

In daily life - towards imitation

Gary Grant became a Christian in 1991, a decade after he opened his first shop. His faith was so strong he almost quit to become a missionary, but instead decided to make the business compatible with his beliefs. As a result, the shop never opens on Sunday, doesn't stock Halloween goods or some of the most popular toy ranges including Harry Potter related merchandise and realistic weaponry and gives 10% of the chain's profits to charity. "We just want to be comfortable with what we're selling," he says. Gary Grant says he values family life and that his staff, no matter what their faith, appreciate not having to work on Sundays. Gary Grant says he went "ballistic" when one of his staff overlooked a child in the queue and served the adult behind instead. Now all shops have step stools to ensure children are seen and can pay for things themselves. One of the achievements of which he is proudest is that he has given lots of people a chance. Below board level many senior staff have come up through the company, and not surprisingly you can get a job at the Entertainer without any qualifications at all. "If I hadn't been given opportunities maybe I wouldn't have had a business this size. I want everybody to have an opportunity," he says. Gary has developed a baptised imagination about his daily work and has blessed so many people - both Christian and non-Christian.

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION

The redemption of creation: what do Isaiah 25: 6-9, Romans 8: 18-25 and Revelation 22: 1-5 reveal of our hope being "Creation Regained"? Why is this important in our present work? What are the dangers of thinking you are "going to heaven"? Revelation 22: 3; Matthew 25: 21-23, Luke 19:17-19; Revelation 14:13; Luke 16:9-12 all speak of future work...what do you think this might be? Why is it important now? 1 Corinthians 15: 35-58. Why do resurrection bodies matter? Why is verse 58 so important?

Living it out

When you sit at your desk tomorrow are you preparing the world for this with a baptised imagination? Or are you just waiting? May God give you a vision of His plan for your life and the life of the world, and may your life say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Prayer suggestion:

This might sound strange...but imagine you have got to the end of this part of your earthly life. Reflect on what you want to be able to say to Jesus. Turn that into a prayer for today. Pray for each other, for hope to infect your daily work.

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. There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos: <http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>

www.smcn.org.uk

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FROM SEPTEMBER 20TH 2015

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**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: 29th 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 Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to all he said. (Luke 10: 38-42) Sitting at his feet showed that Mary wanted to learn from Jesus, and to be like him. Who is your role model? Who do you want to learn from and imitate? Talk about this together at a mealtime this week.

In Read this prayer together before bedtime, and use it to pray for people you know in the church community who are sick or in need.

'Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And for all your love's sake. Amen.' (St. Augustine)

Out Make an advent wreath with greenery from your garden or around your area. As you collect it, give thanks to God for the beauty of His world and His promised return.

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 30th November St Andrew's Day

Readings: Psalm 47, Matthew 4: 18-22. Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ and brought his brother with him: call us by your holy word, and give us grace to follow you without delay and to tell the good news of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Focus verse: 18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

Tuesday 1st December.

Readings: Psalm 80, Matthew 12:22-37. Focus verse: 22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

Wednesday 2nd December

Readings: Psalm 5, Matthew 12:38-end. 48 He replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

Thursday 3rd December

Readings: Psalm 42, Matthew 13:1-23. Focus verse: 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'

Friday 4th December.

Readings: Psalm 25, Matthew 13: 24-43. Focus verse: 31 He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'

Saturday 5th December.

Readings: Psalm 9, Matthew 13:44-end Focus verse: But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town and in his own home.' 58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

What happens when you die? What is our hope?

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Loving God in all of life: Baptised for the future - Isaiah 25:6-8 and Revelation 22:1-5. Getting baptised is such an exciting thing - when you go under the water you are dying to an old way of life and when you come out of the water you are rising to a new way of life that begins today but goes on forever and ever in God's new creation. But I want to say to each of you: "Please don't rise to a way of life where you split life up into the things that matter to God and the things that don't matter. You are a baptised person - have a baptised imagination as well which you can bring to every little part of your life." Rise to a way of life where everything you do you can be to God's glory.

But we can lack passion about our daily work because we secretly or not so secretly don't think it means much in the long run. We actually think it means nothing, compared to what's going to happen in the future...Jesus is our passport to heavenly bliss, a supreme get out of jail card. The jail of course being the earth and all its stinks and stains. One day there will be no more earthly existence and the righteous will contemplate God in heaven. There are many problems with this Big Story but it has some truly terrible implications for our daily work. If we believe this Big Story, then the vast majority of jobs and professions become insidious distractions from the most important work of all. On this view the most important work any person can do is to get souls back into heaven! Proper, spiritual work is always undertaken by the religious professionals - missionaries, vicars, curates and (tattooed) youth pastors.

Is all this talk about loving God in all of life a big distraction? In the OT Isaiah paints a picture which is completely different, in which the good creation, once bursting with radiant joy and enticing work opportunities is now groaning in the most awful pain. But when the Messiah comes, they will not disappear, but their groaning will stop and they will rejoice that the Messiah has returned. The Saviour will achieve far more than many Christians often believe. The Redeemer will bring wisdom and understanding to the earth. But here is the clincher. There is more. He is not going to take us back home. God's Chosen One will also bring a complete healing to God's world: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them." ...Yes, it's lovely poetry. But it's also radical hope. God's plan is for this world. Today is Advent Sunday. Do you know what Advent means? "Arrival of someone notable." We are waiting for Jesus to arrive, to put this world right for good. God's good purpose is to lift the curse (Gen 3) from His beautiful but broken world. Christian hope does not abolish work or physical reality. However Christian hope does take the curse out of work and redeems our bodily activities.. One day we will serve God (joyful work) and rule creation (delightful labour) without the pain, toil and sweat of this present, sin-stained age. We will work in and through our resurrection bodies (1 Cor 15). We will still be working in God's good creation after the return of King Jesus!