

Coming Up at St Mark's

LENT MISSION COURSE:

This Wednesday, 8-9.30pm in a warm room in church (!). Come and write Amnesty letters for the release of prisoners of conscience, with

Barbara Barnes. Stay for as much as you like....The first event of our Lent initiative.



AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

CHURCH SPRING CLEAN.

SATURDAY MARCH 2ND, 10-12.

INCLUDING COFFEE AND CAKE!!!!

Friday 22 March at 7 for 7.15 pm until 9.30 pm: **an evening on Emotional Intelligence.** Dr David Walton, psychologist and author of "Emotional Intelligence - a practical guide." This is an evening for everyone to find out what it is and how it can affect your health, your relationships and your family. **Tickets** - £5, this includes light refreshments. Tickets are available from the Wellspring office: 01423 881 881 or office@wellspringtherapy.co.uk

All proceeds go to Wellspring

prayer

Please pray for...

Isabella Cook (14) and her family this week and next week. Isabella will be having major heart surgery at the LGI next Wednesday 20th February. Her parents are Patti and Andy Cook, younger sisters Olivia and Mia.

Pray for **Ann-Marie**, Lucy-Ann Kirkham's sister in law, and her family. She is in hospital having been diagnosed with cancer.

Give thanks for **Joseph Thomas**, born to Debbie and George.

Give thanks for our **Lent Mission Course**, and for the potential it has for blessing the community.

Pray for a good **Sanctuary** meeting on February 26th with Sue Russell

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Lifeline Harrogate**, opening its first house as long-term accommodation for the homeless this week..

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



Lent Worship:

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 17th February 2013

Every week during Lent there will be a suggested activity you can do to make your journey towards Easter. **Construct a simple cross** and use it each week – you could take two medium sized, dry branches (or planks if you prefer) of around 1.5 metre (up) and 1m (across) respectively and bind them together securely at the centre with garden twine or string. Then wrap more twine, reasonably tightly, around each branch, tying each piece so it hold secure. While you are making your cross, take some time to think about the people, situations and issues that you care about – think about your friends, family, neighbours, community, country, leaders and other nations.... particularly consider individuals, groups or nations who are on your heart because they are living in poverty, or facing grief or suffering, and especially think about those who don't know about, or haven't yet experienced, God's love for them. N.B. **Next week you will need:** some coins and a purse...

Whole Life Balance in the Way of Jesus

Briefly reflect on the main way God spoke to you through this Sunday's teaching: Genesis 1:26 – 2:3 & John 6:12-15. An (un-named) bishop went to see his spiritual director. An hour later after he had poured out everything that was wrong with his life he asked what his wise counsellor would advise. 'Sleep more' was the reply. 'What will that do?' asked the bishop. 'Limit the time you have available to do more damage' was the reply. Whole Life Balance may sound like an insurance policy, but it is about recognising that a healthy Christian life (or indeed any life) needs a balance between the different elements that constitute your 24/7 existence. Sometimes it is easier to see what balance means by looking at where there is an imbalance. Consider these (completely hypothetical) examples:

So your life is a blur from when you drag your tired body out of bed to when you collapse back into it, much later than you originally planned. Your 'to do list' is always twice as long as what you manage to achieve and keeps growing at an alarming rate. The phone rings, the email pings, you're always rushing, you eat your meals not to enjoy tasting (remember the 5 senses) but to take on more fuel. You'd laugh (privately of course) if someone asked you to stop and smell the roses. There are so many things to do, so many people who need you, so many demands. Yes of course you'd exercise more, but there's no time, you'd take that holiday, but your diary's full. Never mind it'll quieten down in week, a month, next year ...sometime ...never. Here we are at Sunday and gosh – it's twice as busy as the rest of the week, all those things to do at church, people to see, arrangements to make, notes to read, groups to attend.....why? Why are you doing all this? Well, of course because you have to – people are relying on you – your family, your friends, your employer, your church....God maybe?

Of course this is an exaggeration, and there are times in life when we have to be busy, but let's cut to the heart of our tendency to be out of balance by expending too much energy....who would you be if you weren't doing all of that? How much of this is because it defines your **identity**, who you are? The Good News is that the love of God for us doesn't depend on what we **DO**, but who we already are – loved and restored children of our Heavenly Father – that is our identity – we have nothing to prove. **This is perhaps the fundamental difference for Christians – for us expending energy is our response to who we already are – not a means of defining our identity.**

So your life is one long holiday. Yes one day you're going to put all this background and knowledge into practice and really make a difference in the world, but there's still more preparation that you need first. You hear that old joke 'if all the people who have ever attended training and conferences and seminars on evangelism were laid end to end would they reach their neighbour' and you wince – but hey, I'll be doing the stuff one day, I'm just not ready yet. Your days are a breeze, nothing is really challenging and that's the way you like it. All this stuff about 'stepping out of the boat' and 'taking a risk', well that's for the really keen ones (who you suspect will be burnt out before long). You know you have to watch for that, easy to get burnt out, easy to be over-enthusiastic, but you know to be more careful than that. Yes there was a sermon about 'two commandments' and the 'Loving God' bit is just what you like, but 'Loving others' ...well, and 'Loving your enemies'that's not going to lead to a quiet life is it?

