

# Daily Devotional Booklet

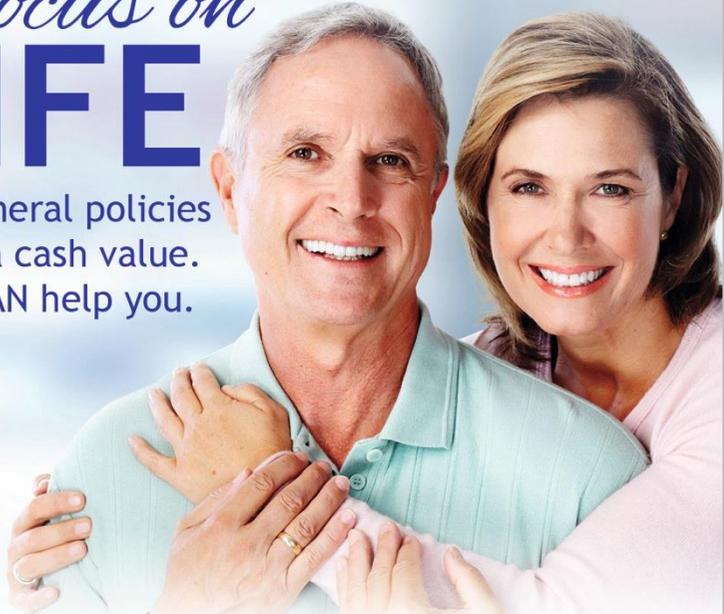
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## What About The Church?



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## What About The Church?

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These devotions are written by a team of writers and ministers from Northfield Methodist Church. An electronic version of this booklet that is formatted for easy reading on your tablet or phone, can be downloaded from our website, or you can request to be added to the email list.

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## **BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY ONE**

### **RELENTLESS PASSION**

***Read Hosea 1:1-11 (NLT).***

*Worship Song: All Things New – Elevation Worship.*

This week we will consider how the church is the bride of Christ and what that means to each of us as the church. When we think of passion, it can bring up many memories of the great romance movies like Grease, Pretty Woman, The Notebook. The relentless passion that never gives up and, in the end, the guy gets the girl. It may even remind you of your partner when you were first dating, and how passionate you felt for each other.

But there is an even older and more amazing love story of relentless passion. In our reading today, God uses the life and experience of Hosea and his disastrous marriage, and unrelenting forgiveness, to illustrate how despite our own unfaithfulness, this is not the end. The promise of forgiveness if we return to Him is always extended to us. God has pursued His people with a relentless passion and does whatever He has to do to win us back. Our sin may have ruined any chance of intimacy with the Father, but God had a plan for redemption and a means to restore a broken relationship.

The means He had, was the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus, through whom we are redeemed and made pure again. Jesus, out of His love for us and His love for our Father, gave His life for us and in so doing, paid a price for His bride. You and I are the bride of Christ.

***Prayer: Dear God, thank you for Your unrelenting passion for me, and for the sacrifice made so that I may be reconciled with You. Please help me to honour You in all that I do as Your bride and Your church. Amen.***

## **BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY TWO**

### **THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE**

***Read Matthew 25:1-13 (NLT).***

*Worship Song: New Wine – Hillsong.*

I am sure all of you have gone to at least one wedding in your life. There is always that moment when the anticipation reaches a climax and the bride enters the church. Clothed in magnificence, everyone gasps at her beauty as she floats down the aisle. The bride and groom lock eyes, sharing the emotional memories of the weeks and months that it took to get to this moment. It has taken hard work and many hours of preparation to get to this wonderful and joyous day. Just like the brides in our passage today, they had to prepare for their wedding day, making sure they had enough oil in their lamps. The message in this parable is a kind of warning to be prepared and make sure we are ready when God comes for His bride. Our purpose and goal for life should be to wait for the return of Jesus and live a life worthy of His love.

When the bride prepares herself for the wedding, she dresses in white, making sure she is clean and sparkling for her wedding. When we are presented to God one day with Jesus holding our hand, the acceptance and acknowledgment of Jesus' sacrifice is the only thing that will make us beautiful and pure again.

God relentlessly pursues us, and Jesus longs to be in relationship with us, but it is up to us to answer and respond. It is up to us to nurture our relationship and prepare for the day when we will be presented as the bride of Christ.

***Prayer: Dear God, I long for the deep relationship with You just as a bride has with her groom. Thank you that You make me clean and pure. Thank you for Your forgiveness and grace. Amen.***

## **BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY THREE**

### **THE GENEROUS BRIDEGROOM**

***Read John 3:27-30 (NLT).***

*Worship Song: The Cause Of Christ – Kari Jobe.*

Have you ever looked back to see the groom's face as he sees his bride for the first time? Or seen a compilation video of grooms' faces as they see their bride? Each time, their face displays their deep emotion with tears of joy. Imagine God standing at the end of the aisle waiting for His bride as Jesus presents us to God, and we see God's love for us streaming down His face. We will stand before God, worthy in His eyes, facing eternity with our Groom. His generosity made a way for us when we were unable to see a way to Him. When we were unable to see His plan for us. God knew from the moment He created us with free will, that we would not always choose Him, and that our sin would become so overwhelming that our salvation would seem hopeless. The enemy was already celebrating his victory, but God, in his endless generosity, made the greatest sacrifice so that His creation, you and I, could find a way back to Him.

