CORINTHIANS 15:20–58

THOUGHT

The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 144***LESSON****David's song of victory****VERSE 15**

*Happy is that people, that
is in such a case: yea, happy
is that people, whose God is
the LORD.*

This psalm is a paean of praise, aptly penned in the time when David was restored to the throne. His prayers in Psalm 143 were answered and David attributed all his victories to the Lord. God was his strength. He taught David to fight. God was his high tower and mighty fortress. Without God, David was nothing.

David thanked God for His condescension to man and to him in particular. We are frail and helpless, and compassed with many infirmities. We are immoral and condemned. Yet, in spite of our insignificance and our fallen condition, God takes knowledge of us. Why does God bother to do that? It is because of His love for us.

David prayed to God to help him against his enemies who threatened him [v. 5–8]. He proclaimed, "I will sing a new song unto Thee." David saw more clearly then than ever that God was the One Who was really enthroned. It was He Who delivered kings from those who would destroy them [v. 10–11].

David desired peace and prosperity for his people [v. 12–15]. Happy are the ones whose God is the Lord. True joy comes only from God. Anyone who departs from God sows the seeds of discontent, disunity and dissolution.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 144
I CORINTHIANS 16

THOUGHT

**Happy day, happy day, When Jesus washed my
sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray, And live
rejoicing ev'ry day.**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 145***LESSON****A wonderful God****VERSE 3**

*Great is the LORD, and
greatly to be praised;
and his greatness is
unsearchable.*

This psalm is about God. It is about God's greatness [v. 1–6], His goodness [v. 7–10], His glory [v. 11–13], His governance [v. 14–17] and His grace [v. 18–21].

"I will extol Thee, my God." David praised and worshipped God every day. God is so great and unsearchable that no human mind is able to fully comprehend Him. He is a God Who has revealed Himself in three persons—as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is a God without a beginning or an end. God is righteous and it is impossible for Him to do anything but good. His goodness reaches out warmly in tender mercy and compassion—to the lost, the erring and the fallen.

David saw God's glory established in His kingdom. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray for His coming. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." It is an everlasting kingdom that will endure for all generations. The Lord will uphold all who fall and He will raise up all who are bowed down.

God's grace abounds to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil their desires and hear their cries. He will save and preserve those who love Him. But those who despise God's grace will die in their sins.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 145
2 CORINTHIANS 1

THOUGHT

What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord. Are you looking with expectancy to His coming?

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 146***LESSON****God – our only need****VERSE 5**

*Happy is he that hath the
God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the LORD
his God.*

Verse 6 declares that the Lord will remain faithful forever. Imagine the assurance to completely rely on someone. There has never been a time when the Lord cannot be fully depended on. There will never be a day when the Lord is too busy or distracted that He fails to keep His promises. There will never be a moment when the pressures of life are too great for God that He neglects any of His responsibilities.

He is altogether faithful. Anyone who places his trust in God will certainly not be disappointed. They will be able to live in joy because of God's assurance that He is faithful to all that He has promised.

The declaration of God's faithfulness is followed by the assurance of God's compassion. He executes judgement on the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, sets free the prisoners, opens the eyes of the blind and raises them that are bowed down [v. 7–8]. These works of the Lord display His faithfulness and are summarised in the statement, "The Lord loveth the righteous!"

Lean on the Lord. His love and faithfulness compel Him to act. He will not be silent. He will not grow weary. He will not refuse the cry of the humble heart. Celebrate His faithfulness and live confidently in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 146
2 CORINTHIANS 2

QUESTION

Is the God of Jacob your God, too?

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 147***LESSON****Fearing God and hoping
in Him****VERSE 11**

*The LORD taketh pleasure
in them that fear him,
in those that hope in his
mercy.*

We need a proper balance between fearing the Lord and hoping in Him. We fear Him because of the greatness of His power and the purity of His holiness. We hope in His love, as promised to us in the Gospel. And the over-whelming assurance is that if you fear the Lord and hope in His love, He takes pleasure in you.

Why does God take pleasure in those who fear Him and hope in His love? Because our fear reflects the greatness of His power and our hope reflects His bountiful grace. In other words, when we fear His great power and hope in His great love, we glorify Him.

We need to stop and think: Is God pleased with what you are doing with your life? When He looks into your thoughts and your desires, and when He sees your actions and your motives, does He like what He sees? What kind of human attitudes and actions does God delight in? Those who obey God and love Him with their whole hearts, and show it with their actions, are those whom God takes pleasure in. When we seek to love and glorify God in all that we do, and walk according to His will, we are fulfilling our very purpose of existence. In doing so, we please the Lord.

Our needs are best met when we first seek a heart that pleases God—a heart of humble, expectant hope that He will always give us what we need most.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 147
2 CORINTHIANS 3

THOUGHT

Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 148***LESSON****Stop and think****VERSE 13**

*Let them praise the name
of the LORD: for his name
alone is excellent; his glory
is above the earth and
heaven.*

The glory that rightly belongs to God is above earth and heaven. We cannot comprehend it. If we are to ascribe to God the glory due to Him, we shall never be able to exhaust that glory. We need to see, feel and understand the glory of God. We are created for God's glory. God is concerned that we glorify Him even in our body. Whatever you do with your body, make sure it brings glory to God. Our sole purpose as individuals is to bring glory to God.

The glory of God must be reflected in every detail of our lives—in our home, in our marriage, in our church ministry. In order to include the Lord in every aspect of your life, you need to meet often and be alone with Him in prayer. Before you do anything, ask yourself this question: Will this bring glory to God or will it bring glory to me? The light of God's presence must illuminate your endeavours. Otherwise, they are done in vain.

If what you are doing satisfies your pride or gratifies your flesh, then you are glorifying self and not God. But if all aspects of your life are put under the power of the Spirit and everything you do is in obedience to the Word of God, you are glorifying God.

The authority of God then provides power for all your efforts. Otherwise, they are doomed to fail.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 148
2 CORINTHIANS 4

QUESTION**Am I glorifying God in my life?**

BIBLE LESSON*Psalm 149***LESSON****God's delights, our joy****VERSE 4**

*For the LORD taketh
pleasure in his people: he
will beautify the meek with
salvation.*

The Lord delights in His people and He adorns the meek and gentle who put their trust in Him. The joy of the Lord abides in the people who are called by His name. He glorifies His people and beautifies them with crowns. Who are these blessed people? They are the humble and gentle, the meek and lowly—people who will simply come to Him.

God takes pleasure in men and women of humility. He is delighted when He sees His children walk this earth clothed in garments of a meek and gentle spirit. He is pleased when we witness with gracious gentleness, that when people ask us for a reason of the hope that is in us, we respond with meekness and fear. He is delighted when we correct those who are deep in sin with such a gentle heart that they are drawn irresistibly from their sins and repent of them. He is pleased when He sees us learning, in the midst of a conflict, to address our opposition with deep humility and a heart filled with meekness.

God is not expecting us to be super-humans. He only wants us to be gentle-minded and to humbly seek Him. There is no magic formula if we want to gain His favour. He is simply looking for meek and gentle people in whom He takes pleasure.

Are you one of these people?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 149
2 CORINTHIANS 5

THOUGHT

You are the apple of God's eye.

BIBLE LESSON*Psalms 150***LESSON**

**Only be sure to praise
God**

VERSE 2

*Praise him for his mighty
acts: praise him according
to his excellent greatness.*

When we consider God's mighty acts, there are a number of things that come to our mind. First, we think of God's mighty acts of creation—He created everything out of nothing. Second, we think of God's continuing care for all that He has created. Third, we think of God's mighty acts of salvation. When we consider all these, we cannot help but exclaim, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!"

Why should we praise the Lord? Why shout "Hallelujah" to Him? We praise God not only for His mighty acts but also for His excellent greatness. We praise God not only for what He does but also for Who He is. We offer praises and thanksgiving to our Most High and excellent God.

There is a very important lesson to be learnt here. Many people think gratitude is the same as praise. Gratitude is often expressed in praise but do we stop praising God when we seem to have nothing to thank Him for, or when He seems to be withholding His blessings? Do the troubles we face in our lives make God less praiseworthy? Of course not! God is to be praised simply because He is God—because of Who He is, apart from anything that He has done for us.

The heart that follows God's will may not always be happy. Our inability to see beyond the present may cause our faith to waver. However, if we are to keep still and let God finish His work perfectly, we will soon join the rest of His creation in the Hallelujah Chorus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 150
2 CORINTHIANS 6

THOUGHT

God is preparing the whole universe as an orchestra of praise and adoration of His Son.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 1***LESSON****The first step to true wisdom I****VERSE 29**

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD.

The Book of Proverbs is widely received by scholars as the inspired writings of Solomon, as stated in the first verse of its first chapter. In fact, it is the first book of the Bible prefaced by his name. The New Testament abounds with quotations from Proverbs.

A proverb is a short and powerful statement, concisely summarising a well-established truth that is often applicable in life. In the Book of Proverbs, we are supplied with practical wisdom commended by the seal of divine inspiration. We see how God has condescended to become our Teacher on the affairs of our daily lives. He has adapted His instruction plainly to accommodate the common person and has presented, in a simple and direct method, the principles of man's duty to Him and to his fellow beings.

The first step towards knowledge is the fear of God. In this text, we are warned against wrongdoings such as impiety, injustice, profligacy, idleness, laziness, indolence, drunkenness and debauchery. Solomon, having illustrated the dangers of the temptations of Satan [v. 10–19], then proceeds to show how dangerous it is if we do not hearken to the call of God. "Because I have called, and ye refused ... ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof" [v. 24–25].

