



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

Intercessors for New Zealand

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Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word, so as to present the Church to Himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind – yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Praying for the Church

[Continued from last month]

Part 5

We, as individual Christians, and as part of the Church of Jesus Christ, are all called to be witnesses to Him. Witnessing is not just “preaching the Gospel” in the narrow sense of that term (that is, simply telling people they need to get saved and how to be saved – good and right though that is); we witness in three major ways – by **word**, by **deed**, and by **example**.

It is true that we need to share the Gospel message with people who are not-yet Christians; but we also need to demonstrate what it means to be a Christian by what we do for people – how we treat them, help them, encourage them, provide for them, care for them, and love them. These are things we need to choose to do, in order to show our love – and God’s love – for them in very practical ways.

We all need to “preach” by example. Whether we like it or not, people see our lives, and also hear from others about us, and the way we live is extremely important! There cannot be a “secret” part of our lives which is hidden, and which is very different from what we profess to believe!

If the cross cannot be seen in my life, then there’s no point wearing a cross around my neck.

Praise God for every opportunity we have, to show by word, by deed and by example, Who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He wants to do in each of our lives! We share the Lord *every day* – by our **words**, our **actions**, and **who we are** (our character).

Please pray:

- Lord, take me and my life; may they be a Godly example of what a Christian should be, how a Christian should live, and how a Christian should speak.
- Forgive me for every time I have, by my life, hindered the Gospel rather than helped share the Gospel.

- Help me to share You, and the fabulous news about who You are, what Jesus has done, and the glorious future You have prepared for those who love You.
- Lead me, O Lord, to people who are hungry and thirsty for the right Way; to know the Truth; and to find eternal Life – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Cause Your Church here on earth to grow and grow; to walk in the power of Your Spirit; to be a good witness to who You are, and how people can know You.
- May the Church always be strongly founded on the Rock, on Your Word, and empowered by Your Holy Spirit, to the eternal praise and glory of Your wonderful name.

Part 6

The Church, in the sense of the people of God, were never intended to live in isolation from the community in which they live. We are called to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to love other people. We are called to serve, in the best possible way, the people amongst whom we live. We should be good workers in our jobs; we should be good volunteers in any organisations we serve in; we should help the poor and needy in our communities. Jesus did all of these things, and so should we.

Please pray that all Christians and their local churches will be:

- A positive witness in our communities to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and a demonstration of how the people of God should live.
- Known as a people who genuinely love, care and help one another, and their wider community.
- A good example at home, at work, at church, and in the community, in all that we do and say.
- Pleasing to God in the way we live for Him, as citizens of His Kingdom.

Part 7

What is the Church teaching? Teaching, especially to young people (the “next generation”), to new Christians

(the Church's "next generation"), and to people who are not-yet-Christians? What is so different between the Church and the world? Between Jesus and every other person who has ever lived, or will ever live? What is the "Good News" (Gospel) we are called by Jesus to share? If the Church – God's people – are not **significantly different** from the rest of the world, then why continue? Why not become like the rest of the world? These are very important questions we need to be able to answer, and to **demonstrate the answer** by the way we live, love, serve, and worship.

Please pray that:

- All churches will both teach, and demonstrate by the way we live, the truths and power that there is in living by the Word of God and the power of His Spirit.
- Once again, the non-Christian world will see what Christians (you and me!) have, through Jesus Christ, and deeply yearn for the same love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control through Him.
- People will be drawn to Christ by what they see in the lives of His true followers.

Part 8

Every Christian, and every church will, at times, have to fight battles which are not physical battles or battles against other people, but battles against unseen wicked principalities and powers of darkness that operate in the spiritual world, and especially attack us in the spiritual realm. Primarily, the way to come against these attacks by the powers of darkness is by prayer, prayer and fasting, united prayer and spiritual warfare. Paul writes about such things in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 and Ephesians 6:10-18.

Please pray:

- For Christians, families, churches, Christian organisations, evangelists and those serving in the mission fields of the world – that they will know God's victories over **all** attacks of the enemy; attacks on them personally, on the work they do, and those they seek to reach and minister to.
- That we will all be fully equipped with the armour of God, which He supplies; that we will always be alert; and discern the will and ways of God in our spiritual warfare,
- For the defeat of the enemy in every attack.
- For God's victories, and God's honour and glory to be maintained at all times.

(To be continued next month)

BIBLE MONTH – JULY

According to some Bible reading research done in 2013, only 29% of Christians read the Bible at least once a week. New Zealand Bible Month is all about changing that! How can we really get to know the Lord, His will and His ways – let alone share it with others, and teach those who are not yet Christians, if we don't read God's Word more often than once a week? Further information about this very important event through July,

encouraging the reading and sharing of God's Word, can be found on the Bible Society webpage www.biblesociety.org.nz/our-bible-projects/bible-month/

- Please pray for this Bible Month and its impact on the lives of churches, individual Christians and their families, prayer and Bible study groups, Bible training, and so on.
- Pray that all Christians will hunger and thirst after God, His Word and His Spirit – to know Him better, to serve Him better, to hear His voice more clearly and with greater certainty.
- Pray for open hearts, open eyes and open ears, to read and hear and obey what God is showing us.
- Pray for good, sound, Biblical teaching to be given in our churches; pray that God's Word of Truth will be shared widely throughout our land, and that people will know and receive what God is leading us to do, and how to live – daily!

