

HOLY WEEK MEDITATIONS

24 – 30 MARCH 2024

SERVING GOD AS A FAMILY



Meditations by Ladies of TRAC WSCS

Scripture verses from GC WSCS

Day 1 – 24 March 2024 “*Serving God as a Family*”

Joshua 24:15 - But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Everyday life confronts us with choices. And the choices we make carry with them the consequences of our decisions. Some would have a short-term impact while others could impact us for eternity. One of such choices is serving God.

Serving God is an attitude and a habit, cultivated daily. It is more than an individual choice as it involves the family as well. Sadly, the Christian family unit is facing unprecedented challenges on many fronts today. These include the busyness of life, career pressures, challenges of raising kids in an increasingly complex and immoral world, difficulties of making decisions or ends meet, finding time for prayer or even a meal together. All these tests the strength of the family bond. In addition, the increasing lack of intimacy, loneliness, and boredom leading to eventual marital break-ups and single parenthood can defeat the original purpose that God has for the family.

In spite of all the negative things that you may find in your family, you can still choose blessing and hope for something good to emerge. But first and foremost, thank God for the situation you find yourself in. Whether the troubles are of your own doing or imposed upon you by others or situations that are beyond your control, God can cause good to come out of any one of them (Romans 8:28). Let your spirit not be dampened, but like Joshua, you can still say, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Being a great military strategist and spiritual leader, Joshua knew what he was saying and committing himself to. The situation confronting him was not completely ideal either. But he knew better than anyone else to entrust his life, including his family’s, to the God who will not let him down. God had earlier reminded him to be strong and courageous, and to meditate on His Word. Joshua was therefore able to challenge the people to serve God towards the end of his life. Following and serving God is not an easy option. It calls for a radical change, which begins with a courageous step to want to serve God.

So, if you choose to serve God today as a family, He will act on your behalf. Remember that the family was not your idea; it was God’s plan. Therefore, He will give you the needed courage to act on it. He will give you the wisdom and love to run your family. He will heal wounds caused by harsh words and unkind actions. But more than that, He will bless you and your family, with His Presence, Love, Joy and Peace.

Dolly Chia
Agape Methodist Church

Day 2 – 25 March 2024 “*Serving fervently with love and prayer*”

Romans 12:10-11 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.

People are naturally self-centred. ‘I come first’ is a slogan echoed by many. But for us who are spiritually born again and desiring to follow in Christ’s footsteps, we want to heed the Lord’s command to love others, especially the unlovable. We must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. With God’s help, we will accomplish the miraculous and make possible what is impossible.

Ronny Heyboer, a missionary and founder of Living Waters Village in Borneo Indonesia, has this to say after his conversion. “Here I was serving the Lord, teaching people to love one another, and yet I hated my wife.’ He remembered crying and telling God that he had had enough. He confessed he was so drained, exhausted and empty. Then something incredible happened. It was as if someone had stuck a large funnel into his mouth and started pouring love into him. He felt enveloped and bathed in love. Then the Lord spoke into his spirit to pray for his wife’s salvation and love her. With new found joy, Ronny went on serving his wife with love till she came to accept Christ personally four years later.

A Christian lady, married with children, took on the responsibility of a caregiver to her sister suffering from depression and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). Her sister took at least 2 hours to bathe daily. Among other behaviours like frequent hand washing, this Christian lady endured and continued to show love to her sister. What sacrificial love!

With God’s empowerment, we too can experience the transforming power of love. We can be intentional to choose others above ourselves and to show the love of Christ with great compassion. We can take God at His word and be willing to love others as Christ first loved us. This includes loving the arrogant, repulsive, annoying, detestable and even our enemies who persecute us, including fellow believers. The grace of God allows us to depend on His supernatural strength to embrace these people.

Do not be discouraged when people reject your love or scoff at your sincere attempts. Let’s persevere with the love of God, praying for yourself to be filled to the brim with Christ’s love. Hold on with joy, patiently enduring all the difficult times, maybe for days, weeks or even years, giving without receiving, loving without being appreciated or even acknowledged. Do press on as you want to obey God when God calls you to love someone.

What are some names that come to your mind? Our motivation to love them is that we want to glorify God, and in the process, we grow spiritually and become more like Christ.

Wendy Sui & Trudy Tay
Aldersgate Methodist Church

Day 3 – 26 March 2024 “Sharing with Christ in suffering and glory”

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

My favourite Bible teacher, the late David Pawson, told the story of a Pastor he had known. This Pastor's church had been firebombed five times - with people inside it. Once, when the Pastor was walking on the street he was gunned down and left for dead. Miraculously, he recovered and continued preaching. In his congregation, hardly a single member was in employment, so the church did not take any offering. If you had guessed that the church was in the Middle East, you would have been right. In fact, this church is in Bethlehem, the birth place of our Lord Jesus.