Be warned! When calamity strikes, there is no hope for those who ignore the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 1
2 CORINTHIANS 7

THOUGHT**Meditate on Proverbs 1:23.**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 2***LESSON****The first step to true wisdom II****VERSE 6**

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Job asked concerning wisdom, “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” [Job 28:12]. Job could only give a general answer, “God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof” [Job 28:23].

However, as far as the search for wisdom is concerned, Solomon goes further, as he tells us where we may find wisdom and how we may get it.

We must closely attend to the Word of God and be convinced that it is the fountain of wisdom. We must “incline our ear and apply our hearts” to it [v. 2]. Many wise sayings may be found in human philosophies but true religion is built upon divine revelation. Therefore, we must receive the Word of God with all readiness of mind, abiding in His commandments and trusting His promises, without murmuring or disputing. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears.

We must treasure God’s Word and hide it in our hearts. We must not only receive but also retain the Word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, so that it may be readily available to us. We must pursue biblical knowledge, like how the famished hunger for food. We must desire, as newborn babes, the sincere milk of the Word [1 Peter 2:2]. We must lift up our voices for understanding—lifting it up to heaven and expecting good and perfect gifts from God [James 1:17].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 2
2 CORINTHIANS 8

PRAYER

Lord, give us wisdom for out of Your mouth comes knowledge and understanding. You store up sound wisdom for the upright and are a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the path of justice and watching over the ways of Your saints.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 3***LESSON****The true Prosperity Gospel****VERSE 9**

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.

One theological approach that is very popular but brings Christianity into disrepute is what we commonly call the “prosperity gospel”. It is the teaching that the God of the Bible can be manipulated to work for man’s advantage through the use of certain prayer techniques, acts of giving or simply thinking positively. In this pattern of thinking, health, wealth and the good things in life are from God, and sickness, poverty and death are from Satan.

Preachers of such ‘gospel’ usually seek to enrich themselves and “through covetousness, shall they with feigned words make merchandise (out of the congregation)” [2 Peter 2:3].

The true Prosperity Gospel, however, stipulates as a precept a Christian’s duty to serve God. We must honour Him, not only with our body and spirit, which are rightfully His, but also with our estates. God, Who is the first and the best, must have the first and the best of everything. His interest is our top priority and whatever we do, we must seek to serve Him first. It is our duty to make our worldly estates available for God’s use, to promote the kingdom of God, to propagate the Gospel, and to help the poor with what we have through deeds of piety and charity.

The promise of God is “thy barns be filled with plenty” [v. 10], implying that God will bless you with an increase far beyond that which is for use, but they are not for vain display—they are for spending and giving, and not keeping and hoarding.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 3
2 CORINTHIANS 9

THOUGHT

Those who do good with what they have shall have more with which to do more good. Giving will not undo us and make us poor. Instead, we will be enriched in Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 4*

LESSON

Obeying your parents

VERSE 1

*Hear, ye children, the
instruction of a father,
and attend to know
understanding.*

God has instituted the family as the basic unit of society. The family unit is thus very important in holding a country or a society together. The logic is that if the family unit breaks down, the society, and thus the country, will also collapse. Unlike modern society, which emphasises individual human rights and democracy (the will of the masses), the biblical emphasis is on the relationship between children and parents, individuals and the state, and, most importantly, individuals and God.

We can approach verse 1 from two angles. “Father” can be interpreted as either (a) a human father, in which case the verse can be understood as advising a young person, in the formative days of his childhood and youth, to receive knowledge from his father; or (b) God, in which case the knowledge comes from our Father in heaven, to Whom we pray and from Whom we expect blessings—the Father of us all and to Whom we ought to be in subjection.

This verse is also applicable to adults. Let us receive instruction with the readiness of children. Let us be dutiful, easy to teach and less confident in our own knowledge, taking the Word of God as the words of a wise father, which comes with both authority and affection. Let all prejudices be put aside, and our minds teachable.

Though Solomon was a wise man and divinely inspired, when he was to teach wisdom, he quoted his father and abided by his words.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 4
2 CORINTHIANS 10

THOUGHT

Fathers are trailblazers. They set the road for which their children will follow.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 5***LESSON****Fleeing from dangerous situations****VERSE 21**

*For the ways of man are
before the eyes of the LORD,
and he pondereth all his
goings.*

Everything that a person does is laid bare before God. There is nothing hidden from Him. He knows everything and is present everywhere. This truth is known about God from our conscience and the wonder of His creation, yet it is human nature to act as if God were not there.

In fact, the modern world promotes atheism very aggressively. We have atheists like Richard Dawkins, who gives talks in universities on why he thinks God does not exist. Some atheists assert that, since they cannot see God and do not meet Him in everyday life, He does not exist.

Most claim falsely that science has shown that life comes about from a chance happening—evolving in a macro-scale and rendering science and Christianity incompatible to each other. This claim is not true. The aim of science is to study only the physical things that can be shown to be true under controlled conditions. Many eminent scientists, including Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday and Francis Collins, are devout Christians.

The world loves a Richard Dawkins because if God does not exist, there are no absolute moral standards and we can live as we please. However, God's Word is very clear: "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house" [v. 8]. We have to avoid the adulterous woman (or man) at all costs. Taken figuratively, an "adulterous woman" may refer to idolatry and false doctrine that can lead us astray.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 5
2 CORINTHIANS 11

THOUGHT

The Apostle Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22 to flee youthful lusts refers to the same theme. Involvement in sins consumes all the parties involved.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 6***LESSON****Consequences of being
lazy****VERSE 6**

*Go to the ant, thou
sluggard; consider her ways,
and be wise.*

Solomon, in these verses, addresses himself to the sluggard who loves ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass and is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is a sure way to poverty. Slothfulness in spiritual matters leads many a believer to an ineffective and half-hearted service for God.

The lazy person is advised to consider the ways of an ant. The sluggard is in his miserable state precisely because he does not consider anything. If we were to imitate others in things that are good, we must consider their ways and observe diligently what they do so that we may do likewise.

The lesson is to learn wisdom. Consider, and be wise. Wisdom is what we aim to attain in our learning—not only to know, but also to be wise. Wisdom is a skill. The wisdom that Solomon talks about is the skill of living. In order to be wise, therefore, we must not only mind the present but also prepare for the future.

Therefore, always look at sloth, not as a weakness, but as a sin that affects the whole man, which might grow within us and eventually control us, if we condone it. Allow sin no chance to root itself. Resist sin in all its forms—bodily, mentally and spiritually.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 6
2 CORINTHIANS 12

THOUGHT

To the spiritual sluggard, we say, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light.”

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 7***LESSON****Wise words for a sinful world****VERSE 2***Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.*

In today's text, we read that Solomon was concerned for the life of his son. He had just seen a young man going to his death [v. 7–27] and, in response, pointed out to his son the inspired wisdom of the Word as a source of life. The Word of God offers eternal life and Solomon advises his son to keep God's commandments and His law.

Our eyes are precious and we guard them with the utmost care. The apple of the eye refers to the miniature reflection of exterior objects in the pupil, the window to our soul. Proverbs 6:23 can aid our understanding of this verse. The commandments are a lamp, the law is light and the reproofs of instruction are the way of life. If we have truly received God's Word, we cannot but reflect it in our lives. If only the young man who went to his death cherished God's Word the way he cherished the tender pupil of his eye, he would not have fallen into the clutches of a prostitute.

As believers in Jesus Christ, it is vital for us to know God's Word, for it keeps us from sliding back in our spiritual walk [Psalm 37:31]. It satisfies the hunger of our souls [Jeremiah 15:16] and is our key defence when facing trials and temptations in life [Ephesians 6:10–18].

Let us make it our aim to bind God's Word upon our fingers and in our hearts [v. 3]. Only then are we ready to face any of life's challenges [2 Timothy 3:16–17].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 7
2 CORINTHIANS 13

THOUGHT

God's Word, enduring through the ages, is still the best guide for living.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 8*

LESSON

**Seeking God early and
diligently**

VERSE 17

*I love them that love me;
and those that seek me
early shall find me.*

What a blessed promise this is! If we love and seek God early, we shall find Him and enjoy His love in return. The appeal is to the young, those who are “early in life”. How happy are the young whose early mornings of life are spent with Jesus! The younger we seek and find Him, the better and more meaningful our lives will be.

He loves those who love Him because strong and unbreakable ties unite them to Him, and His love is eternal and unchangeable. Jesus loves us because we possess His spirit and bear His image.

The youth of today form an important part of our society. But being young, they yearn for a life full of energy, excitement and adventure. Sports, pleasure and entertainment dominate their spare time. But with these activities come dangerous temptations. Parents should pray for their children’s salvation—to win them early before they are destroyed by sin. When a person comes to Christ in his youth, not only is a soul saved but also years of life are saved from sin and its bitter fruits. The best years of one’s life should be given to the Saviour, not to Satan.

Wisdom, personified here as Christ, speaks with divine authority. Solomon was telling us whom wisdom loves. Love is reciprocal. We do not have to wait until we are old to seek wisdom. Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon and Josiah all sought wisdom early in their lives. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 8
GALATIANS 1

PRAYER

**Lord, burden my heart to reach out to the young
with the message of your saving grace.**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 9*

LESSON

Knowing the Lord

VERSE 10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

In this verse, the main doctrine of the Wise Teacher and the theme of the book [Proverbs 1:7] are reiterated. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and ends with the knowledge of the holy. “The fear of the Lord”, which appears in several places in the Bible, does not refer to a cowardly, cringing kind of fear.