In our reading today, the bridegroom arrives and meets the brides who are ready with the lamps full of oil. The generous bridegroom takes all 5 with Him, showing His generous love. Not only did this parable illustrate God's generous love, but it also shows us that not one of us will be left outside if we are prepared. The oil in their lamps represents the Holy Spirit, and we need to be filled with the Spirit of God when Jesus returns one day. Take some time today to consider how full your lamp is.

***Prayer: Dear God, Thank You for your generous love and abundant grace. Thank you for making me pure again. Fill me with Your Spirit Lord, that I may be prepared when Jesus arrives.***

## BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY FOUR

### A GREAT MYSTERY

***Read Ephesians 5:25-33 (NLT).***

*Worship Song: Who But Jesus? – Laura Story.*

Today we will look at the illustration Paul uses to teach us about the relationship between Jesus and the church. Marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between Jesus and His church. God patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between his Son and the church, which he had planned from all eternity.

You may think that a church is a building, but actually each of us are a part of God's church. Fellowship, worship, and ministry are all celebrated by people, not buildings. Church structures house the role of God's people, but they do not fulfil it. This is what the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the church is. It is a unique relationship that God created before the beginning of the world, because God saw the unfolding of humankind. You may think this passage is specifically a set of values for marriages, but it is a set of values for each and every one of us. We the church submit to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, and Jesus, in turn, loves and cares for us as a husband would His wife.

***“And He said, “This explains why the church leaves... and is joined to Jesus Christ, and the two are united into one”, Matthew 19:5.*** Just imagine, when our wedding day comes, dear friend. We will be united in the grace of God and as the bride of Christ. Overwhelming joyfulness!

***Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the creation of the relationship between us, the church, and Jesus, Your son. May I come to understand this beautiful mystery, and be grateful for Your grace.***

## BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY FIVE

### THE WEDDING DAY

***Read Revelation 19:6-10 (NLT).***

*Worship song: The bride of Christ – Life Church.*

The wedding day has arrived. The groom goes ahead of the bride to prepare the house for her. His close friends go ahead of him announcing the coming of the bride and groom. Everyone pours out into the streets to celebrate the wedding day. The church is full of the friends and family who arrived before, beautifully paved in gold, decorated in gems and jewels. The wedding feast is prepared with all the most delicious foods and wines, flowers adorn the tables awaiting the guests of the Lamb. The wedding day has arrived. Can you see it? Can you imagine this day?

Jesus, shining so brightly, stands before God with His bride, dressed in pure white linen. Angels rejoice in celebration, and all the saints who have arrived before join in the praising of God for this magnificent day. The day that all Christians of the world have been waiting for. Nothing that we experience on this earth can ever compare to the joy we will experience on that day when we are reunited with Jesus.

Where are you sitting at the wedding feast, friend? Who are you sitting with? When you look around, who do you see? Many of us may feel unworthy of attending the wedding feast, not good enough. But the truth is, Jesus died for us and made us worthy in God's eyes. Adopted into His family and reunited. Know this, you *are* worthy to sit at this banquet because God loves You.

***Prayer: God, I am humbled at the sacrifice You have made for me and for making me worthy of Your love. Thank you, Jesus, for your love. Thank you for making me a part of Your family. Amen.***

## BRIDE OF CHRIST: DAY SIX

### A CHOSEN PEOPLE

***Read 1 Peter 2:9 (NLT). “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God” (v9-10b).***

*Worship song: Saviour King – Hillsong Worship.*

The thing about a wedding, is that it cannot be done alone. Two families, two worlds, two sets of quite different people, are joined and made one. One family. No longer strangers, but united by the marriage into one family, significantly connected. One of the most beautiful things God created must be a family. The strength that lies in a united family is unmatched. A family supports, guides and loves each other in a way that a stranger or acquaintance cannot manage.

God has called each one of us a chosen people, a Royal priesthood, and a Holy nation, belonging to God. We are no longer separated from God but daughters and sons of a King. God has bought us for a price, and Jesus paid that cost. We have been brought out of the darkness, we can stand in the light of His love and His grace, knowing that. We. Are. Worthy!

We are set apart for God, so consecrate yourself for Him, offer Him all of Your life with all your worries, faults, and circumstances. Declare His promises over your life and sing praise to our God and our Saviour today.

***Prayer: Dear God, You have made me a part of Your Holy nation and I thank You God for making me whole. For saving me from the darkness. I love You Lord Jesus. Amen.***

## **WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?**

### **Reflection on BRIDE OF CHRIST:**

**Welcome:** Reflect on a wedding that you have been to. The bride and groom, how did they look? What special memories do you have of that wedding?

**Worship:** All Things New – Elevation Worship  
New Wine – Hillsong  
The Cause Of Christ – Kari Jobe  
Who But Jesus – Laura Story  
The Bride Of Christ – Life Church  
Savior King – Hillsong Worship

**Word:** Read *Hosea 1:1-11, Matthew 25:1-13, John 3:27-30, Ephesians 5:25-33, Revelation 19:6-10, 1 Peter 2:9.*

God's love for us was so immense that He bought our salvation with the cost of His son's life. We have been accepted and made pure by God. Each of us are a part of the church, which is the bride of Christ.

1. Where do you see yourself in these stories, do you consider yourself as a bride of Christ?
2. How has God forgiven you and dressed you in pure white?
3. How can you be prepared for the day when God's kingdom returns?
4. What can you learn from the parables about marriage?

