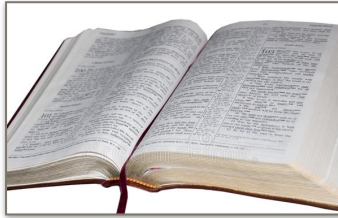


Spring 2020

# The Challenge



A View from the Manse  
**Page 3**



Reasons to read your Bible  
**Page 4**



A National Call To Prayer  
**Page 5**



The Road to Emmaus  
**Page 12**







# The Challenge

Spring 2020

## In This Issue

### **View From the Manse**

Page 3

### **A National Call To Prayer**

Page 5

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

Page 7

### **Technology – help or hindrance?**

Page 10

### **How To Fix Your Mind On God**

Page 11

### **A Companion Along The Way**

Page 12

### **A Book To Save Your Life**

Page 14

### **Reversing Into The Future?**

Page 15

### **Bible Reading Plan**

Page 16

# A View From The Manse

Dear Friends,

As many of you will know, I have been the Minister of Stevenston High Kirk for 18 years. Over these years you have been so patient with me as we have tried various missional projects & strategies, as we seek to reach our community with the Gospel. With the opportunity of taking Study Leave this year, it was my desire to take a study leave programme that would encourage me in my preaching ministry, and would be a time of refreshing and renewal.

While attending the Shepherds' Conference in Los Angeles, I was greatly encouraged through the times of worship, and through precious times of fellowship. Well known Christian singer/songwriter Bob Kauflin from Sovereign Grace Music led the praise for all the main gatherings. With over 3,500 people in attendance, the singing was something to behold! It was so encouraging being part of the worship and getting an opportunity to learn new God-honouring and Christ-exalting hymns.

On the Tuesday (3rd March) I was enrolled in a one-day Missions' Conference entitled "Equipping the Church for Mission". This was a wonderful occasion where the key note speakers shared their experiences of mission in various contexts. Author and Speaker, Dr Stephen Nichols, shared on the history of Mission through the ages, and challenged local churches to pray for their Missionaries and Missionary partners.

The Conference considered the need for preachers to have a 20-20 vision for their preaching ministry, and how to preach and have confidence in the foundational doctrines of the faith. Topics included "Eternal Sonship of Christ", "Supremacy of Christ in Worship", "Thinking Biblically", "Discipleship as a Lifestyle", "Improving Your Preaching", "Ministry of Encouragement", and other talks on evangelism, prayer, heaven, etc. Speakers through the week included John MacArthur, H. B Charles, Conrad Mbewe, Steven Lawson, Paul Washer, and many others.



Dr Steven Lawson led an excellent seminar on "Improving Your Preaching". Another seminar called "Do You Want To Be A Pastor?" was another occasion which brought a sense of renewal in exercising a pastoral ministry, and not merely a preaching ministry. I felt renewed in my calling to the parish ministry, and felt energised in my commitment to a preaching and mission-focussed ministry.

It was great to be refreshed spiritually. Over the week I felt a longing in my heart to grow in my relationship with God through PRAYER and His Word. Therefore, one of the great highlights of the week was being challenged through the preaching of Dr Paul Washer, who brought us back again to the place of PRAYER, and the necessity of investing in a life of PRAYER.

Many of the visitors who came to the conference had come from a Reformed Baptist tradition. Being a Presbyterian, who believes in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, made me feel on occasion like a Scottish lion in a den of Daniels. Despite our theological differences, it was a rich time of blessing in the presence of God, and it was a joy meeting precious pastors and leaders who love Jesus deeply - All One In Christ!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your love, support and prayers over these 18 years. I love the High Kirk family dearly, and it is lovely to see new family members join us over the past months. Please pray that we would continue to grow as a church, and that we may experience times and seasons of refreshing and renewal.

Your Friend and Minister

*Scott Cameron*

# HIGH KIRK NEWS...

## CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

In light of Church of Scotland guidelines, ALL of our meetings and Sunday morning services have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 corona virus. Any new information or updates will be on Facebook or on our website: <https://stevenstonhighkirk.com>. Please remember to keep in touch with friends and meeting members through texts, WhatsApp, video calls and phone calls. And please contact the Minister on 463356 about any worries or concerns you may have. He will also be delighted to pray for you (even over the phone!).