1 John 4:18 states, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” The fear of the Lord is not the fear that God might hurt us but the fear that we might hurt or grieve Him. In this sense, “fear” really means reverence or respect. The fear of the Lord is manifested in a life of obedience, confessing and forsaking our sins, and doing what is right.

The knowledge of the holy is understanding. According to Matthew Henry, the “holy” here is plural and it refers to “holy things”. “The things pertaining to the service of God (those are called holy things), that pertain to our own sanctification; reproof is called that which is holy.” Others believe it is the plural of dignity (Perowne).

The fear of the Lord is the evidence of faith. A life of faith calls for a life of holiness. Wisdom begins with conversion, and then continues with consecration, which eventually leads to holiness. We are to trust in the Lord whose counsel stands, and not in our own understanding [Proverbs 3:5–7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 9
GALATIANS 2

THOUGHT

The value of life is only realised in the knowledge of God.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 10***LESSON****A good name abides
forever****VERSE 7**

*The memory of the just is
blessed: but the name of the
wicked shall rot.*

All of us wish to have a good name. Even the wicked do not want their names to rot after they die. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” [Proverbs 22:1a]. “A good name is better than precious ointment” [Ecclesiastes 7:1a]. Solomon in Proverbs 10:7 observed that the memory of the good brings blessings but the name of the wicked shall rot. By our attitudes and actions, we are creating memories that will be associated with our names in life and in death.

Genuine blessings come from a gracious God and abide with a good man. He who is blessed is a blessing to all around him. In contrast, the mouth of a wicked man is full of fury. Blessed men leave behind blessed memories. They are remembered with respect when they are dead. The wicked shall be forgotten or spoken of with contempt. Like their character, their names corrupt, rotting like a corpse.

Many examples of this contrast can be found in the Bible—Noah and Nimrod, Samuel and Saul, Paul and Pilate. In each case, one man’s name is blessed and the other’s is shamed. The examples set by the great “cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 11 serve as great encouragements to our faith.

In this life, either our sins get blotted out [Acts 3:19] or our names get blotted out [Revelation 3:5]. Today, the Lord wants to work in us, so that our names may honour Him. Let us walk in His way.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 10
GALATIANS 3

PRAYER**Lord, make my life fragrant for Your glory.**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 11***LESSON****The balm for trouble****VERSE 8**

*The righteous is delivered
out of trouble, and the
wicked cometh in his stead.*

Trials and trouble are part and parcel of life. Even God's children, including pastors, are not spared from them. One question that still perplexes many is this: Why do the righteous suffer while the ungodly seem to prosper [e.g. Job; Psalm 73]? Whether our problems are self-imposed, inflicted by others or permitted by God, Christ supplies an abundance of grace with which we can bear them, and in our weaknesses we are made strong.

We are confronted with many problems in life. Whatever the trouble may be, the Lord makes no exceptions, but promises full deliverance. We are to look beyond our problems and this troubled world, to the world above where the wicked cannot trouble us. Multitudes of troubled hearts have found consolation in this blessed promise: "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" [Psalm 50:15]. God delivers the righteous from trouble and sends it upon the wicked instead [v. 8].

The Israelites were delivered out of trouble at the Red Sea and the Egyptians were drowned in their stead. Mordecai was saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lions' den and Peter from prison. In all these instances, their persecutors were punished instead. God heaps trouble on the wicked and saves the righteous.

Read the Bible faithfully and pray every day. In so doing, God will give you the faith and wisdom you need to face any trouble. Find comfort in God's Word and claim God's promise of deliverance for the righteous.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

PROVERBS 11
GALATIANS 4

PRAYER

Lord, help me see beyond the trials of our age and look towards the inheritance reserved for us in heaven.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 12***LESSON****Standing on the promises
of God****VERSE 28**

*In the way of righteousness
is life; and in the pathway
thereof there is no death.*

Proverbs 12 contains many precious lessons. We see the benefit of following instructions, and that of cultivating piety. We are told of the different lot of the just and unjust, the wise and the fool, the righteous and the slothful.

The first 12 verses focus on the value of righteousness. Godly behaviour receives godly rewards. Ungodly behaviour leads to punishment. The contrast here is clear. The wicked seek to benefit at the expense of others and are naturally hated, whereas the godly are contented with what they have in life and are favoured by God.

In verse 28, the way of righteousness is not the way you take so that you can be righteous. It is the way that a man who has been made righteous will take. It is the way of a sinner justified. Such a man is given a new lease of life. It is the way of peace. It is the way of holiness. It is the narrow way and the straight gate that our Lord Jesus refers to in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:14).

The second part of this proverb builds upon the first by saying that “in the pathway thereof there is no death”. This is the extra measure of comfort and motivation for believers to persevere in our Christian walk. In the way of Christ, there is life, and there is absolutely no certainty of death. In Christ, we are assured of the blessed truth that we have passed from death to life. Death has lost its sting. The grave has been defeated.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 12
GALATIANS 5

HYMN

**Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus, Going on before!**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 13***LESSON****Reaping the fruit of wise living****VERSE 20**

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

This chapter focuses on certain life principles that are essential to fruitful living. It begins with the principle of listening to the advice of more experienced people [v. 1], followed by principles concerning careful speech [v. 3, 5], diligence [v. 2, 4], generosity [v. 7], the dangers of pride and covetousness [v. 10–11].

A very important principle on the friendships we keep is found in verse 20. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American poet, says, “A man is known by the books he reads, by the company he keeps.”

Troubles attend the way of those who ignore the wise. The sons of Samuel did not walk in the ways of their father. They “turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgement” [1 Samuel 8:3]. Solomon himself should have heeded his own words. He was wise when he “loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father” [1 Kings 3:3]. But later in his life, his wives “turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God [1 Kings 11:4].

Every Christian has a duty to follow. Our Lord Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow Him [Matthew 16:24]. At the same time, every Christian also bears the responsibility of being followed. Paul told Timothy that he was to be an “example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” [1 Timothy 4:12]. The company we keep in life has a great impact on us as well as others around us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 13
GALATIANS 6

PRAYER

Let us be wise in whom we follow so that we will not lead others astray.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 14***LESSON****Be God-fearing****VERSE 2**

*He that walketh in his
uprightness feareth
the LORD: but he that
is perverse in his ways
despiseth him.*

Chapter 14 begins by extolling the importance of the wise woman in the home. The wise woman (a wife or a mother) builds up the home and the foolish one destroys it. The outcomes between wise and foolish women are great and the effects of their lives are lasting. The English proverb that says, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world” speaks of the influence that a mother has on her child—for good or bad. Truly, one can only rule for good insofar as the hand rocking the cradle belongs to a God-fearing woman.

The conduct of a man is a reflection of his relationship with and regard for God. A man’s outward conduct shows his inward feeling. The God-fearing man walks in uprightness. The God-despising man is “perverse in his ways”, which literally means he turns aside from the way of righteousness. The decisions of both men—the wise and the foolish—are deliberate. Their decisions—to be upright or perverse—are made on account of their view of God.

However, it is not only the conduct of a man that reveals his true character. His words also expose his real self. King Nebuchadnezzar’s self-adulation [Daniel 4:30] revealed his pride and his regard for the Lord, and he was reduced to living like an animal.

The Bible exhorts us to keep a watch over our lips and our lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 14
EPHESIANS 1

THOUGHT**So we think, we walk. So we speak, we are!**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 15***LESSON**

**Use our mouth and heart
wisely**

VERSE 7

*The lips of the wise disperse
knowledge: but the heart of
the foolish doeth not so.*

God gives us instructions to watch our mouths and our hearts. Sin begins from the heart, and a common and effective vessel for a sinful heart to propagate its sinful nature is the mouth [Matthew 12:34].

We are to watch our mouths as words are often effortlessly spoken but painfully retracted. A godly mouth can bring about godly reactions like turning wrath away [v. 1], giving life [v. 4] and dispersing knowledge [v. 7], whereas a vile mouth pours out foolishness [v. 2, 14], stirs up anger [v. 1] and brings forth evil [v. 28].

There are several verses that reflect the positive consequences of having a righteous heart—it makes a person cheerful [v. 13] and it seeks after knowledge and wisdom [v. 14, 28]. Conversely, a perverse heart cannot be hidden from God. We read that even hell and destruction are before the Lord [v. 11]. This verse tells us that our sin will find us out, sometimes even before we act.

Meditating on today's chapter, how should we live our lives? The next time we get angry, how should we use our mouth? Should we curse at the person or situation that kindles our wrath? Should we seek revenge on someone who has done us wrong? Though we are sinful humans, let us do our best to be more Christ-like [1 Peter 3:17–18].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 15
EPHESIANS 2**

PRAYER

Lord, I consecrate my heart and mouth to You daily. Take them and use them for Your divine purpose.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 16***LESSON****Trusting God****VERSE 20**

*He that handleth a matter
wisely shall find good: and
whoso trusteth in the LORD,
happy is he.*

In Chapter 16, Solomon makes many references to the Lord (11 times). This is a way in which he tries to give the right perspective of life. Aptly, Solomon begins with the Lord and man's heart. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" [v. 1]. After all, from the heart come the issues of life [Proverbs 4:23].

In verse 20, Solomon gives us two keys to true happiness. The first is to handle matters wisely, which means to be wise in handling the affairs of life. To handle matters wisely is to be skilful in managing life. It is to be disciplined in body as well as mind. It is to be proficient in every department of daily living. The man who fails to handle these "small" and routine matters of life will find himself overwhelmed by crises. Take care of the small matters, and the big matters will take care of themselves. Neglect the small matters, and we will soon be overwhelmed.