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY ONE**

### **GOD'S PLAN**

***Read Ephesians 3:6-12. "God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (v10).***

The Body of Christ is not a building that believers go to, to worship God. Neither is it an organisation or holy club that people belong to. The Body of Christ is made up of all those who believe and trust Christ for their righteousness before God, by faith. Today's verse shows clearly that the Body of Christ is not a human being's plan but God's plan. The plan is all about the whole of creation being set free from death and decay. Romans 8:20-21.

The people in the Body of Christ have a commandment from Christ, their Lord, to love one another.

The text shows that Christ-followers, broken as they are, are being used by God to show off His wisdom - an amazing statement! That is why it is unwise to insult or have contempt for the Body of Christ. Christ has said that in spite of evil in the world trying to destroy the Body of Christ, the very gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Matthew 6:18. The head is not the Pope, the Presiding Bishop or any human leader, but Christ Himself. Ephesians 4:14, Colossians 1:18. This is why doctrine, traditions etc. should not be such a big deal. Different denominations just help us to worship God in His infiniteness, and express different understandings about God and His Word.

***Prayer: Father God, help me to understand that every person who is part of Your Body, is a person who should be taking part in Your plan of the salvation of the world. Amen.***

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY TWO**

### **YOU ARE PART OF THE BODY**

***Read Colossians 1:15-23. "This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions" (v21).***

In our previous devotion we noted that the body of Christ is God's plan. Today we will focus on the fact that God is inclusive of everyone who accepts Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

As soon as one receives the Holy Spirit after accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, one is seen as a member of the Body of Christ. A person should be baptised or confirmed after this to indicate that the inner acceptance of Christ has happened. When you opened your heart to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, your status changed from an enemy of God to a child of God. Colossians 1:21. The story of the prodigal son shows that God takes believers as they are and places the seal of the Holy Spirit in them. Ephesians 1:13. Every person who has the Holy Spirit is a member of the Body of Christ.

One is not perfect or sinless by any means, but seen by God as righteous, and a full member of the Body of Christ. It makes no sense that one should remove themselves from the activities of the Church and sit at home. The Body is there to help the members to display God's wisdom and carry out His plans for humankind. Ephesians 3:10. The Body of Christ is made up of people sharing gifts for the benefit of all the members. Members not participating take something away from all the members. 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

***Prayer: Lord, thank You for including me in the Body of Christ. Help me to find my gift and use it according to Your plan. Amen.***

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY THREE**

### **CHRIST'S TEMPLE**

***Read 1 Peter 2:1–12. “And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God” (v5).***

The text for today shows us what an awesome privilege it is to be a part of the Body of Christ. Firstly, God is using each individual person to collectively build a spiritual temple for Himself. Each member of the Body is a living part of what makes up a special Temple that God is building. Thinking of the millions upon millions of people who have become members of the body, gives one a realisation of the greatness of that Temple. Secondly, each member of the Body is regarded by God as a holy priest. Each person has the full privileges of going into the “Holy of Holies” at any time. Hebrews 10:19. Thirdly, whatever we do for God as the Body of Christ, is a pleasing sacrifice. This enables us to work for God with joy, knowing that He loves what we are doing for Him. It is very special to realise God is pleased with what we are doing for Him. Sometimes our attempts at working for God aren’t great, yet, by Christ’s blood, God is pleased with us.

We sometimes feel that God isn’t listening to little me, or that I am a holy priest or that my work for God is significant. The passage today shows a believer that sometimes our feelings aren’t true to the facts. God is pleased with the people who have genuinely opened their hearts to Christ, and are members of the Body.

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to realise that You are for us as members of Your Body. Through Your Holy Spirit help me to share my gifting for the benefit of the Body as a whole. Amen.***

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY FOUR**

### **LIVING APART FROM THE CHURCH IS DISOBEDIENCE TO CHRIST**

***Read 1 John 2:7-14. “Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before” (v1).***

How often do we hear people say that they are Christians but are not part of any church? This is like a vehicle saying that it does not travel on a road.

Christ made it a deep part of spiritual discipline to be an active member of the Body of Christ, the Church. One of his last words to His followers was to give them a command to love one another. It is impossible to love the members of the Body of Christ by staying away from them. In 1 John 3:10, John the Apostle goes so far as to say that separating ourselves from the Body of Christ shows that a person is not really a child of God. That is a scary statement. Alternatively, being a part of the Body shows that one is indeed a child of Christ. Loving the members of Christ’s Body proves that one has indeed passed from spiritual death, to life in Christ. 1 John 3:14. What a joy it is to be loved and to love.

1 Corinthians 12:21 shows that we are exactly what we are made to be, if we fulfil the task God has for us in the Body. Being and doing what we were created for gives purpose and life to anyone. If there is one task that everyone in the Body of Christ has to do, it is to love the members of Christ’s Body, warts and all.

***Prayer: Lord, please help me to act lovingly towards the people of God. Give me the strength and fortitude to act lovingly towards the difficult members of Your Body. Amen.***

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY FIVE**

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST – IS ONE**

***Read Ephesians 4:3-6. “For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future” (v4).***

***“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” Ps 133:1.*** We can see from this Psalm that God loves unity. When people are together in thought, and have a common purpose, then the group will be content and happy.

