

In daily life - towards imitation

A well-known professional golfer was playing in a tournament with President Gerald Ford, Jack Nicklaus, and Billy Graham. After the round was over, one of the other pros on the tour asked, "Hey, what was it like playing with the President and Billy Graham?" The pro said with disgust, "I don't need Billy Graham stuffing religion down my throat!" With that he headed for the practice tee. His friend followed, and after the golfer had pounded out his fury on a bucket of golf balls, the friend asked, "Was Billy a little rough on you out there?" The pro sighed and said with embarrassment, "No, he didn't even mention religion." - What had happened was simply this: the evangelist had so reflected Christlikeness that his presence made the pro feel uncomfortable. Do unbelievers sense the aroma of Christ in us?

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION

Read 2 Cor 2:14-17

1. With the understanding that Paul is referring to a Roman triumphal procession whereby those being led in triumph are captive soldiers being led to their death, what is your understanding of Paul's message?
2. What is Paul's job as this captive soldier?
3. Do you think believers today have the same calling to be the fragrant aroma of Christ in every place? What do you think this looks like?
4. In what ways do we see ourselves as captive to 'Rome' or captive to 'Christ'?

Living it out

In what ways do our patterns of work reflect that we are slaves to our work?
In what ways can we bring Sabbath principles of rest, relaxation, justice and mercy to our work environment?
In what ways can we be the sweet aroma of the knowledge of God and the sweet fragrance of Christ?

Prayer suggestion:

Read Micah 6:8 "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Thank God for his mercy and pray for his justice.
Lord Jesus, we want to spread your fragrance throughout our land. As our aroma brings a smell of both life and death, may your kingdom powerfully advance through us. In your name, Amen.

Joining a group:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160.

INSPIRE

LOVING GOD IN ALL OF LIFE: THE AIR WE BREATHE & THE WORK WE DO

A TEN WEEK TEACHING COURSE ON MAKING FAITH A NATURAL PART OF ALL OF LIFE
FROM SEPTEMBER 20TH 2015

Everywhere...in everything

**Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals.
Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.**

Week beginning: 15th November 2015.

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; in - to each other; out - to mission

Up

God has no favourites. We are all equally loved and equally valued by God. Thank Him for that.

In

Send someone you know a text or give them a call, saying that they are precious to God. Try talking to someone else in your class or office this week whom you wouldn't usually speak to, even if it's just a friendly "hello".

Out

In Jesus' parable, the man who was mugged on the road to Jericho was a Jew. The man who helped him was a Samaritan. Outrageous! These two groups didn't usually associate with each other. How could you surprise someone by showing them "outrageous" hospitality or generosity?

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 16th November

Readings: Psalm 46, Matthew 7: 1-12. Focus verse: 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Tuesday 17th November.

Readings: Psalm 47, Matthew 7: 13-end. Focus verse: 24 'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Wednesday 18th November

Readings: Psalm 56, Matthew 8: 1-13. 2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' 3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

Thursday 19th November

Readings: Psalm 61, Matthew 8: 14-22. Focus verse: 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' 20 Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Friday 20th November.

Readings: Psalm 63, Matthew 8: 23-end. Focus verse: 27 The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'

Saturday 21st November.

Readings: Psalm 78: 1-39, Matthew 9: 1-17 Focus verse: Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. 13 But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

Where and in what way have you noticed God at work in your place of work this week?

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Loving God in all of life: Setting people free through work Deut 24:17-22 & 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.

'Remember that you were slaves in Egypt' is a central theme in the book of Deuteronomy. We find this refrain five times in the book. God wanted His people - the Israelites - to model a way of living that showed kindness, mercy and justice to the most vulnerable members of society. We could summarise this theme thus "Don't enslave your neighbour - set him/her free from misery and exploitation!" This would show God's love for all people and in particular his concern for the foreigner, the orphan and the widow. His covenant people are called to show God's love for the world in everything they did and this included work, rest and play.

I wonder what it looks like to 'be free' in our work?? I suspect there is a human predisposition to return to our default – that place of slavery. Most of us spend the majority of our time either asleep or at work. Are we in danger of becoming slaves to our work or our boss? God knew what He was doing when he gave us the Sabbath, it is not simply about not working one day in seven. There is much more to 'Sabbath' teaching. In Deut 15 God told his people to do the Sabbath every 7 years. For an entire year! This included resting the land, cancelling debts and releasing slaves! Notice that this is good news for the land and for slaves. In the year of Jubilee (every fifty years) all people were required to go home and reclaim their land and property (Lev 25). Sabbath wisdom nurtures rest, mercy, good stewardship and justice! Sabbath wisdom also blesses all workers whether rich or poor. Those who have no work (the unemployed) can work in the fields of those who have money and resources (the employed) this was called gleaning. Those who do have work are encouraged to work less (longer breaks) because they can only go over their fields once and this then allows the vulnerable gleaners to enjoy the generous left-over's. Both work and resources are shared in the Israelite community.

Develop a baptised imagination and you will begin to appreciate that God wanted privileged workers to spend time with less privileged workers. Sabbath in Scripture is good news for work and workers. It brings rest, relaxation, justice and mercy to both the employed and the unemployed. It is good news for both the employer and the employee.