## STEVENSTON HIGH KIRK GUILD

We have had a good session under the theme "Companions on the Way" this year. We decided that after Christmas we would meet in St. Monach's Aisle rather than the church hall as it would be more comfortable, and the move has proved a good one. Once we start back, everybody is welcome on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 1.30pm to enjoy a time of friendship and fellowship.

*Mary Ford*  
Convener

## FLOWER MINISTRY

Every Sunday in the Church, there are always fresh flowers on the Chancel. There is a whole team of people involved in this ministry. We have spaces on our rota at the moment if people would like to donate flowers or perhaps you would like to help arrange or deliver them.

If you would like to make a request for the church flowers to be sent to someone, please put their name in the pink folder at the Beadle's Pew.

Flowers can be sent to anyone who is suffering illness, bereavement, special anniversary, birthday or even if its just because you haven't seen them in Church for a while and want them to know they are in our thoughts and prayers.

We cannot guarantee specific dates, but people will receive them as soon as they are available.

*Moyra Teven*  
Flower Convenor

## REV NORMAN CRUICKSHANK

Many people will have been concerned to hear of Rev. Norman Cruickshank's recent health problems. We are delighted to report that Norman is now back at home from hospital. Although both he and Jennifer are very tired, Norman is making a good recovery. We would encourage continued prayer for this precious couple. So many people have benefited from Norman's ministry over the years and we trust that it will not be very long before he is able to be active once more in the Lord's service.

## 6 Reasons For Reading Your Bible Daily

**Wisdom:** "The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise." (Psalm 19:7)

**Hope:** "For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures." (Romans 15:4)

**Delight:** "Instead, his delight is in the Lord's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night." (Psalm 1:2)

**Sustenance:** "He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your fathers had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

**Equipping:** "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17)

**Life:** "My life is down in the dust; give me life through your word." (Psalm 119:25)

# LIGHT A CANDLE OF HOPE: A NATIONAL CALL TO PRAYER

***“Do not fear, for I am with you.”*** [Is 41:10]

***“Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”*** [1 Pet 5:7]

***“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.’”*** [Ps 91:1-2]

The measures to contain the spread of the virus, and most importantly to limit the number of deaths, are ramped up significantly. Normal routine grinds to a halt as our streets (and supermarket shelves) are emptied. Sporting activities of all kinds are postponed or cancelled, and now church events and services are falling victim to the need to limit social interaction, even as we approach Easter, probably the most significant celebration in the Christian calendar.

Fear and uncertainty abound, fuelled by rumour and ‘fake news’ and by an enemy who seeks nothing less than the destruction of God’s creation – humanity. Yet in the midst of it all Almighty God, as He has always been and always will be, is on His throne and in total control of events, of history.

***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*** [Jn 14:27]

As we play our part by following the guidance, as we demonstrate the love of God in acts of compassion and kindness to our neighbours and community, God reminds us to ***“....fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”*** As we do so, he calls us to pray!

Churches Together in England, which comprises the national leaders of the major denominations, has issued a call to all Christians to pray at any time on **Sunday 22 March**. Some prayer points are below.

At 7pm on Sunday, we are also encouraged to place a candle in one or more windows of our home, as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

We support this call to pray, along with Scottish leaders including the Evangelical Alliance’s Scottish Director Fred Drummond, Alistair Matheson (Apostolic Church), Martin Hodson, (Baptist Union of Scotland), the Church of Scotland and individual church ministers/pastors.

Let’s circulate this call as widely as we can throughout the Christian community and let’s see thousands of ‘candles of hope’ lighting up Scotland’s streets and communities on Sunday evening! You never know what conversations that might lead to!

Bless you and thank you!

*Alistair Barton*

Director of Prayer For Scotland

## PRAYER POINTS:

- Start with praise and worship - declaring the greatness, power, awesome majesty and total authority of our God. Psalms 145 - 150 are good for this.
- Thank God for His love, goodness, kindness, compassion, patience, grace and mercy to you, this nation and the world, despite all the sin and darkness.
- That in His mercy, God would slow and limit the spread and impact of the virus, with fewer cases, and in particular far fewer deaths, than expected.
- For the protection of the elderly, frail and vulnerable, especially against the wicked in society who would seek to take advantage of their situation.
- For NHS and Social Care staff who are on the front line – for their safety, health, energy and protection. That they would have all the resources they need to treat and care for those needing that care – whether in hospital, in the care home, or at home. Pray especially for any frontline staff you know by name.
- For the Medical Directors and Scientists seeking to understand this new virus – that God would give them supernatural revelation and clarity, resulting in accurate forecasts and advice.