The second key to happiness is to know the source of wisdom for living. The world's management techniques overlook the fact that man is a spiritual being. A man who handles every aspect of his life well but overlooks the spiritual side may be efficient, but he is not wise.

Life can spring its unpleasant surprises on us and may demand from us more than we can handle. It is during these times that we need more than just wisdom to deal with these surprises. We need the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 16
EPHESIANS 3

THOUGHT

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally. – James 1:5a

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 17***LESSON****Domestic bliss****VERSE 1**

*Better is a dry morsel, and
quietness therewith, than
an house full of sacrifices
with strife.*

There is a Chinese idiom that translates “domestic bliss” literally as “joy of heavenly harmony”. It aptly suggests that such bliss is God-sent. God, Who created the human family, has graciously given us an instruction manual on how to conduct our family lives. This manual is none other than the Bible. But sadly, modern society, by and large, has abandoned God’s ways, and the consequences are all around for us to see—broken families, rebellious kids, juvenile crime, domestic violence, child custody battles, and much more.

It is to our great shame that some governments have to intervene in domestic affairs, such as by forcing ungrateful children to pay for the maintenance of their aged parents. Sometimes, they even have to take over the discipline of children who are “beyond parental control”. We can spare ourselves these heartaches if we heed God’s Word. Proverbs 17:1, for example, teaches us that peace and quietness in the home is better than all kinds of material possessions. Instead of chasing after wealth and power in the corporate world and spoiling our kids with material luxuries, parents should subject their children to godly discipline [v. 2], and spare themselves the grief and bitterness that foolish sons bring [v. 25].

Verse 6 paints a beautiful picture of a stable, God-honouring family where the grandfather delights in his grandchildren, and the son glories in his father. Oh, if only modern man would turn away from his foolish ways and put God back in His rightful place as head of the family.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 17
EPHESIANS 4:1-13

PRAYER

Lord, give us homes with godly fathers and mothers.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 18***LESSON****The sin of pride****VERSE 12**

*Before destruction the heart
of man is haughty, and
before honour is humility.*

When it comes to pointing out the folly of fallen man, the Bible does not mince words. Proverbs 18, for example, lists several characteristics of a fool. He is portrayed as one who is proud, boastful, quarrelsome, deceitful, loves to carry tales, unable to control his tongue and is generally a lover of self and pleasure rather than a lover of God.

Verse 12 warns us that such a man's haughtiness is a prelude to his downfall. On the other hand, a humble person is honoured. Several examples of such people are recorded in the Old Testament for our instruction. David and Goliath are good examples. Arrayed from head to foot in imposing armour, Goliath swaggered before the whole army of Israel, hurling blasphemies and insults at both Israel and her God. In the end, he was slain by a humble shepherd boy who came to him, not in his own power and might, but "in the name of the Lord of hosts". Yes, before honour is humility.

A similar lesson is seen in the encounter between the godly King Hezekiah and the blasphemous King Sennacherib of Assyria, who boasted that no god could deliver any nation from his mighty forces. Hezekiah humbly brought the matter before God. His prayer in 2 Kings 19 is a revelation of his deep trust in Jehovah. God utterly destroyed Sennacherib's army and he returned in ignominy to his own country without shooting a single arrow, just as God had promised through his prophet, Isaiah.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 18
EPHESIANS 4:14-32

THOUGHT

**... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,
and giveth it to whomsoever he will ... and those
that walk in pride he is able to abase. – Daniel
4:17; 37**

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 19*

LESSON

Not bearing false witness

VERSE 5

*A false witness shall not
be unpunished, and he
that speaketh lies shall not
escape.*

In this chapter, Solomon continues with his description of a fool. One characteristic stands out. A fool lacks integrity. He speaks foolish words, lies habitually, sucks up to the rich, bribes the influential, uses dishonest means to get what he wants and does not hesitate to bear false witness against his fellow men. Twice in this chapter, he is warned that he would not escape punishment.

But would he listen? No, because intractability is another of his faults. The unrepentant thief who was crucified with the Lord is a good example. Instead of acknowledging his own sins, he allowed his hatred for his fellow men and his bitterness towards God to cause him to rail against Jesus. “His heart fretteth against the LORD” [v. 3].

More than ever, Christians today need to heed God’s oft-repeated commandment to walk in integrity. To quote John MacArthur in his book, *The Power of Integrity*: “We live in a society that has largely abandoned moral standards and Christian principles. Unkept campaign promises, false advertising, exaggerated tax exemptions, employee theft—compromise has become a way of life. Such moral concession has even invaded the church...We feel intimidated and keep silent. We water down God’s Word on ethical issues at work or in our community to avoid rejection. Too often we prefer hypocrisy to integrity.”

The solution is found in Joel 2:13: “... turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness ...” Do that and you shall “abide satisfied, and shall not be visited with evil” [v. 23].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 19
EPHESIANS 5:1-21

PRAYER

Teach me Thy way, Lord.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 20***LESSON****Walking in integrity****VERSE 7**

The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

On New Year's Day morning, 2010, five drivers in Singapore were arrested for drink-driving. One young man tried to switch places with his female passenger when he spotted the police roadblock because he had been drinking. Needless to say, he did not escape the "hearing ear, and the seeing eye" of the policemen. Fortunately for him, the alcohol level in his blood was within the legal limit and he and his friend were let off with a warning.

Proverbs 20 holds valuable lessons for people like this young man. Verse 1 says that wine is a mocker, and alcoholics are "not wise"; to put it only lightly. The five drink-drivers who were arrested now have to face the wrath of the authorities, which verse 2 likens to "the roaring of a lion." Not only do they have to live with the consequences of their folly, their family members, too, suffer with them. For those who managed to escape the police roadblocks, they certainly could not escape the one who made man's ears and eyes—our Creator God Who abhors cheating and double-dealing [v. 10].

The lesson for us is to lead a life of integrity. If we claim to have a "clean heart" and are "pure from sin" [v. 9] without Christ in us, we are only fooling ourselves and making God a liar, because His Word tells us all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of our sins and make us whiter than snow.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 20
EPHESIANS 5:22-33

THOUGHT

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. – 1 Thessalonians 5:6

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 21***LESSON****Learning from the folly of
the wicked****VERSE 12**

*The righteous man wisely
considereth the house
of the wicked: but God
overthroweth the wicked for
their wickedness.*

Verse 6 of today's reading warns us that greedy people who try to get rich through fraudulent means court trouble, even death. Last year, the Chinese authorities executed two men and sentenced 20 others to long prison terms and hefty fines for their roles in the infamous tainted-milk scandal that killed at least six babies and sickened hundreds of thousands of others. They had used an industrial chemical, melamine, to fool inspectors into believing their milk had high protein content.

This case reminds us of the crime that King David committed against his faithful lieutenant Uriah because he lusted after the latter's wife, Bathsheba. God in His mercy forgave David but he paid dearly for his sins.

Proverbs 21:7 emphasised the wickedness of a different group of greedy people. "The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them." The word "robbery" means "rapacity" or "taking everything that you can, especially by using violence". Such people abuse their power and do not deal justly. Ultimately, God will deal with them. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel are good examples of such people. They used treachery and violence to steal a vineyard from Naboth. God's pronouncement of His judgement on the evil couple through the prophet Elijah is recorded for us in 1 Kings 21.

The lesson for God's people is clear. We are to observe and learn from the way God deals with wicked people. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge" [v. 11].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 21
EPHESIANS 6

THOUGHT

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. – 1 Timothy 6:11

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 22***LESSON****The importance of training****VERSE 6**

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Some modern educationists promote giving children absolute freedom to discover things for themselves, that is, with minimal supervision. They claim that, in this way, they are training children in the way they would go, thus realising their potential. However, the Bible tells us that we should train a child in the way he should go, not would go.

“To train up” can also mean “to catechise”, implying religious and moral training. However, many forms of training in this world are injurious to the moral and biblical upbringing of a child. To expand in knowledge, without soundly enlightening the mind, is but to increase its vulnerability to evil.

Indeed, unless we provide a child with good principles to follow in life, we are leaving him in utter helplessness. And yet we often meet parents who have no biblically-established principles when it comes to education. Ignorant as the parents are of their moral state, and of the besetting evils of their sins, they are ill equipped to apply effectual discipline on their children. As a result, the child suffers from his parents’ ignorance.

Use Timothy’s training from childhood as an example in bringing up your children.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 22
PHILIPPIANS I

THOUGHT

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. – 2 Timothy 3:15

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 23***LESSON****The old landmark****VERSE 10**

Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless.

There are people who preach equality for all—not just equal opportunities but also equal outcomes. This system denounces all forms of private ownership, and history has proved that such a system does not work. There are also people who extol the virtues of pure capitalism, where the rich and powerful swallow up the poor and weak. Solomon warns against this kind of capitalistic exploitation.

The Bible does not teach that it is a sin to be rich. However, it is a sin to covet to be rich. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil [1 Timothy 6:10]. To ensure that the poor and weak are not exploited, God makes special provisions for them in our society. The Bible identifies three groups of people in this category: orphans, widows and foreigners [Deuteronomy 10:18].

In Proverbs 23:10–11, Solomon focuses his attention on the fatherless. To the villains, orphans are the easiest targets. To God, they are special and come under His protection. God is their “Redeemer”, which is also translated as “near kinsman” [Ruth 3:9, 12]. To the fatherless, the Lord will be their Father. Any hurt done to them will be an offence against God, Who will use His omnipotence for their protection.

