



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

Intercessors for New Zealand

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You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you are also built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. (*Ephesians 2:19-22*)

Praying for the Church

[Continued from last month]

Part 9

The purpose of the local church is both to build up the local Body of Christ and also, in joining with other churches, to upbuild the whole Body of Christ in their area. Christians are not called to live separate, individual lives, seeking their own welfare and relationship with God, but to be part of the whole Body, supporting, encouraging and praying for one another, as well as reaching out to their community with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus. Just as our human bodies are comprised of many different parts, the Body of Christ is also comprised of many different groups which will differ from each other because they minister to different people, in different areas, with different needs, and so on. Churches don't need to imitate one another, or be jealous of one another, and certainly not compete with one another! We are all parts of the whole Body, living, serving and worshipping for the common good. Paul illustrates this when he says that the eye cannot say to the ear, 'I have no need of you', for where would the hearing be without the ear, or the sight be without the eye?

Please pray that:

- Every Christian, as far as possible, will be closely associated with a local church – a group of people who mutually support, encourage and pray for one another.
- Each local church will support and encourage other churches in their area.
- We will all see ourselves as a part (a member) of the whole Body of Christ.
- There will not be any sense of competition with one another, but a mutual upbuilding of the whole Body of Christ in the circles in which we live and move.
- Every town, city and rural church will see **growth**, in size, maturity and ministry over the coming years.
- The Holy Spirit will move in powerful ways, in and through Christians and the churches.

Part 10

Growth! Every farmer looks for multiplication and growth – for a good, healthy, prosperous outcome. The same is true of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "I

will build My Church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it!" (Matthew 16:18). The Church grows through sharing the Gospel in such a way that people are born again into the Kingdom of God. It grows through the number of believers increasing. It grows by multiplication of local churches. It grows by teaching, prayer and the maturing of its believers – spiritually, socially, ethically, and by practicing what God has taught us and told us to do! It grows as the Spirit of God is allowed to move in our midst, inspiring, leading, empowering and anointing His people to do the tasks He sets before them. And that includes **us!**

Please pray that:

- The Church of Christ will grow strong, healthy, and becoming increasingly fruitful in what it does.
- The Church will multiply in numbers as more and more people are born into God's Kingdom.
- The Church will not only grow in numbers, but also in maturity and effectiveness in reaching out to our lost, confused and dying world with the wonderful Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit will move in powerful ways amongst His people – encouraging and equipping them for all that He calls them to do.
- We Christians will be "doers of God's Word, and not just hearers only!"

Part 11

One of the main functions of the Church, apart from those mentioned previously, is to equip believers for daily life, service and witness. Teaching the Scriptures is a major part of this. So is Christian counselling, prayer and showing by example how Christians should live, behave, find God's will and direction for their lives, giving them opportunities to serve, encouraging them to share their faith, leading them in worship to God, and seeking to help them overcome the myriad of temptations we face in the world.

Please pray that:

- All Christians will be encouraged to press on to the end, like Paul, and receive the wonderful crown of righteousness.
- Leaders in the Church – whether they lead the youth, young adults, or older adults, will all seek to encourage and teach those they lead, in the ways of God.
- We will all successfully "fight the good fight" [against evil] and finish the race well, persevering to the end.

- Those who feel discouraged, or weary, or unable to cope, will be assisted and encouraged in every way possible, so that they too will come through to victory in the race God has called them to run.

Part 12

The presence of God, in the midst of His people, is a crucial part of the gathering together of the Church. Whether we gather together to worship, pray, study His Word, share the Gospel message, or for other reasons, we need the presence of God to inspire, guide, give wisdom, empower and be made manifest in our gatherings. These are the key differences between the Church and a worldly social club. If people who are not yet Christians come into a gathering of God's people, there should be that sense of "there's something different here" – in fact, what is different is the presence of the Lord God, our Creator and Redeemer!

Please pray that:

- We will always welcome the Spirit of God into our midst when we gather together in His name.
- We will not just "do our own thing", or be bound by tradition, but will give the Lord freedom to move and speak and inspire as He desires.
- There will be a supernatural element to our gathering together because God is a God of the supernatural – and that supernatural presence may affect physical aspects of our meeting, such as healing of the sick; as well as spiritual aspects such as deliverance, freedom in the Holy Spirit to exercise the gifts of the Spirit, show the fruit of the Spirit, and see unsaved people become drawn to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
- God, not people, will be truly glorified in our midst; that God will enjoy being with us as a loving Heavenly Father; and that what we do will be pleasing to Him because it is led by His Spirit.

This is the 12th and final part of this series on praying for the Church, the Body of Christ.

CURRENT ISSUES

Please pray about the following issues which are of great concern in, and to, our society.