In John 17:3 we find Jesus praying earnestly for unity between believers. The reason why Jesus asks this, is clear. Unity in the Body of Christ is the greatest evangelical tool to the rest of the world. When the Church is in unity of purpose following Jesus, joy and hope is apparent to all who look from outside into the church. When there is disunity, those outside point at why they don’t want any part of Christ or the Church. A church in unity is a church that shows the power of Christ. Ephesians 1:19–20. Christ is the power behind such a church. The signs and gifts of the Spirit will be clear for all to see. A church like this is alive and well. The passage in Ephesians 1:19–20 informs us that the very power of Christ is available to the Body. Unity in the Body is only possible because believers *eat from the same loaf*. Colossians 1:10–14.

One of the proofs that a believer is really alive in Christ, is seen by how much they love the people in the Body. Love is an action, not a feeling, in this sense. In fact, in 1 John 3:14 it states that those who love the Body of Christ have proved that they have been made alive in Christ. The verse also states that those without love are still dead.

***Prayer: Holy Spirit help us to grow in love for each other. Amen.***

## **BODY OF CHRIST: DAY: DAY SIX**

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST – MANY MEMBERS**

***Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. “Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part” (v14).***

This text shows that every person in the Body of Christ has a set of gifts (talents and abilities). When the entire passage is read, we find that those who are shy and introverted have essential talents. Often these people work quietly in the background without being noticed by other people. Of course, Christ notices, very much, that these people are using their talents for the Kingdom of God.

We may sometimes wonder if it is true that our talents and gifts are really needed. After all, many Christians don't use their talents and gifts to build up the Church. Ephesians 1:23 explains that the Body of Christ is made complete by Him. Thank goodness for this. Nobody needs to feel guilt after realizing that they wasted their gifts for many years before getting involved. Today's passage shows that even when we think that what we do for the body of Christ seems insignificant when compared to other members' contribution, what we do is important indeed. Those who may feel that they are looked down upon by others, can know without a doubt that their contribution is essential to the health of the whole body. According to 1 Corinthians 12:18, wherever a person is practising their gifts, God is the one who placed them there.

There is not one person who is a true believer, that can say they aren't needed to build up the body. 1 Corinthians 12:21. When believers show appreciation for each other's gifts, harmony and care is built up between all in the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:25.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you that You have a purpose for me. Amen.***

## WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?

### Reflection on BODY OF CHRIST:

How sad it is when Christians think that they don't need to be part of the Body of Christ. On the other hand, it is a great comfort to know all true believers belong to the Body, and all of their gifts are essential to build up the Body. Unity, hope and purpose result from using one's gifts to build up the Body of Christ. Christ is glorified by people using their gifts.

**Welcome:** Tell some people how you appreciate and notice their gifts and talents. Be honest in what you say.

**Worship:** Sing "My life is in You Lord":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPqHufcoreg>  
Spend some time praising God openly as the Spirit leads, if you are comfortable to do so.

**Word:** Read **1 Peter 2:1–12**. ***"And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple" (v5a)***. The Body of Christ is made up of living stones. Living things grow. One of the best ways to grow in Christ is to find and use the gifts God has given one. Many times, the gift is matured and honed as people learn by experience.

**Work:** What gift or gifts are being honed and matured in your life today? Do you need to take a step in faith to find out what gift God is prompting you to use? Pray for yourself and others, for encouragement and courage to keep growing your God-given gifts.

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY ONE

***Read Romans 8:14-21. “For all who are lead by the Spirit of God are children of God. The spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery, leading you back to fear but a spirit of adoption enabling us to cry Abba Father” (v14-15, The Revised English Bible).***

Today’s reading sets our theme for the week. We will be reflecting on what it means to be the Children of God in the context of God’s Church. Being part of a happy earthly family is most people’s dream, but whether or not we have been blessed with this happy earthly family, we have a place in God’s family as followers of Jesus Christ. If we learn to enjoy our position in God’s family we are assured of a share in God’s Kingdom, both now and forever, and we are able to know an intimate relationship with our Abba Father ***“The Spirit of God affirms to our spirit that we are God’s children and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ; but we must share his sufferings if we are also to share his glory” (v16,17).***

Pause for a moment and reflect on these verses. An heir is entitled to an inheritance. As a child of God we are heirs in God’s Kingdom and co-heirs with Jesus. WOW!!! That’s powerful! Spend some time today just thinking about what this means to the way we live our lives and the way we do church.

No family is without its struggles and strife, and Paul reminds us that we must be prepared to share in Christ’s sufferings so that we can enjoy our inheritance in the glory of eternal life with the Father.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I come to You in awe of your great gift to me. The gift of being called your child. Help me to live my life so that others can see you reflected in me. Amen.***

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY TWO

***Read Galatians 3:23-4:7. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (v28).***

Today we focus on the inclusivity of God’s church. Paul’s proclamation that ALL are one in Christ Jesus was radical in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine. Theirs was (as is ours) a culturally divided society. Throughout the Roman Empire, which was supposedly a common culture with common laws, people were pitted against people, classes against classes, religious creeds against religious creeds, philosophical stances against philosophical stances. Paul’s countercultural statement helps us understand that we are all welcome regardless of ethnicity, social standing or gender, and therefore we are compelled to welcome all God’s people as our brothers and sisters in Christ. This statement has often been described as “The Magna Carta of the new Humanity”, for it sets forth a relationship in Jesus Christ in which ALL believers can be united with Christ.