When you are despised and abandoned, look to the Redeemer, Who is always ready to take up your cause. The Psalmist says, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up” [Psalm 27:10]. Is Christ your Redeemer and Advocate?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 23
PHILIPPIANS 2

THOUGHT

The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless. – Psalm 10:14b

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 24***LESSON****The secret of house building****VERSE 3**

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established.

Many of us have heard of the story of the three pigs who wanted to build houses for themselves. The first pig used straw and the second pig used wood, and both finished building quickly. The third pig used bricks, and it took the longest. The big bad wolf destroyed the straw and wooden houses in no time.

The test of a building is its ability to withstand destructive forces. Will the house leak when it rains? Will the foundation shift when the winds blow? To put up a building, there are certain essentials, like a strong foundation and the right materials. And so it is with building a spiritual house.

Solomon says that wisdom is the foundation on which our spiritual house must be built. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Wisdom is not only the foundation but also the builder. The Chinese has a saying that it is easy to build but difficult to maintain. Maintenance requires just as much effort and prudence. Solomon advises us that a house is kept and made stronger by understanding. Solomon's point is that, with prudent management, a man can raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon his industry.

The way recommended to us here is through wisdom, understanding and knowledge, that is, both piety towards God (for that is true wisdom) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 24
PHILIPPIANS 3

THOUGHT

Wisdom is better than weapons of war [Ecclesiastes 9:18a]. A wise man will triumph over difficulties by his wisdom in a way a strong man cannot achieve by force.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 25***LESSON****Good advice before legal action****VERSE 8**

*Go not forth hastily to
strive, lest thou know not
what to do in the end
thereof, when thy neighbour
hath put thee to shame.*

Ideally, a Christian should avoid getting into legal tussles. A considerate Christian will concede his rights rather than insist on them to the hazard of his own soul and to the injury of the Church [1 Corinthians 6:1–7]. Hasty strife is always wrong. Think well beforehand whether the case is right or, if it is, whether it is worth the contention. Weigh the implications involved.

A man often brings ruin to himself over a hasty legal strife. Instead of triumphing, his neighbour puts him to shame. As long as we are in this world, sin and Satan will stir up contention. We must never forget that not “hatred and wrath” only, but “variance and strife” are also “works of the flesh”, which will exclude us from heaven [Galatians 5:19–21].

Hence we are reminded of the constraining obligations to “seek peace, and pursue it” [Psalm 34:14b]. The noble example set by Abraham gives us a good illustration—he quenched “the beginning of the strife” by yielding his natural superiority and his just rights to his nephew [Genesis 13:8].

However, if we have tried all possible means to reconcile a conflict and strife seems inevitable, let us ponder on how much wisdom and rule over our own spirit is needful, to conduct ourselves honourably according to our profession as a Christian. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself [v. 9a]. Show to him that the objective is not for you to win but to put a speedy end to strife.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 25
PHILIPPIANS 4

THOUGHT

If only Christians practise these rules of wisdom and love, there will be less strife in the Church.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 26***LESSON****Dealing with fools****VERSE 4**

*Answer not a fool according
to his folly, lest thou also be
like unto him.*

We are forbidden [v. 4], and yet commanded [v. 5], to answer a fool. One verse teaches us to “answer him not” but the other teaches us to “answer him”. However, the context attached to each teaching explains the seeming contradiction. Both are sound advice for dealing with fools, depending on the context.

Suppose there is a free thinker who likes to scoff at the Christian religion or mock the Word of God. Generally speaking, it is better to follow Hezekiah’s command in response to Rab-shakeh’s blasphemy: “Answer him not” [2 Kings 18:36]. Along the same line, Jeremiah also turned away in silence from the folly of the false prophets [Jeremiah 28:11]. There are times when it is better to walk away. The English proverb says that discretion is the better part of valour when you are dealing with a man who is looking for a fight. His mind has been made up. He is only there for a quarrel and not interested in an honest discussion. To such fools, answer them not.

However, there are also times when foolishness ought to be corrected. When such an occasion presents itself, Christians ought to speak wisely. The fool is to be answered when it is for his good, for the advancement of truth and for God’s glory.

Hence, to speak or not to speak depends on circumstances, places, times, the people to whom we speak, the manner and purpose for our speaking. Ultimately, we must be sure that our words will promote the honour of Christ and His Church.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 26
COLOSSIANS I

PRAYER

O, God, give us wisdom to govern our tongue; to discover “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” [Ecclesiastes 3:7b]; most of all, to suggest the “word fitly spoken” [Proverbs 25:11] for effective reproof.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 27***LESSON****Be humble****VERSE 1**

*Boast not thyself of
tomorrow; for thou knowest
not what a day may bring
forth.*

The little tongue and the human pride—a lethal combination that has led to the downfall of so many men, be they great or small. It is perhaps human nature that success often triggers man's thought of self-sufficiency, encouraging his little tongue to wag.

Verse 1 starts emphatically with “boast not”, for no man can assure himself of more than what he has of the present. What is it about life that we dare to boast about? Life is so frail a thing. It is but a vapour that appears for a little while and vanishes [James 4:14]. All flesh is as grass, which in the morning flourishes, in the evening is cut down, and on the morrow is cast into the oven [Matthew 6:30]. Death is certain and no respecter of men—it is a direct fruit of sin. Therefore, boast not.

Only the foolish boast of tomorrow. The humble, prudent or medically infirmed does not boast of the future for they know not what the present day brings forth, let alone tomorrow. We are all guilty of the sin of pride and a loose tongue at some point of our lives. Now that we are enlightened by this verse, praise God for the successes and blessings He has given you, but “hold” unto our tongue lest it runs and starts to boast.

Future events are the secret things that belong to God, which He keeps close to His breast. Man proposes and God disposes.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 27
COLOSSIANS 2

PRAYER

Lord, help me meditate on James 4:15, “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 28***LESSON****Requirement of effective prayer****VERSE 9**

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

A stern warning is given plainly and simply here: Obey God's Word. But how do you obey unless you listen? And how do you listen if you choose to turn a deaf ear? If one does not listen, there is no chance of one learning, let alone obeying. When God's laws are disobeyed, sin seeps in. Then prayers are not only unheard, they become an "abomination".

The word "abomination" and its variants (abominations, abominable) appear 176 times in the King James Bible. Abomination refers to an extreme sense of hatred that leads to abhorrence. An abomination is that which brings detestation to God. A holy God cannot and will not put up with the slightest sin in the same way that a man will not stand the taste of milk that has turned bad. If we sin, our prayers will cause God to spew us out.

What is your response to preaching? The Bereans received Paul's preaching with ready minds [Acts 17:11] but the Jews of Jerusalem plugged their ears and would not listen to Stephen [Acts 7:51–60]. Where do you fall between these two extremes? Cornelius gave us one of the best examples of receptive hearers when he assembled his family and friends to hear "all things that are commanded thee of God" [Acts 10:33b].

We also read that the Israelites held a great celebration after they understood Ezra's teaching [Nehemiah 8]. The Thessalonians regarded Paul's preaching as the very words of God [1 Thessalonians 2:13].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 28
COLOSSIANS 3

THOUGHT

Before you pray, consider John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 29***LESSON****Spare the rod, spoil the child****VERSE 15**

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents must consider the benefit of due correction and the mischief of undue indulgence. If a child is “left to himself”, where will his training come from? The child will probably be exposed to the influence of his peers and society. A child left on his own brings shame, as foolishness is bound in his heart “but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” [Proverbs 22:15b]. More often than not, the rod symbolises a person’s interest in a child’s life. He is trying to give the child instruction, direction and correction, steering this child in the way he should go.

Quoting a negative example, King David, though a man after God’s own heart, did not take an active hand in teaching Adonijah. Instead, he indirectly encouraged his son to rebel against him by not being interested in his son’s upbringing. King David failed to train his son in the way he should go. This failure is seen in his other children as well—Absalom and Amnon, to name two.

It does not matter whether one is a child of God or not. If a parent does not follow through with the right kind of training, the negative impact will be clearly seen in his children.

In our modern society, the rod is often frowned upon. Parents who let their children do things in their own will must bear the shame that follows from such indulgences. Rod and reproof should be used jointly to instil wisdom in our children.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 29
COLOSSIANS 4

CHALLENGE

Consider also the father’s role in bringing up the child—do not provoke your child to wrath [Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21].

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 30***LESSON****Dangers of wealth and
poverty****VERSE 9**

*Lest I be full, and deny thee,
and say, Who is the LORD?
or lest I be poor, and steal,
and take the name of my
God in vain.*

This is the dangerous consequence of riches: “Lest I be full, and deny thee ...” What a sin it is to deny God! Men are often tempted to deny the Lord—often not His existence but chiefly His providence.

On acquiring wealth, men often attribute it to their own achievement and think that they can live without God and any dependence on His provision. Having had a large affluence, one may fail to thank God or even forget that He has a concern in the affairs of one’s life.

On the other hand, pray that poverty does not ensnare us. Men, for want of food and raiment, are often tempted to steal from their neighbours. Stealing is explicitly forbidden in the Bible and is a sin against the Law of God. In addition, one sin often leads to another. For example, to cover up one’s act of theft, one may deny it under oath. One becomes guilty of false swearing and taking the name of God in vain. In so doing, one becomes guilty of the breach of the third commandment. Starting with poverty, sin easily begets sin.