- **Gender issues** and the confusion it is bringing, and will continue to bring, in society (especially amongst youth); including some countries where speaking against these issues is being made "illegal".
- **Drugs and alcohol**, including attempts to decriminalise or legalise everyday use of marijuana.
- **Euthanasia**, and the debate about legalising euthanasia.
- **Suicide**, and the terrible statistics for suicide in New Zealand, especially amongst young people.
- **Abortion** – the killing of many thousands of unborn babies in our country each year.
- **Death and destruction** – Jesus said that "the thief [Satan] comes to steal and to kill and destroy – but I [Jesus] have come that you may have **LIFE** and have it abundantly – in all its fulness" (John 10:10). Pray that our people, our nation, our Government will

choose **LIFE**, *not* death and destruction; not being robbed by the enemy of the good and right things God has given us to enjoy!

LEGALISE ALL DRUGS ?

The New Zealand Drug Foundation has suggested that the Government should remove criminal penalties for the possession, use and social supply of *all* drugs, not just cannabis. It also called for the cannabis market to be strictly regulated, and for more resources to be put into prevention, education and treatment – that is, drug taking should be regarded as a *health* issue, rather than a *criminal* issue. Commercial supply and trafficking of drugs would still be a criminal offence, but not the personal possession, use, or social supply (that is, giving to friends) of drugs. Apparently, this is similar to what is done in Portugal where it "had produced early positive evidence of reduced drug use, fewer offenders in prison, fewer court cases, and a reduction in HIV infections and overdoses."

In New Zealand, a Green Party bill is waiting to be debated in Parliament that would ease access to the use of medicinal cannabis products for certain patients. There are also suggestions that New Zealand should liberalise the laws for the general use of cannabis.
Source: *Dominion Post*, 6 July 2017.

Please pray about these issues. These matters are of great importance to the welfare of our people and country. Already, in the past few weeks, a number of people have died as a result of using synthetic cannabis! Pray for wisdom for every Member of Parliament as these issues are debated, and for the ultimate outcome regarding any new legislation.

THE COMING ELECTIONS

Our General Elections for the next Government, and our local Members of Parliament, will be held on **Saturday 23 September**.

Please pray that:

- All Christians will *prayerfully* vote for the Party/Parties which will make up our next Government, and for the Member of Parliament who will represent their electorate.
- People *will* vote. At the last general election three years ago, about 1 million people who were eligible to vote did not do so! If (say) 10% of those people were Christians who did not vote, then about 100,000 votes were wasted and had no influence on who our leaders for the next three years would be!
- Parties and prospective MPs will not make rash promises that will not be fulfilled.
- All those candidates who are seeking election will be honest and fair in their promises and claims.
- *Important* issues will be debated before the elections, not minor or unimportant issues which waste time and side-track people from the main issues.
- That there will be no "dirty" politics.

[Continued on page 4]



His name is *J e s u s*

6. *Jesus – facing temptation and testing*

We all face temptations to do what is wrong, or not to do what God tells us to do. We also all face times when we are tested by the people or circumstances around us. Sometimes these trials seem impossibly long or difficult. Often we wonder if other people *really* face what we do, or even understand what we are going through. Surely we are going through situations that no-one else does, or even understands?

But the Bible says that “No temptation (or testing) has come to you that is not common to everyone, but God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted or tested beyond your own strength (to overcome), but He will, with the temptation, also provide a way of escape so you will be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

That may seem only partly encouraging – to know that other people *do* face similar situations and temptations to what we do. But what about the Lord Jesus – does He really understand? After all, He had divine power on His side when He was on earth.

Sometimes we refer to Jesus’ temptations by the devil, in the wilderness, and the three times Satan tempted Him – to turn stones into bread, because He was hungry; to get followers by doing something dramatic, like jumping off the pinnacle of the Temple and not being hurt when He hit the ground; or, to bow down to Satan and follow Him, then Satan said he would give Jesus all the nations of the earth – a short cut to acquiring the nations of the earth as His Kingdom. But Jesus resisted every one of these temptations – to use His power to satisfy His own needs (self-centredness), the drawing of a crowd by doing a stunt (pride), and compromising with Satan.

These were not the only temptations Jesus faced. Luke 4:13 says that “When the devil had finished *every test*, Satan left Jesus *until an opportune time*.” So Jesus obviously faced other temptations and testing too, including later on in His ministry.

Now the above three temptations may not have much relevance to us, in the sense that even if we wanted to, we couldn’t turn a stone into bread, jump from a great height and not injure ourselves, or worship Satan and gain all the nations of the world. So does Jesus *really* identify with us and the testing, trials and temptations that we humans face?