SECULARISM

Over the last few decades we have seen a gradual decline in the percentage of New Zealanders who regularly attend church. While church attendance is not a measure of the percentage of true Christians in New Zealand (that is, those who are practising Christians – seeking to follow the ways of Christ), never-the-less there is obviously an increasing secularisation of our society, and even some opposition to Christian things and the Christian faith. We may ask: What percentage of people in our land regularly read the Word of God, pray, have fellowship with other Christians, and seek both to share their faith, and live it out on a daily basis?

Please pray for:

- The Holy Spirit to once again breathe upon all churches, and those who are seeking to follow the Lord, renewing, inspiring, equipping and empowering them to live as Jesus taught us.
- An increasing level of prayer, not just individual prayer but groups of people meeting to pray and intercede for our nation, and those who are not yet Christians.
- Effective encouragement, training and discipleship that will help all Christians – church leaders and people – to reach out to the lost in effective, fruitful ways; that many seeds will be sown in well-prepared soil, and bring forth an abundant harvest.
- Christians to deliberately pray for unsaved friends and seek to actively share their faith and the love of God with them.
- Churches to be relevant, relational, and culturally appropriate, reaching out to both major and minority cultural groups in their area.

THE EQUIP TOUR

The *Equip Tour* is being run by *All Together NZ*, who are the people behind the *Hope Project* that was run for several years, to share the Gospel with our nation. The tour is currently in the South Island, and aims to train and equip people to share their faith.

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His name is *J e s u s*

5. *Jesus' interactions with people*

Although Jesus' public ministry only covered about three and a half years, He met with, and inter-related with, thousands of people, from all sorts of different backgrounds.

With "ordinary" people

Jesus was very popular with ordinary people. On two occasions, He taught 5000 and 4000 people for most of the day, until they needed to go home; and Jesus didn't send them home hungry – either physically or spiritually!

When He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, a few days before Passover and His arrest and crucifixion, the crowds thronged around Him and worshipped Him with great praise and admiration – so much so that the much more conservative Jewish leaders were very concerned, especially since they wanted to silence Jesus. (Mt 21:1-17)

Jesus loved the people who came to Him with open hearts, open ears and a hunger for what He had to say and do. He taught them in parables, healed the sick, and set free those who were in spiritual bondage. He loved the people, and they loved and followed Him.

Even though Jesus was a Jew, He still associated with Samaritans and Gentiles as well as Jews. And while most leaders would not have spent much time with children in general, and even His disciples tried to stop the children coming to Him, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and don't stop them, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones such as these." (Mt 19:13-15). Jesus was a "man's Man" but He was also a friend of little children, foreigners, lepers, other outcasts, and so on.

With His disciples

Jesus chose twelve disciples, specially to impart to them the good news of salvation, God's message to His people, and to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit to heal, deliver those in bondage, see people set free, and even raise the dead. He taught them, both by word and by example. He sent out the twelve to do as He had been doing (Lk 9:1-6). Later He sent out the 12 with 60 others (Lk 10:1-12), to teach them also the principles and demonstration of the Kingdom of God in their midst.

The group of twelve disciples who Jesus chose were a very interesting mixture of people – their backgrounds, occupations, ages and so on. He even chose one who would betray Him! Some of them we are very familiar with, from the Gospels, such as Peter, James and John; others we know a little about, such as Matthew, Thomas, Andrew, Philip, and Judas Iscariot; the rest (Bartholomew, Thaddaeus, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Canaanite Zealot) we know almost nothing about from the Bible. Who were these latter disciples, and what did they do or say? (Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:14-16)

With the Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes, teachers, lawyers, and rulers of the synagogues

Even at the age of twelve, Jesus created quite an interest in the Temple amongst the learned teachers and priests as He asked leading questions, and also answered some of the questions! (Lk 2:41-51)

On the whole, the scribes, Pharisees, teachers and rulers in the Temple and synagogues had become quite legalistic, even going beyond what the Scriptures taught and making an issue of many minor things which Jesus showed were not the real meaning of, or behind, the laws they were supposed to support. For example, plucking grain and healing on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-8, 9-14); forgiving sins (Mt 9:2-7); eating with tax collectors and sinners (Mt 9:9-13); fasting (Mt 9:14-17); not washing hands (Mt 15:1-9); Jesus' authority (Mt 21:23-27); paying taxes to Caesar (Mt 22:15-22).