What then should we be praying for, in order for us to escape the dangers of wealth and poverty? Remember the Lord’s Prayer and pray that He will “give us this day our daily bread” [Matthew 6:11]. Not more, not less, but our daily provision to sustain us yet draw us away from temptations.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 30
I THESSALONIANS I**

CHALLENGE

Ask not for riches and stay strong in poverty in order to lead a God-honouring life.

BIBLE LESSON*Proverbs 31***LESSON****Fear of God rather than
love for beauty****VERSE 30**

*Favour is deceitful, and
beauty is vain: but a
woman that feareth the
LORD, she shall be praised.*

For a man seeking a wife or a parent seeking a daughter-in-law, the last chapter of Proverbs, especially verses 10 to 31, are most instructive.

The word “favour” is semantically near to the Hebrew word for “grace”. The word “grace” can refer to a woman’s outward appearance and form, and is parallel to the word “beauty”. However, oftentimes under this beauty lies an ill-natured and depraved mind. If the length of life is but a vapour, what more is the endurance of a woman’s beauty? Do not be confused. Beauty is to be admired, for it is the work of God. But to commit oneself solely to an external façade without the consideration of inner qualities would be foolish, especially where marriage is concerned.

Inner beauty comes from a right relationship with the Lord and true beauty is impossible without the fear of the Lord. Peter speaks of the inner beauty that ought to grace the life and conduct of every believing woman [1 Peter 3:1–6]. If the fear of the Lord is absent, then it is impossible to radiate the beauty of the Lord.

A German proverb goes, “Every woman would rather be beautiful than good.” Countering this, one wise pastor retorts, “Yet she who chooses to pursue godliness instead of fashion sacrifices none of her beauty for it. She may indeed gain some, for beauty in the heart puts beauty on the face.” Forget beauty and look for a lady that displays the fear of God instead.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PROVERBS 31
1 THESSALONIANS 2

CHALLENGE

Lord, help me not to judge a person by external looks.

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 1***LESSON****The theory of futility****VERSE 17**

*And I gave my heart to
know wisdom, and to
know madness and folly: I
perceived that this also is
vexation of spirit.*

What is the meaning of life? How can I find fulfilment in life? These were the questions on Solomon's mind as he began a series of grand experiments on life. Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes when he was old, looking back at what he had accomplished in his life. In his public office as king of Israel and in his private life, Solomon had accomplished much. So it is disconcerting to read that Solomon found life empty and his many efforts to make it meaningful ultimately futile.

Solomon tried every possible pursuit available to him. As king, he had the means to live the kind of life that would give him the most satisfaction. Solomon lived life to the extreme. The first grand experiment that Solomon carried out was his pursuit of wisdom. He said, "And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven ..." [v. 13].

All politicians enter the public arena with a promise of change to make life better for society. For the rest, we are more modest; we just want to make changes for ourselves to better our lives. Solomon found that there were things that knowledge alone could not do—the crooked could not be made straight.

Albert Einstein was known for his theory of relativity. Solomon was known for a more fundamental and important truth about man—the theory of futility without God. Despite his pursuit of knowledge, Solomon discovered that life could never be meaningful if God did not assume His rightful place in our hearts.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 1
I THESSALONIANS 3**

THOUGHT

Stop living life on substitutes. Instead of chasing the dream, we should be running to God.

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 2***LESSON****Living the high life****VERSE 11**

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Having failed to find meaning in the disciplined pursuit of wisdom, Solomon swung to the other extreme—an all-out, anything-goes pursuit of pleasure. “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure ... I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine” [v. 1, 3a].

This hedonistic lifestyle may be described by the slogan of a sport shoe brand—“Just Do It.” If it feels good, just do it. If it is fun, just do it. Take all you want! Live it up! Eat, drink and be merry, which were the last words of a rich farmer who thought that he had the rest of his life mapped out [Luke 12:19].

Solomon certainly had the resources to just do it. He gave himself “unto wine ... whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy” [v. 3, 10a]. However, he found out that life was not a giant buffet and amusement park rolled into one. Too much of laughter is madness and pleasure accomplishes very little [v. 2]. Solomon lived the high life and found its emptiness.

Still, there are many people who strive to live a life of self-indulgence and in pursuit of wanton pleasure. Many work hard to finance their fun. Little do they know that their fancy toys will never bring them everlasting joy. Real joy comes from having God in His rightful place in your heart.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 2
I THESSALONIANS 4**

THOUGHT

You may have the toys but not necessarily joy. The former comes from your labour; the latter is a gift from God.

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 3***LESSON****Who is in control?****VERSE 14**

*I know that, whatsoever
God doeth, it shall be for
ever: nothing can be put to
it, nor any thing taken from
it: and God doeth it, that
men should fear before him.*

I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." This is the famous couplet penned by English poet, William Earnest Henley, in his poem "Invictus". Henley extolled the indomitable spirit of the man who is in control of every situation in life.

The reality is that we are no more in control of life than a dingy in the ocean is in control of the waves and winds. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" [v. 1]. Solomon then lists 14 bad events and 14 good ones. Who determines the times for which these events take place? Certainly not man! It is God Who "hath made every thing beautiful in His time" [v. 11a].

Not only do we have no control over life's events, we also have no answers for life's most perplexing questions. God "hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" [v. 11b]. The word "world" is "eternity". It is also translated as "forever" [v. 14].

God has given us a void as huge as eternity but He has not given us the ability to fill the void or even understand the reason for it. God's intent is that our yearning to fill that void will drive us to Him. Our satisfactions in life are met and our frustrations are overcome by having God take His rightful place in our lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 3
1 THESSALONIANS 5

THOUGHT

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. – Psalm 16:11

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 4***LESSON****Full of trouble****VERSE 6**

*Better is an handful with
quietness, than both the
hands full with travail and
vexation of spirit.*

In Ecclesiastes 4, Solomon warns about the endless toil that is the result of envy. We are caught in a rat race where we try to live up to our neighbours. In the corporate world, the way to the top is to beat everyone else. As a result, we see people as objects to be exploited or obstacles to be removed for us to reach our goal. But they are opportunities that God has given us to minister. Solomon says, “This is also vanity and vexation of spirit” [v. 4b].

Many think that the answer to this futility of pursuing worldly success is to do nothing. Solomon says such people who fold their hands and do not participate in life are fools [v. 5]. Equally foolish is the man who argues that since he is in the race, he might as well grab as much as he can [v. 6b].

The biblical approach is to be content. One way farmers in the rural south of the United States trap racoons is to drive some nails into a hollow log and place some food in it. The racoon smells the food and reaches into the log to grab the food with its front paws. When it tries to retrieve the food, its front paws are snagged by the nails. The more food it grabs, the harder it is for that racoon to extricate itself. If only the racoon knows how to let go of some of the food, it will be freed.

If only we know that enough is enough.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ECCLESIASTES 4
2 THESSALONIANS 1

THOUGHT

**Better is little with the fear of the LORD than
great treasure and trouble therewith. – Proverbs
15:16**

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 5***LESSON****The gift of rejoicing****VERSE 19**

*Every man also to whom
God hath given riches and
wealth, and hath given him
power to eat thereof, and
to take his portion, and to
rejoice in his labour; this is
the gift of God.*

In this chapter, Solomon wrote as a commentator making observations on the goings-on in society. He went to the temple and saw the insincerity of the worshippers. He called their worship “the sacrifice of fools” [v. 1]. He visited the courts, and he saw perversion of justice and corruption in high places [v. 8]. He passed by the marketplace and all he noticed was the blind and meaningless pursuit of wealth, the incessant drive to acquire more, and the insatiable appetites of the human heart. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity” [v. 10].

The reason for this maddening pursuit is the idea that the road to happiness is through the accumulation of things. We think that if we have more, we will be happier. We think that if we have the toys of the world, we will have joy. God’s perspective is totally different. The gift of riches is separate from the gift of rejoicing. We can have the former without being blessed with the latter.

Solomon tells us to focus on the Giver and not the gifts. Warren Wiersbe wrote: “If we focus more on the gifts ... we are guilty of idolatry. If we ... complain about them, we are guilty of ingratitude. If we hoard ... we are guilty of indulgence. But if we yield to His will and use what He gives us for His glory, then we can enjoy life and be satisfied.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 5
2 THESSALONIANS 2

THOUGHT

We are less willing to receive from God than He is willing to give. The reason is that we give attention to the wrong gifts.

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 6***LESSON****Satisfaction guaranteed****VERSE 9**

*Better is the sight of the eyes
than the wandering of the
desire: this is also vanity
and vexation of spirit.*

Some advertisers slap a logo on their product and service that reads, “Satisfaction Guaranteed! Or Money Back!” It will be wonderful if every service that we use or every product that we buy comes with this guarantee. If only life could give us this kind of assurance, too. Solomon punctured this balloon with the needle of reality. He says, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men” [v. 1]. Solomon’s observation is not a positive one. Humanity is afflicted with one condition—the futility of life.

The rich man is not exempted from this evil. Here is the irony: A man is blessed with riches, but “God giveth him not power to eat” [v. 2]. A man is blessed with many children—the pride of a man’s life—yet he dies without a burial [v. 3]. So we have to ponder the question: What is the point of pursuing wealth and success if God does not give you the satisfaction of contentment?

The greater irony is that despite knowing that nothing the world offers will come with “satisfaction guaranteed”, we continue in our relentless pursuit of things that will only add to our discontentment.