When we become part of God’s family we need to accept all of God’s children, not just those who are similar to us in social standing or culture. As John Wesley teaches: ALL people need to be saved, ALL people can be saved; ALL people can know they are saved; ALL people can be saved to the uttermost (my emphasis).

***Prayer: Abba Father, thank you that I am no longer a slave, but a child in your Kingdom.***

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY THREE

***Read Ephesians 1:5. “He destined us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favour of His will” (The African Bible).***

Central to Paul’s message to the Ephesians in this verse, is that we have been chosen by God to be part of God’s family. We were not by nature the sons and daughters of God, but God *adopted* us into God’s family and placed us in an honoured and favoured position. To be adopted into a family is to be accepted into a family as a full member, with all the rights and privileges of a child born into the family. Because of His love, God chose in advance for us to become His children – members of His family.

Paul teaches the Ephesians *why* God chose followers of Christ to be His children. It was “*in accord with the favour of His will*”. In an act of love and as part of God’s divine plan, God designed a way for all people, even those not part of the Jewish people, to come into the family of God. God made the way for all of us to be part of this family and so we must share this glorious news, by our actions, with those around us.

***Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for choosing me to be your child. Help me to spread this glorious news to others, especially those who fear they are not worthy of your love and acceptance.***

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY FOUR

***Read Hebrews 12:4-6. "Have you forgotten how good parents treat children and that God regards you as His children?***

***My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline,  
but don't be crushed by it either.***

***It's the child He loves that He disciplines,  
the child He embraces, He also corrects" (The Message).***

All too often we confuse discipline and punishment. *Discipline is a way of training oneself in obedience, self-control, skill (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary).* It is a positive, helpful force. Punishment, however, focuses on past misdemeanours and does not do much to change future behaviour. Thus punishment can be described as a negative, vengeful force.

Sadly, we often hear people say that God is punishing people for wrongdoings when God may actually be disciplining people. During the Corona Pandemic much has been said about God punishing us for being such wicked people. This is difficult to accept, if one does not have an image of an angry, vengeful god. Human beings have clearly messed up and now we are being called to account but this is not *punishment*, we are having to face the consequences of our actions. In this difficult time we have, as always, choices to make – to be part of the problem or part of the solution. During this awful pandemic we have the opportunity to help put things right in our own lives and relationships, as well as helping those less fortunate than ourselves. We can become proactive in finding solutions to the massive problems our world is facing. Reread the passage above in the context of Covid19.

***Prayer: Abba Father, help me to find ways to be part of the solution to the Covid19 pandemic.***

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY FIVE

***Read 1 John 3, 5:1-4. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1, NIV).***

The greatest proof of God’s love for us, is the gift of God’s Son (John 3:16) to become one of us so that in Him we too can become God’s children.

***If anyone has material possessions and sees their brother or sister in need but feels no pity for them, how can the love of God be in them (1 John 3:17).*** Because God loves and accepts us, it is incumbent on us to show love and acceptance to others. The church has a “preferential option for the poor” and so it is the Christians duty to help the needy. This verse is especially challenging to us living in such an unequal society during a global pandemic.

***And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us (1 John 3:23, NIV).*** With its insistence on believing in Jesus and loving one another, this verse articulates the essential elements of the Christian life. To love and serve God and to love and serve others. ***Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:5, NIV).*** This is our great reward – this is our inheritance! Thanks be to God!

***Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for loving me so much that you sent your Son to be my Saviour. Show me how to demonstrate your love to those around me.***

## CHILDREN OF GOD: DAY SIX

***Read Revelation 1:12-20. “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (v7-8, NIV).***

As we come to the end of the week, we are treated to a glorious picture of the Risen Christ and His Church - the seven lampstands of gold. We are often totally overwhelmed by the vision of the future but Christ tells us BE NOT AFRAID. He is the beginning and the end – the Alpha and the Omega. Christ was with us at the beginning and He will be with us at the end...

As children in the Kingdom, we have the assurance that we are part of the eternal family of God. We do not need to fear because Christ has conquered death, and so we too have the assurance of a glorious eternity with Him.

The message of the book of revelation is IN THE END GOD WINS!  
As children of God we're on the winning side. Halleluiah!

***Prayer: Abba Father, thank you that my future with you is secured through my adoption into your family.***

## **WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?**

### **Reflection on CHILDREN OF GOD:**

**Welcome:** Share your experience of doing church during Lockdown.

**Worship:** Sing 'Father God I wonder how I managed to exist' (Celebration 41) and 'Abba Father' (Celebration 1).

**Word:** Read ***Romans 8:14-21***.

- No one before Jesus had been known to address God the Father as '*Abba*'. How is it for you to address God thus?
- How do you understand *adoption*?
- What do you think Paul means when he says that we need to share in Christ's suffering so that we can share in Christ's glory?
- Creation is an integral part of the Kingdom. What do you think the church should be doing to grow this part of God's kingdom?

**Work:** If you are not part of any of the outreach or environmental projects at Northfield or any other organisation, could you consider becoming involved in some way? THANK YOU!

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY ONE

### A MESSY TEMPLE

***Read 1 Corinthians 3:16. “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” (ESV).***

Isn't it just so incomprehensible that the Creator of the universe decided to live in me? And in you? Isn't it amazing that even on our worst days, the Spirit of the Lord dwells in us?