Moreover, Jesus had no time for hypocrisy – people pretending to be spiritual and great "doers" of the Law, whose hearts were not set on truly worshipping and serving the Lord God (Mt 23:1-36).

On one occasion, when He went into the Temple and saw what was being done with regard to the animals for sacrifice, He "cleansed the Temple" and said to its leaders that they had turned God's House of Prayer into a den of thieves (Mt 21:12-16).

With the poor and needy

Jesus showed great compassion for the poor and needy.

For example:

- The widow of Nain whose only son had died (Lk 7:11-15).
- Healing the Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt 15:22-28).
- The Samaritan woman who had been ostracized because of the many husbands she had had and the life she was living, and had to come to the well by herself in the middle of the day when the sun was at its hottest (John 4:1-42).
- The women who came and anointed His feet with perfume (Lk 7:36-50), and washed His feet with her hair (Jn 12:1-8).
- The woman who was about to be stoned for adultery (Jn 8:2-11).
- The lame man who had no-one to put him into the pool at Bethesda (Jn 5:2-18).
- The lepers who were outcasts from society because of their disease (Mt 8:1-4).
- The thief dying on the cross next to Jesus (Lk 23:39-43).
- The Gadarene demoniac who had been bound with chains to restrain him, and who abused his own body because of his insanity (Mk 5:1-20).
- Matthew and Zacchaeus – Jewish tax collectors, despised by their own people for collecting taxes for

the Romans, and also over-charging in order to profit from the gains (Mt 9:1-13; Lk 19:1-10).

With leaders and people in authority

Jesus was just as much at ease with leaders as He was with the humblest and “lowest” of people. Apart from in the Temple where He spent time with the teachers and leaders, He also spent time with a Roman Centurion; Caiaphas, the High Priest; Herod, the Jewish leader; and Pilate, Caesar’s Governor in Palestine.

With those who opposed Him

Generally speaking, Jesus showed great restraint and wisdom in dealing with those who opposed Him. The major thing that He spoke very strongly against was religious hypocrisy by those who claimed to be God’s people. See, for example, Matthew 23. Hypocrisy, jealousy, lies, and deception can have no part in God’s Kingdom which is built on truth, justice and God’s love – not a general, wishy-washy “love” that tolerates almost anything, but true love which builds up, strengthens, and stands for what is good and right. Like God the Father, Jesus looks at and discerns, the motives and intentions of people’s hearts, so He could forgive sinners who repented and changed their ways of life; but He did not tolerate pride, stubbornness, and unrepentant hypocrites.

So He forgave the Samaritan woman at the well; the woman who was about to be stoned for adultery; the crippled man on the stretcher; the repentant tax collector; and so on, but not those who would not change their cold, stony hearts and become like little children in order to be born again into the Kingdom of God.

With John the Baptist

John and Jesus were cousins, but in many ways they had parallel ministries until John’s ministry decreased, while Jesus’ ministry increased. John was Jesus’

forerunner. John was a prophet, and a preacher of righteousness, repentance and water baptism. In order to fulfill all righteousness, Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan, during which time He was also baptised with the Holy Spirit. From this time on, John’s ministry became superceded by Jesus’ ministry. Eventually, John was put to death – and Jesus didn’t intervene, because the seed had been sown, and now the fruit was about to come as Jesus gave His life for all who have sinned but who believe in Him and repent. See Mt 3:1-17; 14:1-12.

QUESTIONS

We have looked at many different ways in which Jesus related to many different groups and types of people. If Jesus’ life demonstrated all these relationships with different people:

1. How does Jesus relate to *you*?
2. How do *you* relate to Jesus?
3. How can you share what *you* know about Jesus, and what you have experienced in *your* life, with other people?
4. What lessons have *you* learned from the Scriptures and from life’s experiences, that have helped you most?
5. How do *you* relate to people who are very different from you?
6. How should we deal with people who oppose us, try to put us down, dislike us, or are jealous of us?
7. How do we receive God’s grace, wisdom and patience to deal with difficult people and situations, as Jesus did?

Prayer Suggestions [Continued from page 2]

Please pray:

- For Dave Mann and Tony Collis who are leading this tour, and others helping them.
 - That it will be fruitful in training, encouraging and equipping people to share their faith wherever they live, and for churches to reach out to their communities.
 - That an abundant harvest will be reaped as a result of this training, and subsequent sharing of the Gospel.
- Plans are currently being formulated for another **Hope Project** to occur every Easter throughout New Zealand, to take the Gospel again to our land, so that Jesus’ name is heard throughout our land, and the final Passover Lamb that was slain – for the sins of the world – might be recognised as the all-sufficient Lamb of God, who alone can take away the sins of all who come to Him in faith, to receive His grace and be born again. **Please pray** for God’s leading in these plans!

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Weekly *Prayer Updates* can be found on our website: www.pray-for-the-nation.org/prayer-updates.php

This monthly *Prayer Letter* is also on our website: www.pray-for-the-nation.org/monthly-magazines.php