*Continued over page...*



- For the Governments in the 4 nations having to take drastic decisions affecting every citizen – that they would have the wisdom and courage to make the right decisions and ‘do what it takes’ to deal with the impact of the virus both on society and the economy. That there would be unity both within the UK leadership and with the leaders of Scotland, Wales and N Ireland.
- For business leaders, owners and employees rapidly facing a very uncertain future – that leaders/owners would be able to look after their staff and that businesses would rapidly recover once the virus peak has passed.
- For our society – that we would turn from individual selfishness to being a caring, compassionate community. That much good would come out of this crisis – good that would not be temporary but would last.
- For Foodbanks - that the level of donations would rise again so they can continue to serve the neediest in society, and for the health of volunteers and staff.
- That our social fabric would be maintained with no breakdown of law and order.
- For the Church – that we would grasp this unique opportunity to be ‘salt and light’ in our communities, drawing many to Jesus, to the Cross, to salvation and eternity in the Kingdom of light, not the dominion of darkness.

## SUNDAY NIGHT PRAYER

The following prayer can be used when lighting the candle:

*For all that is good in life, thank you,  
For the love of family and friends, thank you,  
For the kindness of good neighbour and Samaritan  
stranger, thank you.*

*May those who are vulnerable, hungry or  
homeless, experience support,  
May those who are sick, know healing,  
May those who are anxious or bereaved, sense  
comfort.*

*Bless and guide political leaders and deci-  
sion-makers, with wisdom,  
Bless and guide health workers and key workers,  
with strength and well-being, Bless and guide each  
one of us, as we adapt to a new way of living.*

*And may the light shining from our windows,  
across road and wynd, glen and ben, kyle and isle,  
be reflected in our hearts and hands and hopes.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*



**This is what Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote to his fellow Christians as they navigated a local bubonic plague:**

"You ought to think this way: 'I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person, but will go freely.' See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

Posted by Dr Joel Beeke

### A Boost To Morale

My husband and I would like to express,  
the peace we have found in your church;  
A boost to morale when faith wears thin  
Scott's love of Jesus has warmed us within.

*James & Elizabeth Shirley*

# "THY KINGDOM COME!"

## Thy Kingdom Come Global Prayer Initiative: Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday 2020 (21 - 31 May)

Dear All,

Thy Kingdom Come is a global, ecumenical prayer movement which takes place each year from Ascension to Pentecost. Christians are encouraged to pray for more people to come to faith during these 11 days of prayer. This will be its fifth year.

From Bangladesh to Brazil, Australia to Austria and South Africa to the Solomon Islands, more than 2 million Christians, across 65 different denominations and traditions, in 90% of countries worldwide have participated.

Ruth and I had the privilege of attending and participating in the "Thy Kingdom Come Beacon Event" in Trafalgar Square. The Square was packed and we found it very moving that three Archbishops (Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox) could stand side by side and pray for our country. Senior leaders from the emergency services also shared items for prayer.

In 2019 the app was downloaded thousands of times in almost 100 countries worldwide – more than twice as many as in 2018.

In their annual feedback survey, the organisers found that:

- 92% of those taking part were praying for friends and family members to come to know Jesus – with nearly two thirds (62%) of this group planning to follow up or talk to the people they were praying for;
- 70% of those who took part felt more encouraged to share their faith;
- 40% of respondents took part for the first time this year – which shows this is still very much a growing movement;
- 99% want to be involved again next year, the same figure as last year –demonstrating growth and value.

The Church of Scotland and The Scottish Episcopal Church are both officially involved with Thy Kingdom Come. Resources were translated into Gaelic and were distributed widely. HM The Queen praised Thy Kingdom Come as an example of the close working together of the Church of England and Church of Scotland. It also enables local congregations to share in a global Kingdom-focussed initiative. This year Thy Kingdom Come will begin in the week of the General Assembly and we hope it will be marked in some suitable way.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please do consider how you might be involved where you are.

Wishing you every blessing,

*Rt Revd Colin A M Sinclair*

Moderator

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

# “My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness”

Dear friends,

As the opening line of the hymn says, “My heart is filled with thankfulness”.

I would like to thank our Minister, Scott & his wife Antonia for their visits, and to all our “Prayer Warriors” who kept my husband Hugh and I in constant prayer. I was also so grateful in receiving a beautiful Prayer Shawl from the Guild – I love it!