Another exaggeration, and there are times in life when we need extended rest and recovery, but let's cut to the heart of our tendency to be out of balance by recharging too much....have we got our **priorities** right? The Good News is that we are empowered by God for the sake of others, not just for our own benefit. We'd all love to experience more of the gifts of the Spirit, but we need to see the biblical principle that the gifts are given **for the good of all. This is perhaps the fundamental difference for Christians – for us being renewed is not only for our benefit (which of course it is) but for the benefit of others.**

A limited, but helpful, analogy is that of healthy battery life. Think of a battery (one of the rechargeable ones). There are times when the battery is giving out energy and times when it is receiving energy (being recharged) – too much of one or the other is harmful to the battery. In the same way the Bible suggests in many places that human beings need a balance in life between giving out and receiving in, between expending energy and being renewed.

Right at the beginning of Genesis we learn that we are made in the image of a creative God. A God who expends energy in being creative, but who also values renewal of that energy by sometimes not being creative. In Exodus the idea of life balance is embodied in the Sabbath commandment. In the Psalms David writes of times of great energy and times of rest. Psalm 23 while having much about renewal also speaks of 'walking through the valley of the shadow of death and fearing no evil' times of crisis and challenge are frequently times of great energy dissipation. In the ministry of Jesus we see a lot of balance (as you'd expect) between Jesus giving out and receiving.

In the Gospels we meet Mary and Martha. Mary is apparently more reflective by nature and Martha more of a doer. A whole life balance would be one in which the Mary and Martha elements of our personalities were well balanced. Jesus commends Mary, but in context. At the moment in time the better thing to do was to listen to Jesus and be renewed. But it doesn't appear that Jesus is advocating a life only of receiving and renewal and He certainly did not model that. He knew how to be still and receive refreshing from His Father and how to be re-energised by prayer and solitude, but also by friendship and rejoicing in the success of others (see His reaction when the disciples come back and report after their first mission – Luke 10 v17-22). But He knew what it was to expend His energy doing the Father's will. In John 4 when He meets the Samaritan women at the well we read that He was tired. When the woman with the flow of blood touches His cloak He says 'Power has gone out from me.' Jesus, the most balanced human being who has ever lived, knew times of both giving out and receiving.

This principle of balancing expending energy and being recharged is shown dramatically in Leviticus Chapter 25 – where we discover an expansion of the Sabbath principle of productivity followed by restoration. Already familiar with this pattern over a period of seven days, we find that God says to Moses that there is to be a sabbatical year – after six years of harvesting from the land (or part of it) the land is to lie fallow for a year, and expanding further after seven Sabbaths of years (49 years), the 50th year is the year of jubilee which is a year of remarkable personal and societal renewal. We should not become too bogged down with legalism of what does and doesn't constitute rest and renewal and what days (or years) there should be renewal that was the mistake the Pharisees made, and which caused so much conflict between them and Jesus – we need to step back and see the bigger picture; **that God Himself and all His creation (including us) need to balance expending energy (giving out) and being renewed (receiving refreshment).**

The great evangelist and revival leader Duncan Campbell, when he was a young man was bemoaning the lack of action in so many Christians to a wise elder friend. 'I'd rather burn out than rust out.' Duncan said proudly (He was from Scotland) – Translation – 'I'd rather expend too much energy than just be recharging.' 'Aye laddie – but it's better to last out.' Was the reply. Translation – Whole Life Balance is the best way to honour God in our 24/7 lives.

Study

Leviticus 25 - is the year of Jubilee about resting and relaxing or radical restoration for all?
Matt 12 v 1-14 – how does Jesus behaviour reflect a better understanding of 'sabbath'
Psalm 23 – how are the elements of expending energy and recharging dealt with in this Psalm?
1 Kings 18 and 19 – what does the story of Elijah say to you about whole life balance?
Luke 10 v 38-42 – how do you relate to Mary, Martha and Jesus in this enlightening short passage?

Living it out (Application):

Of course this week just one question – take time to review your life and to what extent you are balanced in giving out and receiving. What practical steps do you need to take to move towards a more Whole Life Balance?