George Cadbury was born in Birmingham in 1839. His father, John Cadbury, was a tea and coffee dealer. The Cadburys were members of the Society of Friends and they sent George to the local Quaker School. His childhood was spent in a loving and deeply religious family. At the age of 22 George and his elder brother, Richard, took over the family business and in 1873 they stopped selling tea and coffee and focused exclusively

on chocolate. George and Richard were not just concerned about the quality and profitability of their chocolate. As Christians both men believed that the happiness and well-being of their employees was one of the chief aims of the business. They were profit-sensitive without being profit-driven.

The Cadbury factory was unlike any other of its day. Each day began with Bible readings and prayers and the working day was considerably shorter. George and Richard introduced half-days on Saturdays and bank holiday closing. Biblical teaching about the Sabbath helped George and Richard to develop a baptised imagination about their chocolate factory. In 1878, when the premises became too small, the brothers decided to build a factory in the country. They called this new site "Bournville". On this site the brothers provided football and cricket fields, a huge playground for children, swings and even an open air swimming pool. Employees were encouraged to have fun and the sporting and recreational facilities were first-rate. Sometimes the brothers would tell the employees to knock off early and everyone would enjoy playing and watching a cracking game of cricket. You could say that Cadbury brought the mercy, fun and shalom of the Sabbath into the chocolate factory.

In many ways the Cadbury factory tells the story of Israel to anyone who has 'ears to hear'. Just as Israel was called to be a light to the nations, so the Cadbury factory was shedding light in 19th century England where many factories had an Egyptian flavour: Very long days in miserable conditions for meager pay. The story of Israel and the story of Cadbury encourages us to ask this question. How can we love the strangers in our midst? How can we show mercy to the vulnerable and oppressed? How can we show hospitality to foreigners and refugees? One way to do this is to develop a baptised imagination in the simple craft of asking questions that show empathy and love.

When we meet 'foreigners' and refugees from other countries we can love them by taking an interest in their cultures, their families and their languages by asking questions that show empathy, compassion and affirmation. This requires a baptised imagination - "Tell me what was it like to be an accountant/plasterer/opera singer/dentist in Syria." We can also learn foreign languages in order to 'spill the perfume of Christ'.

How can we spill the aroma of Christ? Spilling the aroma of Christ is another way of talking about having a baptised imagination. Here is a question for you. If you were an aspiring Christian missionary, would you take your wife and three young children deep into the jungles of West Papua to a headhunting, cannibalistic tribe who valued treachery as a virtue?

In 1962, missionaries Don and Carol Richardson felt called to preach the gospel to the Sawi tribe in western New Guinea in Indonesia. Don set about learning the language,

which was daunting in its complexity. There are 19 tenses for every verb! Don was able to become proficient in the language after a tough schedule of 8–10 hours a days study. When the Richardson family arrived among the Sawi people, they found a culture built on warfare, treachery and deceit between neighbouring tribes. Particularly unpleasant was the process known as "fattening the pig for the slaughter" whereby an apparent friendship was developed for the purpose of luring the victim into a sense of security, suddenly shattered when he was confronted, killed and cannibalised. The Richardson's were appalled by this and agonised over how to make a breakthrough in their Christian communication. It got worse, when they told the story of Jesus, the Sawi made Judas their hero because of the way he had (in their eyes) fattened Jesus for the slaughter.

The Richardsons threatened to leave, and they watched with amazement as the tribes, tried to prevent this, they made peace with an amazing ceremony. Both tribes offered a baby into the care of their enemies, not, as the Richardsons feared, as a sacrifice, but as a "peace child". As long as the peace child lived, peace was guaranteed. And the peace child was exempt from fattening the pig for the slaughter, for killing the peace child was the greatest sin. At last the Richardsons had the key to the Sawi culture. They explained that Jesus was God's peace child, and he was killed! Judas was no longer the hero and the Sawi in large numbers became Christians.

So why do we learn a foreign language? Is it to spill the aroma of Christ like Don Richardson or is it simply to make money and 'get a good job'?

Susan is a French teacher. How can she develop a baptised imagination about her profession? How can she spill the perfume of Jesus as she teaches French? Language expert David Smith has argued compellingly that the dominant way of teaching modern foreign languages (MFL) is shaped by consumerist and materialist narratives. I shop therefore I am. Or for fluent Latin speakers - Tesco ergo sum. The focus is upon autonomous individuals maximising profit and pleasure as they manage their lives with consumerist tunnel vision. I want to say these things in French Mme Dupond: 'I want a cold beer now'. 'I want to make a complaint about this shoddy malt whisky now'. 'I want to take a selfie on my phone now'. Smith has noted that the only mention of 'religion' in textbooks is horoscopes!!!!

So there is a constant drip feed of individualistic materialism in French textbooks, which young people absorb uncritically. So how can Susan shed the perfume of Christ as she teaches French? Susan can do a lesson in French about Randy Lewis or George Cadbury and this spills the aroma of Christ. Without flagwaving - I am a Christian so come and persecute me - she is challenging the dominant consumerist story by telling the stories of people who refuse to live in this spiritually vacant and morally bankrupt narrative. The French teacher who lacks a baptised imagination will simply reinforce the individualistic and materialistic messages that Smith has noted.