For the phone calls, beautiful flowers and all the delicious homemade food (which included chicken soup, chicken stew, sweet and sour chicken and steak pie). There are too many names to mention, but you know who you are! You are loved and appreciated.

One person in particular I feel I must mention - Margaret Durham. On the 12th of January 2019, I broke my shoulder bone, which started a year of other health worries. Through it all, Margaret has been such a rock, running me to the hospital, getting my shopping, and on occasions taking me shopping. She would help take Hugh to "Anam Cara" in Kilbirnie for respite, and always made time to sit and pray with me. What a blessing Margaret was to Hugh and I.

I am so thankful for all the love and care towards us from you all, and so blessed to be a part of the High Kirk Family.

I pray God’s richest blessings for you all.

Your dear sister in Christ Jesus.

*Mildred Burns*

## Philippians 1:2 - 6

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

# Prayer Life

*"Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God."*

— **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**,  
Studies in the Sermon On the Mount



When a man is speaking to God he is at his very acme. It is the highest activity of the human soul, and therefore it is at the same time the ultimate test of a man's true spiritual condition. There is nothing that tells the truth about us as Christian people so much as our prayer life. Everything we do in the Christian life is easier than prayer. It is not so difficult to give alms--the natural man knows something about that, and you can have a true spirit of philanthropy in people who are not Christian at all. Some seem to be born with a generous nature and spirit, and to such almsgiving is not essentially difficult.

The same applies also to the question of self-discipline--refraining from certain things and taking up particular duties and tasks. God knows it is very much easier to preach like this from a pulpit than it is to pray. Prayer is undoubtedly the ultimate test, because a man can speak to others with greater ease than he can speak to God. Ultimately, therefore, a man discovers the real condition of his spiritual life when he examines himself in private, when he is alone with God.

*"Some people have called Edwards the Last Puritan. I refer to Martyn Lloyd-Jones as maybe the last of the Puritans—because he embodied not only that theology, but he embodied that devotion."*

— Paul Washer, *Logic on Fire: The Life and Legacy of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*



# WORD ALIVE

## GENESIS

Our recent studies at the Autumn Word Alive on the life of Noah were fascinating and challenging. Many expressed their appreciation at the opportunity to reflect in some detail a part of Scripture which many believers take different views in some aspects of the narrative.

The book of Genesis is of course about beginnings and much care is needed in seeking to understand some of its teaching.

Over the centuries Christians have taken differing positions about some of the teaching of this early book. What is important is that these variations are made with the conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

I came across this article from a friend's church magazine in Gairloch and I found it helpful and insightful as the writer seeks to communicate his thoughts on the early chapters of Genesis.

Trust you also find it stimulating ..... keeping in mind that Christians have historically a variety of views on some of the details of the text. The book of Genesis is not meant to be a scientific text book but a record of the God who created all things. It is amazing that the God who created the world is now recreating new lives through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in reflective mood

*Norman Cruickshank.*

## ARTICLE ON GENESIS BY JEREMY FENTON

In the beginning — no, before the beginning, God was. And God decided to make a universe. - So God took a piece of nothing and exploded It', controlling his explosion with infinite precision to make the universe just right. God gave his universe four dimensions so that time and space came to be, and particles and forces so that things came to be. The first stage was complete.

And God said "Let there be elements", and gravity (his greatest invention) saw to it that stars were made and galaxies, where the whole miraculous system of elements came to be. And God saw that it was good. The second stage was complete.

And God said "Let there be places where life can begin". So billions of years later (but to God a billion years is as a single step) planets formed, circling the stars and made of their elements. The third stage was complete-

And God said "Let there be one particular planet which is exactly right for life to flourish". So God made Earth the perfect size at the perfect distance from its sun, and showered gifts upon it: vital water in its three forms (his second greatest invention), elements and minerals, tectonic systems, sheltering planets, a stabilising moon, protective magnetism, a nurturing atmosphere, land and sea, and everything else as God required. And God saw that It was very good. The fourth stage was complete.

And God said "Now let life begin", for that may have been why he made his universe. And simple life forms came to be. Over billions of years they developed and spread (but to God a billion years is as a single step) until the planet was ready for complex life, created using evolution (his third greatest invention). God watched his special planet as living things in all their variety came to be and covered It, and animals and plants of all shapes and sizes lived on it, and he was pleased with what he saw. The fifth stage was complete.