We are temples for God's Spirit. God has set us apart – we are a holy people whom He loves so much that He came to dwell in us. And that can seem quite overwhelming. When I look at the chaos in my own physical house at times and how I battle to keep up with the cleaning, I get overwhelmed. If I can't even keep my home tidy every day, how do I keep my body as a temple for God? I mean, it's God!

But unlike trying to sweep the dust under the carpet when I have visitors over, Jesus is a permanent resident. We don't have to put on airs and graces and try to hide the mess from those who we live with. And we don't need to hide our mess from Jesus – He knows what we're trying to shove into the crevices and into the back of the closet. He knows who we are and He loves us anyway. He knows who we are at the core, and He died for us anyway.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you for knowing my mess and loving me anyway. Amen.***

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY TWO

### A SPIRITUAL HOUSE

***Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (v4-5, ESV).***

God is building you up as a living temple to Him. He lives in you and is making himself at home. He is comfortable in His living space, and is making you new. With Him as our foundation, we are guaranteed a sturdy basis on which to grow our lives.

We are inhabited by the King of the universe and He has set us aside as His holy people to become a beacon to others who have not yet found their spiritual home. We can shine our light from our temples to bring others home to Jesus.

We are the church in God's world. Our bodies are the buildings, more so than the physical church building. And our bodies and minds are fuelled by a faith in God based upon His grace.

We do not have to be afraid of the process of being built anew. We do not need to fear meeting any standards in order for God's Spirit to live in us. He has chosen you and He has chosen me.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you for choosing me as a part of your holy priesthood. Amen.***

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY THREE

### LOVING THE TEMPLE

***Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (ESV).***

We are temples to the living God and we need to take care of our bodies physically, mentally and spiritually, in order to look after the ‘building’ He has given us. We need to learn self-love in order to protect the ‘building’ in which His Spirit resides.

Learning to love ourselves is hard, especially if we think of all that we have done wrong; how many times we have gone astray; how we have disappointed ourselves; how we think we have disappointed God. God’s unconditional love shows us that we are too hard on ourselves. He loves us in spite of our flaws and Jesus died to cover our sins. We need to start the process of seeing ourselves as God sees us. It is hard to imagine the extent of God’s wide, long, deep, never-ending love – now imagine if we loved ourselves even one tenth of that amount. He loves us so. We need to start looking in the mirror and looking past the physical flaws. We need to look in the mirror and start looking past the mental barriers. We need to see ourselves as temples of God – holy and beautiful enough that He wants to live in us.

***Prayer: Lord, help me love this temple that you have built for me. Amen.***

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY FOUR

### CONSTRUCTION

***Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-11. "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (ESV).***

With God as our sturdy foundation, our strong capstone, we are guided in how to build our temples. We can add to the building, but God is the foreman. He is making us into a new creation through the death of His Son and His love for us.

Although we have the greatest builder of all time on our project, we need to take care in the way we lay the stones. We need to take care in what we use to build up our bodies, minds and spirits. We need to make sure that we use strong materials that do not buckle and bow under pressure from the world. We need to transform our temples and not conform them to the patterns of this world.

We are a new building project in Christ and with a firm foundation and faith, we do not have to be shaken. We just need to put trust in the builder and give ourselves the grace to continue the building process.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you for being my firm foundation. Amen.***

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY FIVE

### HOME MAINTENANCE

***Read 3 John 2. "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." (NIV)***

With Jesus as our firm foundation, we still need to do regular upkeep of our temples. We need to look after our minds, bodies and souls. We need to do soul-keeping.

We can care for the temple of the Holy Spirit in so many ways:

- prayer
- reading God's builder's manual – the Bible
- rest
- reflection
- exercise
- friendship
- good nutrition
- worship
- dancing, singing, being creative
- fellowship with other believers...

Looking after ourselves is so important and connecting with God, ourselves and other people is vital in maintaining the home of the Spirit.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you for the many ways that I can care for your temple. Amen.***

## HOLY TEMPLE: DAY SIX

***Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-17. "For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (v17, ESV).***

We are called to be God's light in the world and to share the Good News about Jesus. This task is made so much easier by the fact that God's Spirit lives in us: our bodies are temples to the Spirit. Even though we often feel unworthy, God chooses to live in us. We are His holy temple, in spite of what we view as the mess.

The process of building our temples as new creations in Christ is done through the guidance of God as the master foreman and Jesus as the foundation and cornerstone of our lives. Despite all the metaphors as our lives as buildings, God literally dwells in us. His Spirit communes with our spirit. We need to start a journey of learning to love the bodies, minds and souls that God has gifted us. We also need to ensure that we look after ourselves so that we can connect with God, ourselves and others in a meaningful faith-fuelled journey.

We are God's holy temple and His church in the world. We have been gifted with housing the Creator of the world. May this idea continue to astound us, as we experience the extent of God's unconditional love.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you that you have chosen to live in me. Amen.***

## **WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?**

### **Reflection on HOLY TEMPLE:**

**Welcome:** The Creator of the universe sent His Spirit to live in you. What feelings does this stir up in you?

**Worship:** Listen to “Cornerstone” by Hillsong.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izrk-erhDdk>  
Thank God for dwelling in you.

**Word:** Read ***1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 3 John 2.***

Jesus sent His Spirit to live in us. He chooses us as His holy temple to share His love with the world.