God's chosen location for His one and only Son to be born in - the most special and the world's most sung-about town - is today a poor and dangerous place. God's chosen people - the apple of His eye - are today the most maligned and hated people in the world. The Jews suffered atrocious horrors during WW2, and continue today to suffer the most heinous outrage imaginable.

Many people think that once they become Christians, all their troubles will end. The opposite is true. Like the Jews, Christians are called upon to be different from the world. The Apostles lived by the principle that they must obey God, not men. That was when their sufferings began. Paul had status and power as a Pharisee. When he met Christ and became a follower, he was flogged, imprisoned, shipwrecked, bitten by a snake and eventually beheaded by the evil Nero. Except for John, none of the Apostles died of old age. They faced torture and martyrdom in the most horrific ways, including beheading and crucifixion, because of their faith. Indeed, David Pawson said that "The Acts of the Apostles" might equally be entitled "The Agonies of the Apostles".

In his sermon, "Preparing For Suffering", Pawson said that suffering is normal for Christians. Like the Israelites, we too, hold a special place in God's sight. We are God's children – and His heirs! When we accept Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit into us, the Spirit testifies (the strongest affirmation possible) with our spirit that we are God's children.

Suffering is a necessary part of being a Christian, for how else can we be refined such that, like the shine of pure gold, the image of God may be reflected in us!

In peaceful and prosperous Singapore, where people of different religions live harmoniously alongside each other, we do not experience persecution and sufferings to anywhere near the degree of those of the Christians in the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world. We thank the Lord that we are spared, and we must pray earnestly for God's mercy and grace to be upon those who must endure persecutions and sufferings for their faith, that they may be strengthened and comforted.

Does it mean that we have no suffering? Far from it. In our fallen world, who among us have not been struck by the sorrow of a sudden or premature death of a loved one, or been betrayed by people we trust, or been hit by the thunderbolt of a diagnosis of a fearsome illness or disability, or been de-stabilized by a financial crisis?

When such calamities befall us, non-believers will be quick to mock us: "If your God loves you so much, why does he let this terrible illness strike you?", or "Where is your God when you need Him?"

You will recall that the teachers of the law mocked Jesus, "He saved others" they said, "but he can't save himself!...." (Matt 27: 42).

Verbal arrows of this kind shot at us can wound deeply, especially for those who are unable to find satisfactory answers to their sufferings and may even have asked the same questions themselves. Job's sufferings were compounded by the "advice" of his friends. His steadfastness and trust in the Lord enabled him to overcome his sufferings and, at the end, earned him double blessings from God.

There are all kinds of sufferings, and when our faith is tested, our agony is all the more unbearable.

The difference between a Christian and a non-believer in facing sufferings is that the Christian has someone to cry out to, a mighty and comforting omniscient Father, Son and Holy Spirit who sheds tears with us (as when Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus), who has intended for us to live in a world that He called good but which we had made bad by our rebellion and disobedience. Yet, despite it all, He has provided the Way out, but many have rejected His Way, including many of our loved ones. So we suffer still - for our non-believing loved ones, whom we do not want to be condemned.

So we must pray for His grace and mercy!

Ting Hi Keng
Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church

Day 4 – 27 March 2024 “Managing family well”

1 Timothy 3:4-5 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full^[a] respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)

We typically think of ‘management’ as someone being in charge of or overseeing something, such as running a business or an organisation. However, another definition of this word is to use something effectively and efficiently, avoiding waste, for example, in managing one’s time or money well.

Managing Family

Viewing 1 Timothy 3:4a through the lens of family being a God-given resource that requires careful stewardship, I realise that effectively managing one’s family is an intentional responsibility, much like consciously scheduling time to increase productivity at work.

I contemplate my role in my family as daughter, sister and fun-aunty to 5 children from 4 to 8 years old. Have I established familial ties in a way that is pleasing to God?

Child

Colossians 3:20

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

As a daughter who often gave her parents sleepless nights, I have taken for granted that my parents, are supposed to forgive me for each wilful act of spiritual and physical disobedience. Have I allowed God to transform our parent-child relationship according to His will?

Sibling

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

As a sister, I have vague memories of conflicts with my siblings. Conflict is inevitable for all sibling relationships especially when we were kids and more so as teens! Throw in a bit of unintentional comparison from the parents, there is no doubt that a green-eyed monster was lurking in the shadows of our home at some point in time. By the grace of God, this monster had been banished.

I thank God that my siblings have grown to remain as close as possible, given that we no longer live under one roof. However, have my interactions with them been full of grace, even when we disagree? Instead of speaking in love or receiving rebuke with humility, have I been mean-spirited when communicating with my siblings?

Relative

Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Someone once described me as a “*funty*” (fun-aunty). I should conduct a survey when my nephews are older to see if this is true, ideally before they reach their teenage years and no longer think it's cool to hang out with their aunt.