And when God saw that the time was right he made his masterpiece, thinking and speaking humans, who were to be as small gods on this planet, to know and love their creator and his creation. In his generosity towards them he blessed their world with many special gifts: colour, music, variety, beauty. And God saw that it was very good. The sixth and final stage was complete.

And God rested, leaving humans to enjoy and complete and understand his world. But in time humans went astray and in their pride and greed they spoiled themselves and their planet. But God was ready for that and he had a plan. But that is another story.

Note: Genesis chapter 1 tells THAT God made the world. It does not tell HOW he made the world and the whole universe. Perhaps it was his intention that humans would try to discover this, and scientists are doing their best. This version of Genesis (= the beginning) contains some of their discoveries.

Submitted by Rev Norman Cruickshank



# COVENANT FELLOWSHIP SCOTLAND

## Technology – help or hindrance?

In the modern, high-speed, information-rich age that we inhabit, we can feel overwhelmed. Weighed down by expectation that we will be up to speed with what's happening in the world around us. Feeling pressured by trying to fit too many activities in against unrealistic, self-generated deadlines. Then again maybe that's just me! I'll be honest – this means that things get missed or curtailed – and that includes prayer and time in study/devotionals.

That's where technology can step in. Wait though, you may be saying – doesn't that just increase demands and reduce the reality of time with God?

To be honest, it can, but if we see it and use it as a means rather than an end then it can actually enhance our devotional and prayer life.

There are many prayer/bible apps available and the four that I am going to mention are ones that I have a little experience of myself and I have found to be helpful.

If you are really not into technology then don't feel compelled to read on – it's an amazing and wonderful fact that we can talk with, and listen to, God directly through His Word and as He leads us in our prayers – our prayer here at Covenant Fellowship Scotland would be that you would know real deep fellowship with Him.

For those of you who would find a little prompt/nudge/suggestion to pray/read helpful then here are some suggestions to look at...

### Prayer...

**Prayermate** (Android and iPhone)

**Inner Room** (Android and iPhone)

Both these apps allow you to note down prayer topics/notes in various categories and to be prompted/reminded at set times to pray. They differ in the detail of how you configure them but are both reasonably intuitive and easy to use.

With Prayermate, if you wish, you can sign up to receive prayer "feeds" from a very long list of Christian organisations, for example Scripture Union, UCCF, Open Doors, Keswick Ministries, and the prayer entries can be protected with a PIN for security.

Inner Room has been developed by 24-7 Prayer and has elements of devotional material as well as the prayer notes you make.

Both of these apps are free.

### Study/Devotion...

**Olive Tree Bible** (Android, iPhone, Windows, Mac)  
**Lectio 365** (Android and iPhone)

**Olive Tree Bible** is an app which brings you the full text of the Bible, in many different translations and also has a number of bible reading plans and guides/reference materials available. It allows annotations and parallel text among other features.

**Lectio 365** is a daily devotional from 24-7 Prayer in conjunction with CWR and offers guided devotions for each day in a very accessible and meaningful way.

The basic Olive Tree Bible app is free but you can purchase additional translations/commentaries if you wish – it syncs across platforms if you have an account so can be taken with you on a phone or a tablet as well as being on your desktop computer. Lectio 365 is also free.

In Covenant Fellowship Scotland we believe that prayer and bible reading are vital and would value your prayerful support for us.

We hope that, if you use one of these apps, then you would put in an entry for CFS and commit to regularly bring our work before the Lord.

In His service

*Eric Smith*

Covenant Fellowship Scotland

# HOW TO FIX YOUR MIND ON GOD

Finding peace feels a bit tricky right now. As we face new uncertainties by the hour, we're all in need of Shalom, the kind of peace that God promises in His Word. God's peace provides calm hearts and healthy thoughts. It pushes away fear and helps us feel whole and safe.

Yes, we want that! But how can we find peace in such troubling times?

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV) says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

I know how distracted you are right now. You'd love to fix your mind on God, but it's hard when learning how to "social distance," worrying about toilet paper (who saw that coming??), and juggling new roles of working and schooling from home.

How can we fix our minds on God? I have a few suggestions for you and I trust they'll help. It doesn't require hours of solitude and silence. It's possible even in the midst of craziness and concern.

## Fixing Your Mind on God

Our church leaders recently recommended praying Psalm 91 for 91 days. Perhaps your church is doing something similar. I truly love this suggestion because Psalm 91 is perfect for our current season and it's not very long. I can pull up the Bible App on my phone to read it several times a day. It takes my mind off of my uncertainty and places it firmly on God.