- What can you do to start the process of loving the temple God has given you?
- What do you currently do to look after your temple? What can you start doing to make sure that you care for your body, mind and soul?
- Can you find other Scriptures that show how to care for God’s creation (you)?
- How does Christ’s Spirit in you influence your every day?

**Work:** This week, become aware of God’s Spirit in you. Find time to rest and connect with His Spirit.

## BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY ONE

### I AM THE VINE

***Read John 15:1-17. "I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is my Father" (v15, TPT).***

Jesus is speaking to his disciples, and us, in this passage. He says 'I am the vine'. In this parable, Jesus is the vine, and the Father is the farmer or the gardener. As believers, and as the church, we are the branches of the vine. There are many worldly vines that we could be rooted in, but there is no other vine like Jesus. Jesus tells us that he is the 'true vine'. This vine is living. This vine is sprouting. This vine is the source of life for us, as the branches. Being connected to this vine nourishes us and causes us to grow fruit. There is no other provider like Jesus. 'Abiding' involves complete dependence upon Jesus, the vine. If we, as the branches, don't remain intimately connected to the vine, our 'sap' is cut off. We wither, and our fruit becomes dry raisins instead of juicy grapes. ***"I am the sprouting vine and you're my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you..." (v5a, TPT).***

In this series 'What About The Church?', we have reflected on what scripture tells us about the church. We have examined the metaphors that the Bible gives us. We have explored the church as the 'Bride of Christ'. We have looked at the church as 'Children of God'. We have investigated the church as the 'Body of Christ'. We have studied the church as a 'Holy Temple'. And this week we will look at the church as 'Branches of the Vine'.

*What is the source of your life? Who is the source of your joy?  
What is the source of your fruit? What vine are you connected to?*

***Prayer: Father, thank you for including me in your vine.***

## **BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY TWO**

### **MY FATHER IS THE GARDENER**

***Read John 15:1-17. "He cares for the branches connected to me by lifting and propping up the fruitless branches and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest" (v2, TPT).***

Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. The Father is the wise and loving gardener. He props up the branches, lifting them off the ground to enhance growth. He prunes every branch that does not produce fruit. After the harvest, in winter, the leaves fall off and the vine goes dormant. Before the new buds of spring grow, the pruning takes place. Branches that are unfruitful due to disease or damage are removed, so that the plant's energy can go into the healthy branches. The fruitful branches are pruned back to form new canes for new growth. Without pruning, the fruit for the new season will be diminished, and the vine will grow wild. Pruning stimulates growth, produces maximum yield without breaking the branches, protects against mildew, and produces better quality fruit. The Father does pruning in our lives, too, so that we will become healthy and bear much spiritual fruit. Sometimes we need pruning from attitudes, habits or hang-ups. Sometimes we need pruning from fruitless activities. Sometimes we suffer losses and grief, but then find that God is redirecting and healing us. We can trust the Gardener. His skill will make us whole and fruitful. Churches need pruning too. Sometimes our preferred practices are no longer effective in advancing the kingdom. Sometimes leadership changes. Some churches experience pain when there is a spirit of discontent and dis-unity. Maybe this season of lockdown, where we cannot gather as a church as always, can be seen as a season of pruning. When this loss is surrendered to God, this pruning can create new growth. Trust the Gardener.

***Prayer: Father, help me to trustfully accept your pruning.***

## BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY THREE

### YOU ARE THE BRANCHES

***Read John 15:1-17. “I am the sprouting vine and you’re my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless” (v5, TPT).***

Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. The Father is the gardener. Branches cannot support themselves, nurture themselves, and survive alone. Branches need the life-source of the Vine, and the support and tending and pruning of the Gardener. As Christians and as the church we also cannot support ourselves, nurture ourselves, and survive alone. We need the loving support, tending and pruning of God. Our life comes from the Vine, the live-giving sap comes from the Holy Spirit. The vine has many branches that grow nourishing fruit for sharing with others. Many healthy branches that grow together, form the church. Disconnected branches become withered and die. There is no growth, and no fruit. Their vital connection with the trunk has been severed, and the sap no longer flows into the branch, bringing life. The leaves turn brown, the wood becomes brittle. Healthy branches, however, produce good fruit. This fruit is not for the benefit of the vine, it brings glory to God and provides nourishment and sustenance for others who find shelter in the branches. When we, as believers and as the church, are rooted in the Vine, and if we are pruned by the loving Gardener, we are life-giving to our community. We are many branches of the one true Vine, and if we do not love each other it means that our connection to the Vine has been cut off. To bear fruit must come from caring for each other, for the same Christ-life lives within every believer. We are not branches of many trees, but of one vine.

***Prayer: Father, thank you for being my source of life-giving fruit.***

## BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY FOUR

### LET MY LOVE NOURISH YOUR HEARTS

***Read John 15:1-17. "I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. You must continually let my love nourish your hearts. If you keep my commands, you will live in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands, for I continually live nourished and empowered by his love. My purpose for telling you these things is so that the joy that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness!" (v9-11, TPT).***

Some believers see obedience as a kind of legalism, where God's grace is earned by behaving a certain 'Christian' way. But Jesus is saying that obedience is a natural result of love. If you love someone, you try to do what pleases that person. In verse 14-15 Jesus explains that his disciples are not servants who obey because they have to. They are friends who obey because they want to. Living in Christ means loving him, and that results in a willingness to live in obedience and trust. Obedience from the heart, a giving up of rebellion, creates free-flowing love. Obedience and joy are deeply linked.