Yes, He does! For the Bible also says that Jesus was “tempted or tested in all areas like we are, and yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Let us look at some of these areas where He identified with us, and we can identify with Him.

Satanic testing and temptation

We have already seen above that Jesus was tempted by Satan (cf. Job’s satanic testing in Job chapters 1 and 2). The devil even used Scripture when He tested Jesus, and Jesus reminded Satan of what the Scriptures really meant! Jesus knew God’s Word and simply quoted it; He didn’t argue! The devil tempted Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) in similar ways to how he tempted Jesus, by saying things like “If you will ...” or “If you are ...” or “Did God [*really*] say ...?” Misquoting Scripture or doubting what God has clearly said, are often tactics of the enemy. Jesus finally said, “Away with you, Satan!” (Matthew 4:1-11) – something we often need to say when we are tempted!

Traps and tricks

Questions, especially trick questions which are designed to trap us into a corner, or get us to say or do things which are wrong, are common tactics of the enemy and sometimes of other people.

On a number of occasions the Pharisees, Sadducees or others tried to get Jesus into a corner by their clever questions. See, for example, questions about 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).

Disappointment

Jesus was disappointed by a number of people who He called to follow Him, but, for various reasons, refused to do so. Some of these were people who had a lot of wealth and refused to lay that aside, or used excuses that they had other things to do “first”, before they followed Him.

Jesus knew sorrow at seeing His love and His invitation to people to “Follow Me”, etc., rejected.

Rejection

Love – divine love – being rejected! People tried to push Jesus over a cliff; they tried to stone Him; because they did not like what He was saying and who He said He was. Many of the scribes and Pharisees rejected Him; many of the Jews; His own people in Nazareth (Matt 13:54-58)

Judas betrayed Him; Peter denied Him three times; His disciples forsook Him and fled; many of the Jews rejected Him at His crucifixion, and the Romans put Him to death, even though the Governor of the land, Pontius

Pilate (the Roman Emperor's representative in the land) said, "I find no fault in this man." (Luke 23:4)

Jesus wept

Jesus felt deeply, just as we do. Jesus wept when Lazarus died (John 11:35-36); He cried over Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-39); He was moved by compassion on a number of occasions. He knew and felt sorrow and grief and loneliness and rejection.

He felt anger when He saw how the Temple was being used to make money from animal sacrifices; when the House of Prayer had become a "den of thieves".

Jesus humbled Himself

Even though He is the Son of God, Jesus humbled Himself and identified with us. He came into our world, making Himself "a little lower than the angels" and living as a man. He humbled Himself even to the point of death – death on a cross by brutal crucifixion, as well as the other brutalities He faced – all for us! "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in *every respect* has been tested as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15. See also Philippians 2:5-11 and Matthew 16:24-28).

Jesus' suffering

Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane for hours as He faced His arrest and death. In His agony He prayed, as any human would, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me ..." but His Spirit prayed "... nevertheless, not what I want, but what You want!" (Matthew 26:39)

Peter says, in 1 Peter 2:20b-21, "If you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps."

Jesus knows what it is like, because He has been through situations just like us. He understands, He cares, He loves – and He will support us through them!

So, "Beloved, *do not be surprised* at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to *test you*. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be *glad and shout for joy* when He is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, Who is the Spirit of God, is resting upon you!" (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Remember: Jesus suffered. Jesus died. But He also rose again to live forever – and so will we! Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS

1. What does this study show you, is one of the major reasons why Jesus came to earth?
2. In what ways can Jesus identify with you in your trials, temptations and weaknesses?
3. In what ways does Jesus demonstrate to us His incredible love, compassion and understanding?
4. How do we "deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus"? (Matthew 16:24)
5. What are some ways in which Jesus has helped you to face satanic attacks, traps which have been set for you, disappointment, rejection, suffering or being humbled?
6. Jesus **wept** when He came to Lazarus' tomb? What does this tell you about Him?
7. How can Hebrews 4:15 help you in a difficult time or situation?

Prayer Suggestions [Continued from page 2]

PROMISE KEEPERS

Each year, a series of three Promise Keepers events are held. This year they will be in Christchurch (18-19 August); Wellington (15-16 September); and Auckland (6-7 October) under the overall theme of "**Believe**" – What do you believe in? Because that is where your hope lies! These events are times for men to gather together to Refocus on God the Father; Refresh in His supernatural presence; and Renew their spiritual strength. See www.promisekeepers.nz

Please pray for these three events:

- For God to draw men to them; for a work of God's Spirit in their lives (families, workplaces, and churches)
- For all the speakers and organisers of these life-changing events!
- For the Christian men and fathers in our land, that they will set a godly example at work and at home.

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