A few Bible suggestions to calm your heart include:

Psalm 91  
Philippians 4:6-7  
Isaiah 41:10  
Psalm 56:3-4

Once you've selected one, let it begin to sink into your heart. Here's how:

- Read the passage several times a day. Set a reminder on your phone if it helps.
- Whenever possible, say the verse out loud.
- Meditate on it. Carve out a few quiet minutes and envision its truth in your life. This is not just a passage for people in Bible times, it's for you today. Take it to heart.
- Pray it back to God, asking Him to give you all the verse offers.
- As you review the verse repeatedly, you'll naturally begin to memorize it. Practice reciting it from memory.
- Each time you begin to feel uncertain or anxious, call the verse to mind as a reminder of God's sovereignty and protection.

In His love,

*Cathy McIntosh*

[www.cathymcintosh.com](http://www.cathymcintosh.com)





## A Companion Along the Way

### Easter Sunday on the Emmaus Road

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

The gleaming cloud tops and fragrant spring air would have invigorated most travellers leaving Jerusalem that Sunday afternoon. But these two began their trek to Emmaus staring grimly at the trail, forcing leaden feet up the steep path to the ridge, where they would follow the road down the Judean slopes.

Cleopas and his friend were going over and over the events of the weekend that had climaxed with their Leader hanging limp, pale, lifeless on a stained wooden cross. Then a hurried burial -- and despair.

Hearing the crunch of footsteps behind them, Cleopas glanced back. A traveler was rapidly climbing the grade, as if to join them. But he had caught only fragments of their conversation. "What are you talking about?" he asked, as he caught up to them.

Cleopas stopped. "Where have you been?" he asked. "Everybody in Jerusalem has been talking about Jesus of Nazareth." He told of their excitement. Of the arrest and crucifixion. Of the women's tale of a stolen body and of angels. "We had hoped that he was the Messiah," Cleopas said, "but now...." His words drifted off in sadness as he resumed the journey.

They were at the summit, and as the road began its downward incline, the traveler shot a strange challenge: "Don't you know what the Scriptures say?" Cleopas just shrugged and gestured with his hands as if to say, "We don't know."

So for the next several miles, the traveler began to talk, patiently explaining each of the Scripture passages that spoke about how the Christ, the Messiah, would have to suffer. Then he explained about Messiah's glory to come.

Cleopas and his friend walked with amazement. It was as if Scriptures that they had heard, but never understood before, began to click into place. Their steps quickened. Their hearts were pounding, but they didn't notice.

The miles seemed to melt away. Then suddenly, just around the bend was their village, Emmaus. They were home. The traveler thanked them for their company and turned again to the path, but they didn't want to let him go. Not someone who could bring them such hope, such understanding from the Scriptures.

"Won't you stay overnight?" Cleopas called. "It'll be dark soon. You must! Please!"

He did stay. As they reclined around the table, Cleopas handed a fresh round loaf to the traveler. "Would you honour us by offering the blessing tonight?"

The traveler lifted up the bread and repeated the familiar Jewish blessing:

"Blessed are you, O God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

And then he began break it, handing a piece to each of them in turn. Cleopas caught his breath. His eyes met the man's. Suddenly, in that moment, he knew! Who knows how? -- but he knew. It was the Lord! He saw the faintest glimmer of a smile on his face, and then Jesus simply vanished.

All they could do was stare at each other for a moment in stunned amazement.

Then Cleopas jumped up. "It's true! The women were right. Jesus is alive! He has risen!"

Their food and drink lay untouched on the table, but both men were bounding out the door and away, running. "No wonder our hearts burned within us while he was talking to us on the road," his companion said later, as they paused briefly. They ended up running, then walking, then running again nearly the whole way back to the city.

Cleopas pounded on the upper room door. "We have seen him! We have seen Jesus!" Peter opened the door a crack, but Cleopas couldn't contain himself and pushed his way in. Then their story tumbled out. "He's alive!" Cleopas concluded. "The moment he broke bread with us, all of a sudden, we knew him."

Like these two men on their way to Emmaus, many have come to the same startling conclusion. Unrecognised, Jesus begins to walk the road with us, to talk to us. And if we think to, if we care enough to ask Him in, we come to realise who He really is — the Christ, the Son of God, the Risen One.