Jesus doesn't want us to operate as unthinking servants, but as intimate friends, willing participants in growing his kingdom and his church. We get to share in his joy and plans for the future. When we have an intimate and continuing connection of faith in, and obedience to, Jesus, our lives bear fruit of Christ-likeness. We live in Christ and he lives in us - a mutual indwelling. We are not alone! When we try to accomplish spiritual work in our own strength the result is small. We can do nothing that has a lasting result without relying on Jesus' strength through us. We must practice dependence on him, not independence from him.

***Prayer: Jesus, thank you for the privilege of being your friend.***

## BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY FIVE

### ABUNDANT FRUIT

***Read John 15:1-17. "When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are my mature disciples who glorify my Father!" (v8, TPT).***

The whole purpose of being connected to the true Vine, is to produce fruit. When we live in Christ, and Christ lives in us, we bear fruit for his glory. What is this fruit? When we, as the branches, are rooted in Jesus, the vine, then the fruit we produce is Christ-likeness. Firstly, the fruit includes the character of Christ *within* us. God's 'pruning', or correction, is necessary so that our lives become more fruitful, and his mission that he calls us to, becomes more effective. Secondly, the fruit includes the fruitful ministry of Christ *through* us. In verse 12-13 we see that the fruit is a deep sacrificial love for each other. When we experience the love and presence of Christ, Christ's love and presence works through us, into the lives of those around us.

When we experience the life-giving power and love and grace of God in our lives, we cannot keep it all to ourselves. Vines do not produce fruit for themselves – fruit is for the nourishment of others. We cannot truly be rooted in the Vine if our fruit rots on the branches. When we get together to love and serve and care for each other, we start to become the church. A healthy church does not exist only to serve our members, a fruitful church lives to glorify God, and nourish its community, both inwardly and outwardly. In a time of Covid19, where we as a church choose to serve each other by not gathering in worship as we know it for now, we still nourish each other by deeply and sacrificially caring for our most vulnerable, our hungry, and those who are suffering.

***Prayer: Jesus, I rely on you so I may bear your fruit to glorify you.***

## BRANCHES OF THE VINE: DAY SIX

### WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?

***Read John 15:1-17. "You didn't choose me, but I've chosen and commissioned you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of my Father, for my sake, he will give it to you! So this is my parting command: Love one another deeply!" (v16, TPT).***

Jesus chose, commissioned, and appointed his disciples. But the Great Commission also includes all Christ followers. We have been chosen by God and commissioned to produce nourishing, lasting fruit for his Kingdom. In a time of lockdown, where we cannot gather, we see that church is not about a building. Churches with big auditoriums and expensive equipment are suddenly in the same position as those who gather in rented rooms. The online platforms of all are the same. In this time of unexpected challenge, we all have to focus on three things: worship in electronic, digital and online format; caring for the hungry and vulnerable; and love for each other. Suddenly each home is responsible for their own worship, each person has to find their own way to God. And we see that God cannot be locked down. We see that Love is present in unexpected places. We see that grace is something we all need from God and each other. We see that kindness is something we need to extend to ourselves and others. A church that consists of healthy branches, firmly rooted in the living vine of Jesus, is a fruit-bearing church. This kind of church is the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, Children of God, a Holy Temple, Branches of the Vine. This kind of church values honouring God and protecting our community above our buildings and our need to gather. This kind of church extends grace and sacrifice. This kind of church respects physical distancing while bridging social distances.

***Prayer: Loving Father, keep our church firmly rooted in you.***

## WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?

### Reflection on BRANCHES OF THE VINE:

God can serve the world perfectly. He does not need our help. Yet he chooses us and appoints us to produce lasting fruit in his kingdom. Even in our brokenness. We do not do this in our own strength. We do this through the nurturing and growing and pruning of God, while we are rooted firmly in the Vine.

**Welcome:** Reflect on a time where you experienced a deep disappointment, and in hindsight realised that it was God's way of pruning you for new growth.

**Worship:** Gather your kids, and sing 'God is the Vine':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gET4P4ZQsCQ>  
Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for the work he has done, and is doing in your life.

**Word:** Read *John 15:1-17*.

In the parable there are 3 distinct metaphors.

- Jesus is the vine. Reflect on what that means to you.
- The Father is the gardener. Reflect on what that means to you.
- We are the branches. Reflect on what that means to you.

Re-read the scripture for this week from the perspective of the church.

- Does your experience of church look like the description in the reading?
- Do you, as a member of a church, live in a way that others experience church positively through you?

# Let's do coffee

Trading Hours:  
Tuesday to Friday  
09h00 - 16h00  
Saturday & Sunday  
08h30 - 12h00



 010 140 0218

 [coffeeshop@nfmcc.org.za](mailto:coffeeshop@nfmcc.org.za)





## HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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-  #Northfield Methodist Church
-  @NorthfieldVoice
-  Service Times

Chapel: 7am & 5:30pm

Sanctuary: 8am, 10am & 6pm

Wesley Hall: 6pm (Youth)

Children's Church: 8am, 10am & 6pm



A group of people gathers regularly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

Take the message from the Sunday sermon into deeper learning by joining or forming a small group. If you do not belong to a group yet, you are welcome to sign up by contacting Nick (082 808 1452) or Ria (063 020 4639).