The grass is greener on the other side, so we roll along. The water is sweeter over there, so we move on. But the discontentment moves with us because it is part of our nature. Our perspective of life will not change for the better until we learn to find our satisfaction in God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 6
2 THESSALONIANS 3

THOUGHT

**Contentment is not getting what you want.
Contentment is enjoying what God has given you.**

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 7***LESSON****Choose godly wisdom****VERSE 11**

Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

Solomon sought to bring us back to our senses with godly wisdom concerning the realities of life. A good reputation is to be preferred over wealth and pleasures, just as our passing away to be with God in heaven is better than our birth into this world of sorrow and pain. It is better to be serious about the matters of the soul than to be in love with the lusts of the world [v. 1–6].

In dealing with anger, discontentment and oppressions in life, Solomon noted that it is always wise to maintain a humble spirit, which could adapt easily to low situations when circumstances in our lives change, to manage our anger with grace and godly wisdom, to endure patiently as we submit to God's will in times of trial, and to be thankful even when bad times come, as our situation could have been worse [v. 7–10].

Having godly wisdom is better than gaining an inheritance. It enables us to make wise choices in life that bring about good rather than cause hurt, and strengthens our spiritual life as we recognise that God is at work in every situation [v. 11–22].

The fear of the Lord gives us the wisdom to order our steps not only in the right way but also out of every dangerous path [Psalm 37:23–24]. On the other hand, worldly wisdom, with all of its pleasures, pomp and pride, leads us into folly and down the slippery road to destruction. What is your choice?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 7
1 TIMOTHY 1

THOUGHT

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. – Colossians 3:2

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 8***LESSON****God's sovereign justice****VERSE 12**

*Though a sinner do evil
an hundred times, and
his days be prolonged, yet
surely I know that it shall
be well with them that fear
God, which fear before him.*

Ecclesiastes 8 poses some difficult concepts for us to understand. It deals with the prosperity of the wicked and God's divine justice. We see this in the history of rogue nations and their dictators, who seem to have unstoppable power. It is natural to question why God does not do anything to stop them.

Theodicy is a branch in theological studies that seeks to reconcile two seemingly contradicting concepts—God's all-powerful nature and the existence of evil. One way is to show the temporal nature of evil. Adolf Hitler was a wicked ruler because he initiated the killing of nearly six million Jews—one of history's most horrifying crimes. However, although he boasted that his Third Reich would last a thousand years, it actually came to a swift end in less than 10 years.

God may allow the wicked to go unpunished for a while but He does not forget about it. He controls all things. It is foolish for unrepentant sinners to think that they can continue in sin. Without repentance, their eternal destiny would be far worse than what they have done on earth.

We must trust in our all-powerful God even in times of distress. As the world is inherently evil, it is no use trying to explain why bad things happen to good people, and why the wicked seem to enjoy prosperity. Solomon concludes that we should make the most out of this wretched life by enjoying life itself in a God-honouring way.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 8
I TIMOTHY 2**

THOUGHT

Let us fear the Lord and be thankful to Him in every situation for He is in control.

BIBLE LESSON
Ecclesiastes 9

LESSON
Only one life

VERSE 5

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Solomon further examined the vanity of life in this chapter. It is puzzling for us to understand the situations that happen to the good and to the bad. No man can predict the future; anything can happen. On the surface, the righteous and the wicked have one thing in common—physical death. However, although it is true that the righteous have no advantage over the wicked, as both will eventually die, the former enjoy an everlasting life and endless hope; while the latter have nothing to look forward to, except a hopeless end.

How then should we live our lives on earth, while preparing for eternity? The human race is bizarre indeed. We go about doing our work every day, striving greedily for worldly achievement, success and power. In our short lifespan, we fight for temporal things, filling our lives with feelings of pride and hatred, jealousy and envy. Little do we realise that we are all living under a death sentence!

Indeed, whether we are kings or labourers, every earthly thing that we have accomplished will count for nothing one day. It is all vanity. Christians are reminded that we are simply passing through this earth; we are not going to be here forever.

Do something meaningful with your life by serving our Lord wholeheartedly. Only the work that we do for Him will last forever. Then will we hear our Lord say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 9
I TIMOTHY 3

THOUGHT

Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last. – C. T. Studd (1860–1931), missionary to China, India and Africa

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 10***LESSON****Tread carefully****VERSE 1**

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

Solomon, in this chapter, gives some examples of how the wise use wisdom to enhance themselves, as compared to the foolish, whose ways lead to destruction. Verse 1 gives us the imagery of a fly caught in the perfumer's ointment. It eventually dies, giving the perfume a terrible smell instead of a pleasant one. The analogy is simple. A person may build a good reputation of wisdom and honour but all his efforts may crumble into waste because of some foolish mistakes in life. People tend to remember one's foolish mistakes better than one's achievements.

Joseph is one outstanding example of a person whose reputation remained untarnished in spite of the many temptations and trials he faced. He never allowed a single act of folly to smear his reputation. He did what was right in the eyes of God regardless of the situation he was in, and this pleased God. Eventually, Joseph rose from a lowly slave to become an esteemed prime minister of Egypt.

It is important to watch the manner in which we speak and conduct ourselves. James 3:5 warns: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" A wrong action, or a word not fitly spoken, can give rise to great misunderstanding, deep hurt and consequences that we may regret for a long time.

Let us ask God for discernment and wisdom to tread carefully and please Him each step of our way. It is not how we start that matters, but how we finish.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 10
1 TIMOTHY 4

THOUGHT

The test of your character is what it takes to stop you. – Bob Jones, Sr

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 11***LESSON****God's unsearchable
wisdom****VERSE 5**

*As thou knowest not what
is the way of the spirit, nor
how the bones do grow in
the womb of her that is with
child: even so thou knowest
not the works of God who
maketh all.*

Events in life are anything but predictable. The mysteries of “how” and “why” are too deep for us to fully fathom. The September 11 terrorist attack in 2001, the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 and, more recently, the 2010 Haiti earthquake are events that caught the world by surprise. We are all at God’s mercy for He knows everything in His foreknowledge; and whatever happens to us in life is never by chance.

Let us recognise Who God is. He is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (all-present) and omniscient (all-knowing). Everything in this universe is known to God. Nothing escapes Him and there is nothing that He does not already know—past, present and future.

Human knowledge, on the other hand, is finite. Even when we come to the end of our lives, we are still struggling to truly comprehend the one thing that we think we know. No one can ever plan his future with certainty, for who knows what will happen tomorrow? James 4:13–15 reminds us about the unpredictability of life. It is God, not us, Who determines everything that happens. Who, then, can boast about anything?

As we meditate upon God’s Word in humility and obedience, He gives us the wisdom to do His will. Life is no longer a guessing game when we take on a Christ-centred perspective on everything in life. It is only when our hearts are yielded to God that we are able to experience His comfort and peace that passes all human understanding, even when life’s storms come crashing through.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 11
I TIMOTHY 5**

THOUGHT

Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustingly and quietly on Him Who has all things safely in His hands. – Elisabeth Elliot

BIBLE LESSON*Ecclesiastes 12***LESSON****Choosing wisely****VERSE 8**

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

In the days of our youth, we must not forget God. This is a fitting reminder because it is easy to neglect God when we are young, strong and energetic, chasing after our worldly dreams and ambitions. Everything seems possible and enticing; and every opportunity, a pity to miss.

However, the fact is, regardless of young or old, how we live our lives depends on what matters most to us. Is Christ most important to you? There are things in life that God gives us to enjoy and use for His glory, but we must never value these things above God. The world seeks to lure our hearts away from God. The more we allow our love for worldly pleasures to grow, the more our love for God diminishes. 1 John 2:16 reminds us that these worldly sins include sensual pleasures (lust of the flesh), covetousness (lust of the eyes) and desire for fame (pride of life). In Ecclesiastes, Solomon concludes that all these are but “vanity of vanities,” as they will all fade away together with the world.

As believers, our life should be Christ-centred [Colossians 3:1]. We are to fear God by giving Him due honour in our worship and by obeying His commandments [v. 13]. This means repenting of our sins, serving Him and giving Him first place in our lives, and looking to Him for grace and wisdom to steer us through this transient life.

Be constantly vigilant and prayerful. God will enable us to live victoriously for Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ECCLESIASTES 12
I TIMOTHY 6**

THOUGHT

Our efforts to please God will not be in vain for He will judge us accordingly. – Ecclesiastes 12:14

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 1***LESSON****A most exquisite song****VERSE I**

*The song of songs, which is
Solomon's.*

The Song of Solomon is also called “The Song of Songs”, which, in Hebrew, means “A Most Exquisite Song”. It is also known by its Latin-derived name, the “Canticles”.

A Shulamite shepherdess, brought into Solomon’s court against her wishes, was longing for her shepherd lover [v. 2–4]. She was dark (because of her time spent under the sun) but comely [v. 5–6], and she wondered where her lover was at the moment [v. 7–8]. King Solomon wooed her and compared her to Pharaoh’s prized horses, promising to adorn her with jewels, gold and silver. However, the shepherdess disregarded Solomon’s riches, and preferred her own simple pleasures—spikenard and myrrh, which she kept within her breasts. The fragrances reminded her of her lover, whom she compared to a cluster of camphire (henna blossoms) in Engedi. When Solomon likened her eyes to doves’ eyes [v. 15], she thought, instead, of her lover, and their home in the countryside [v. 16–17].

The Song of Solomon is, on the surface, a love song written by Solomon or, some say, about Solomon. To the Jews, it contains allegories of Jehovah’s love for Israel. To the Christians, it contains symbolism of Christ’s love for His Church. Solomon wrote 1,005 songs but this one stands the test of time and is accepted as part of Scripture.