This story has been adapted from Luke 24:13-35. Copyright 2009, Ralph F. Wilson. All rights reserved. Originally published as "A Companion Along the Way" in The Evangel, April 3, 1988, pp. 4-5. Revised April 8, 2009. "Copyright Ralph F. Wilson <[pastor@joyfulheart.com](mailto:pastor@joyfulheart.com)>. All rights reserved. Used by permission."

## KESWICK AYRSHIRE

With all that is happening in the world at the moment, you will perhaps not be surprised that the trustees have made the decision to cancel Keswick Ayrshire 2020.

In light of the events surrounding the continuing worldwide crisis caused by the 'Covid-19' Coronavirus, it is a decision that we feel we have to take at this time.

Our thoughts at this stage are for everyone affected and for those who are providing care, seeking cure, and those making decisions for our safety.

Whilst we are disappointed that Keswick Ayrshire 2020 has not been able to go ahead, the trustees have already begun to plan for Keswick Ayrshire 2021 with the hope that this threat to us all will have passed in a few months and 'normality' can resume.

The plans for 2021 are already in place inasmuch as our dates and visiting speaker:

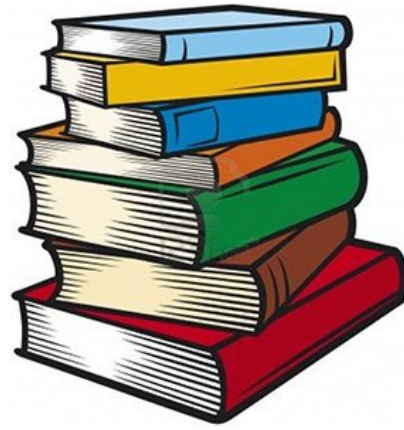
**When:** May 21-23, 2021  
**Where:** The Park Hotel, Kilmarnock  
**Who:** Canon J John



If after church, you wait awhile,  
someone may greet you with a smile,  
but, if you quickly rise and flee,  
we'll all seem cold and stiff, maybe.  
The one beside you in the pew  
is, perhaps a stranger too.  
All here, like you, have fears and cares,  
all of us need each other's prayers.  
In fellowship we bid you meet,  
with us around God's mercy seat.

# A Book To Save Your Life

By Donna MacNeil  
(ESPS Ministries)



Every so often a great book comes out that is the latest 'must have' about 'something'. Today I want to share about such a book for those who serve in ministry. It is so much more than just a good read, it could literally change your whole life! I devoured it. Page after page of the author being real, relevant, and transparent in a humbling manner. It reels the reader in.

I'm referring to the latest bestseller from John Mark Comer- "**The Ruthless Elimination Of Hurry**". Odds are that most of us reading this post know at least one pastor/leader who has had to demit from ministry due to burnout, stress, depression, moral failure, or sickness. Perhaps we have been or are close to that place ourselves. We may be on a continuous loop of sustaining appearances, juggling diaries/year planners, preaching and leading, pastoring and praying, whilst never feeling fulfilled or on top of it all. Add to that a gnawing sense of guilt of not enough time to date your spouse, bond with your children, or even enjoy some time off for yourself. It's a recipe for disaster.

Ever since I heard this quote, I have repeated it more times than I can count. "Jesus alone died for the church, no one else has to". Yet something's not working because so many are literally feeling like they are dying in ministry. Pressures, people, opposition, worries and fears, demands and deadlines, and not enough hours in the day, or even the night for it all.

At the time of writing, we are a week away from the end of the first month of this new year. How are you feeling so far? Tired already? Emotionally drained? Exhausted? Plagued by problems, over stretched, running from meeting to meeting? Perhaps you're even scared to face the ghost like thoughts at the back of your head - 'I can't do this anymore' or 'I want out'. A pastor told me recently they wished they could work in a shop 9-5, 5 days a week, then go home and enjoy switching off and a couple of days off.

The grass always looks greener I know, but the heart was confessing that anything looks better than a present reality of feeling utterly and constantly overwhelmed.

Living out the call of God on our lives is done so much better when :- a) We're actually alive to do so and, b) We are able to know God's peace in the day-to-day rhythm of life and ministry. Something has gone so wrong when as a society we are living under the tyranny of time. We must take the reins of our own lives and get a healthy balance of living.

This book will help you not just benefit from the honest testimony of the author, but also form the wonderful solutions and spiritual disciplines he has managed to now incorporate into his life. Modelled on the example and truths Jesus left us to live by.

I'm delighted that John Mark Comer is still a pastor and still in ministry, that's good news! He literally recalibrated his life. What a wonderful story that could also be ours if we need to get repositioned at the very start of this New Year. Over to you.





# Reversing Into The Future?

By David Wilson

Many years ago, when still not old enough to apply for a driving licence, I was showing off, in my father's car (a 1953 Austin Somerset!) my already acquired driving skills to a friend. He turned to me and asked, "What gear are you in when you're reversing?" I thought I had not heard him properly but when I asked him to repeat what he'd said, he asked exactly the same question! I somehow deduced that my friend had not grasped some of the finer points of the art of driving.

In thinking about that episode, I sometimes wonder if the Church (that is, the worldwide church) is going backwards - and at speed. We often consider the early church, as depicted in the Book of Acts, as an ideal to aim for and there is no doubt that their passion and dedication should inspire us. However, they soon had their problems, as evidenced by the issues raised in many of the letters of Paul and other New Testament writers. Also, they very soon had to face severe persecution.

People talk about getting back to a time when Scotland was a respectful, God-fearing nation and there is no doubt that society in general is a much more secular place than it used to be. However, I am not so sure that we should be harking back to a by-gone era. Thinking again of my friend's query about reversing, there are now lots of cars fitted with reversing cameras, so you can see clearly where you are going - backwards. These cameras eliminate "blind spots" and I cannot help wishing that, when some of us start feeling nostalgic about "the good old days", we had our own way of eliminating blind spots and thus become more realistic about how things used to be.

Sadly, it did not follow that when more people were attending church on Sunday, they were necessarily better human beings during the rest of the week and, at different times throughout history, various sections of the church have tackled other sections in (literally) murderous fashion.

There is, undoubtedly, a lot to be learned and a lot to inspire us in looking at different aspects of how things once were. Personally, I often feel waves of nostalgia when I remember certain periods of my own experience of Church. In particular, I tend to view my years in the House-church movement through rose-tainted spectacles - but then my wife brings me back to reality by mentioning some of the unbelievable events that we encountered there.

Let us be thankful for what was good in the past and, yes, do let us be inspired by the many Godly women and men who "fully followed" their Lord. However, let us be spurred on, let us, like the Apostle Paul, "press on" towards maturity and so see the Church built up and God's will done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Rather than longing for the past to return, may it be our aim to see the Church become what we have never been before.

# DAILY BIBLE READINGS

APRIL - JUNE 2020

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
1	Mark 12:13-17	John 6:25-59	John 16:5-16
2	Mark 12:18-27	John 6:60-71	John 16:17-33
3	Mark 12:28-34	John 7:1-13	John 17:1-5
4	Mark 12:35-40	John 7:14-24	John 17:6-19
5	Mark 12:41-44	John 7:25-44	John 17:20-26
6	Mark 13:1-31	John 7:45-8:11	John 18:1-14
7	Mark 13:32-37	John 8:12-30	John 18:15-18
8	Mark 14:1-11	John 8:31-41	John 18:19-24
9	Mark 14:12-42	John 8:42-47	John 18:25-27
10	Mark 14:43-15:41	John 8:48-59	John 18:28-40
11	Mark 15:42-47	John 9:1-12	John 19:1-16a
12	Mark 16	John 9:13-34	John 19:16b-27
13	John 1:1-18	John 9:35-41	John 19:28-37
14	John 1:19-28	John 10:1-21	John 19:38-42
15	John 1:29-34	John 10:22-42	John 20:1-9
16	John 1:35-42	John 11:1-16	John 20:10-18
17	John 1:43-51	John 11:17-37	John 20:19-23
18	John 2:1-11	John 11:38-44	John 20:24-31
19	John 2:12-25	John 11:45-57	John 21:1-14
20	John 3:1-21	John 12:1-11	John 21:15-25
21	John 3:22-36	John 12:12-19	Revelation 1:1-8
22	John 4:1-26	John 12:20-36	Revelation 1:9-20
23	John 4:27-38	John 12:37-50	Revelation 2:1-7
24	John 4:39-42	John 13:1-17	Revelation 2:8-11
25	John 4:43-54	John 13:18-30	Revelation 2:12-17
26	John 5:1-15	John 13:31-38	Revelation 2:18-29
27	John 5:16-30	John 14:1-4	Revelation 3:1-6
28	John 5:31-47	John 14:5-14	Revelation 3:7-13
29	John 6:1-15	John 14:15-31	Revelation 3:14-22
30	John 6:16-24	John 15:1-17	Revelation 4
31		John 15:18-16:4	