Have you overlooked this book of the Bible? Read it and be blessed by God’s Word in this most exquisite song.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**SONG OF SOLOMON I
2 TIMOTHY I**

THOUGHT

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2 Timothy 3:16–17

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 2***LESSON**

**Christians, awake, salute
the happy morn**

VERSE 11

*For, lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone;*

The Shulamite likened herself to the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. Solomon likened her to a lily among thorns [v. 2]. She turned her attention back to her lover, whom she likened to an apple tree among trees of wood, and like a visit to the banqueting house.

She urged her lady companions in Solomon's court (the daughters of Jerusalem) not to wake her from her reveries. She imagined her lover coming to take her away [v. 8–10], after a long winter or the end of the rainy season. As she dreamt of spring, she was also reminded of foxes that caused ruin to her vines. It was her duty to catch the foxes and prevent damage to her vineyard. She and her lover belonged to each other and she urged him to return again when the day broke [v. 16–17].

We are reminded here of the time when we were still strangers to the grace of God. How desolate our lives were then! When Christ's Gospel light shone upon us, we were awakened, as it were, from deep winter. Let us heed the call once again, lest we falter and backslide. Indeed, the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone.

Let us look forward to the tasks ahead of us. Now that we are children of God, let us labour to take on the little foxes in our lives that hinder our walk with God. Remember also that we are to bear much fruit for Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
SONG OF SOLOMON 2
2 TIMOTHY 2

MEDITATION

Read Hebrews 12.

BIBLE LESSON
Song of Solomon 3

LESSON
Rescue the perishing

VERSE 2

*I will rise now, and go
about the city in the streets,
and in the broad ways I will
seek him whom my soul
loveth: I sought him, but I
found him not.*

The Shulamite describes, as it were in a dream, the night when she was supposed to meet her lover. However, she could not find him so she rose up into the city to search for him. After some effort, she found him and took him to her mother's home. Again, she urged her companions not to wake her from her reveries. Solomon appeared on the scene with much grandeur in what appeared to be pillars of smoke [v. 6]. He was perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and 60 strong men accompanied him [v. 7]. Solomon had a chariot with silver pillar supports, a golden base and purple covering. He wore a crown that his mother made for his wedding day.

Some of us may identify with the passage above. Like lost sheep, we once tried to find our own way out of our predicaments, using our own strength. Many give us false hope, like the watchmen [v. 3], but none could really help us. But when Christ comes into our lives, what joy it is to finally see with our new spiritual eyes!

There are many who are still lost in this world. Let us strive to bring them out of their spiritual blindness, with love and patience. At times, we might be in despair because we do not know how to witness for Christ. In times like these, pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because only God can move a person's heart towards Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
SONG OF SOLOMON 3
2 TIMOTHY 3

CHALLENGE

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. – Matthew 28:19–20

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 4***LESSON****Blest be the tie that binds****VERSE 12**

*A garden inclosed is my
sister, my spouse; a spring
shut up, a fountain sealed.*

Solomon tried again to entice the Shulamite with sweet words [v. 1–5]. However, her mind was still on her fragrant mountains and hills. She imagined her lover calling her back to him [v. 7–15]. She had captivated her lover’s heart, and he described her as better than wine and spices. She was as honey and milk to him, and her garments were fragrant. She was like a private garden that only he could enter to enjoy therein, with fruit orchards, fragrant trees and spices, and fountains and wells of fresh water. She wished that the north wind would blow and carry the fragrance to her lover, and entice him to come to her [v. 16].

Here is a picture of purity that Christians should emulate. We should keep our bodies pure and undefiled for our future life partner. Husbands and wives, let us be to our partner, a garden that is fenced up and well-guarded from the peering eyes of strangers. A garden is also to be enjoyed—it should be well-tended and pleasant for the enjoyment of the occupants. So should our relationship be with our spouse.

Let us begin this new day that the Lord has given with a new attitude towards our home and family. At home, worship the Lord as a family. Sing praises and hymns, and share with one another in sweet fellowship. Pray together, submitting to the Lord whatever petitions you may have, giving thanks always to the Lord for this privilege to come before the throne of grace as a family.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**SONG OF SOLOMON 4
2 TIMOTHY 4**

PRAYER

O Lord, we pray for our family. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we journey together, on our way to our heavenly home. Thank You for family members that You have given us. Help us to care for one another, with love, joy and peace that only You can give.

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 5***LESSON****He is altogether lovely****VERSE 16**

*His mouth is most sweet:
yea, he is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this
is my friend, O daughters of
Jerusalem.*

A bridegroom called on his bride to open the door. She hesitated and responded slowly. When she finally rose from her comfortable bed to open the door, she found her beloved gone. She felt sorry and went to the city to seek him. When asked by the daughters of Jerusalem, she gave an extensive description of her beloved's character and accomplishments [v. 10–16]. She obviously knew him well.

Having detailed the various features of her beloved, the maiden declared that “he is altogether lovely”. He was not only great in his physical appearance but also a perfect man.

Repentance allowed the maiden to recollect pleasant memories about her past encounters with her beloved. When she was lying on her bed of ease, she did not have the same capacity to appreciate her beloved. But now in a state of repentance, she recalled what she knew about him. She not only focused on his perfection in its entirety but she also examined his perfection in its parts. A lover wants to know all about the object of her love. It is the same with a true believer—he or she wants to know all about Christ.

Spurgeon described our Lord thus: “Not only is His teaching attractive, His doctrine persuasive, His life irreproachable, His character enchanting, and His work a self-denying labour for the common good of all His people, but He Himself is altogether lovely.” If we apply verses 10–16 to the relationship between Christ and His church, it shows how greatly believers must cherish the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

SONG OF SOLOMON 5
TITUS 1

QUESTION

Why is the maiden so slow in responding to her bridegroom's call? How can she risk losing such an “altogether lovely” man?

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 6***LESSON****A restored relationship****VERSE 2**

*My beloved is gone down
into his garden, to the
beds of spices, to feed in
the gardens, and to gather
lilies.*

The bride's delay in receiving the groom prompted this sudden departure but she knew exactly where to find him. He had gone "to the beds of spices, to feed, and to gather lilies" in the garden. Knowing what interested him provided the key for her to re-establish their intimacy.

When she began to think through the fundamentals of her relationship (Who is my beloved? How do I feel about him? Where can I find him?), she began to understand the importance of restoring their ties. She realised that though they were now separated, they still belonged to each other. She was now filled with a renewed sense of oneness with her beloved.

This chapter gives an extensive description of a restored loving relationship between the groom (Christ) and his bride (the Church). The maiden had won back the groom's heart. She had smitten him with her eyes, as he declared, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." The bride declares happily: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The love is mutual.

Similarly, our communion with God is maintained by the frequent renewal of our ties with Him. If our hearts can affirm that we belong to Christ, there is no question of His being ours. Christ's Church is like a garden, enclosed and separated from the world. It is His garden. He takes care of it, delights in it and visits it. He feeds among the lilies; He takes delight in His people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
SONG OF SOLOMON 6
TITUS 2

THOUGHT

**One is nearer God's heart in a garden than
anywhere else on earth. – D. F. Gurney**

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 7***LESSON****The reconciled couple
rejoices in each other****VERSE 10***I am my beloved's, and his
desire is toward me.*

In this chapter, the groom continued to describe the beauties of his bride and expressed his love for her. In turn, the bride showed her great delight in him and her desire for communion and fellowship with him.

The harmony between the couple was fully restored and they could once again enjoy their love for each other. The groom was admiring the beauty of every part of the bride's body—from her feet to her head. We see here a picture of Christ looking at His beloved children. The detailed descriptions of the body parts are important as they not only show that Christ takes note of every aspect of His Church but He also knows every member in it. Not one of us is overlooked. But we must remember that we are only beautiful in the eyes of our Lord if we are truly His. His beauty must be reflected in our lives.

In verse 10, the maiden claims her interest in her groom ("I am my beloved's") and takes notice of his affection for her ("and his desire is towards me"). She feels completely secure in his love and is wholly taken up with him. Campbell Morgan added: "It is the full, final, ultimate word of love. It expresses complete satisfaction, absolute rest and utmost contentment and peace."

By analogy, the great delight and desire of the groom in his maiden helps us understand how much God loves us. Happy are we when our delight and desire are in Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
SONG OF SOLOMON 7
TITUS 3

THOUGHT

**... and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,
so shall thy God rejoice over thee. – Isaiah 62:5**

BIBLE LESSON*Song of Solomon 8***LESSON****The strength of love****VERSE 6**

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

In this verse, the maiden described the strength of her love, which she likened to a seal, death, grave and fire. These descriptions give us some remarkable pictures of love that we can use to examine our relationship with Christ.

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.” The maiden appealed to her beloved to seal their commitment. If we desire Christ to set us as a seal on His heart, surely we cannot do less than setting Him as a seal on ours, too.

“For love is strong as death.” The pain of a disappointed lover is like the pain of death. Christ’s love for us is stronger than death, as it breaks through death itself. He loves us and gives Himself for us. Similarly, the love of true believers for Christ needs to be strong to make them dead unto ungodly things.

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” The maiden’s desire for her beloved was so unrelenting that there was no room left for a romantic rival. Believers who truly love Christ should also be jealous of anything that draws them away from Him, and reject anything that comes between them.

“The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” The maiden’s love for Solomon was like a raging fire that could not be extinguished. Our love for Christ should burn like a fire that produces a vehement flame in our hearts and consumes the impurities in them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
SONG OF SOLOMON 8
PHILEMON

THOUGHT

Whenever love absorbs the heart, jealousy will guard the object of affection. – Spurgeon