On a serious note, I enjoy spending time with my nephews, even though it can be stressful at times. In a way, it's my way of being a good sister to my siblings - providing them relief by minding their children for a while. This one-on-one, undivided time spent pursuing mutually enjoyable activities together with different nephews fills the emotional cup of the child as well as mine simultaneously.

While I am not their parent, can I use my authority as their aunt to nurture their spiritual growth and intentionally guide them toward the path of obedience and godliness? Am I setting a good example of what God expects from His children?

Conclusion

As I end my reflection, I know I have fallen short in effectively managing my family relationships in the past. However, it is never too late to learn how to better use my time as a daughter, sister, and aunt for God's glory by making the most of what He has given me. Though the road ahead may be rocky at times, I take comfort in God's wisdom to guide me through future challenges.

For those facing difficult circumstances or past family relationships, do persevere and keep close to God, who can transform even the seemingly impossible situations. God can and will always make a way, when there seems to be no way.

By a roadway in the wilderness

He'll lead me

And rivers in the desert will I see

“God Will Make a Way” by Don Moen

Amanda Lim

Barker Road Methodist Church

Day 5 – 28 March 2024 “Bonding well within family”

Colossians 3:18-21 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Families are fundamental to the wholeness and well-being of individuals. Unfortunately, families have increasingly come under siege. Brokenness, conflicts, and abandonment are becoming the central portrait of experience, possibly, in a growing number of families. And when a family is broken, the intricately woven fabric of social, psychological and spiritual support for one another in the family tears apart.

The advice in Paul’s letter to the Colossians (3:18-21) was premised on the need for family members to approach one another in accordance with the standards and commands God has given His earthly children.

Paul addressed primarily two kinds of relationships easily recognised in four very well-defined roles within a family for instruction. Embedded in his prescription for godly interactions, Paul alluded indirectly to the underlying fault lines that may cause cracks in a family.

It is interesting that Col 3:18 begins with an instruction on the role of wives. Since ancient days, Israelite women had actively engaged in trade and commerce. Wives worked side by side in family businesses with their husbands, as exemplified by the tentmakers Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3)¹. Because women were usually skilful and blessed in the intricacies of food preparation, pottery and handicraft, one could surmise that women’s work was highly valued because it contributed to the survival of the family or household.²

In calling for wives to submit, their capacity to bring home income is inconsequential. Submissiveness requires an implicit acceptance and acknowledgement of the husband as head of the household. More importantly, it is in tandem with accepting the Lordship of the heavenly Father in worship (“as is fitting in the Lord”). And women would be foolish not to choose to honour the good and perfect order of the Lord’s scheme of relationships.

Inherent in the instruction for husbands is their obligation to extend to their wives loving gentleness and grace. It will be tough to nurture submissiveness in wives if the family environment is harsh and devoid of love and gentleness. Paul pointed out that it is the reciprocal duty of husbands to reach out to their wives through the vehicle of gentleness and grace. Wholesome relationships in a family happen when husbands provide the safe space of love and grace for wives to submit. Nurturing this in a family would enable men, as the head of a household, to demonstrate what being made in the image of God means. The need for intergenerational relationships to be “worked out” becomes clear. Obedience of children is a pre-requisite for worship that pleases God. Abraham demonstrated that

¹ & ² Women’s Work in the Greco-Roman World, [Lynn H. Cohick](#), 2009

unwavering and unconditional obedience when he prepared Isaac for sacrifice to the Lord. But this obedience “in everything” is closely interwoven with how earthly fathers have to reciprocate with sensitivity and discernment when interacting or communicating with their children.

The directive to the fathers was an explicit “*Do Not embitter ...*”. The prohibition is short and clear. Fathers need to know that they wield tremendous power and influence over a child’s life and well-being. Words and deeds of a father can tear down or build up a child’s mind and spirit. Therefore, a healthy relationship between fathers and their children can be cultivated only when fathers mindfully avoid the pitfall of embittering or alienating their children.

Healthy relationships framed within the first order of obeying God and loving Him and following with the second order of loving one another, apply, especially today.

Tay Sor Har
Bedok Methodist Church

Day 6 – 29 March 2024 “Fulfilling one’s responsibility”

1 Timothy 5:8 Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

As I reflect on today’s verse, I am glad that it did not sound like an instruction or reminder to me anymore. It is something I always aim to live by. In fact, the verse reminds me of God’s providence in my life.

When I was growing up, my self-employed Dad had to manage his cashflow very carefully. On days when we were short, it could be rather stressful and most often, the period was during the Chinese New Year when bonuses had to be paid and obligations to be met. Somehow, my parents managed to provide for us and gave us the education we needed.

When it was my turn to provide for my parents, it was easy as I had a good paying job. Then years later, I had a calling to be a stay-at-home mom. I knew that I had to continue providing for them. Rather than focusing on the obligation, I would just think that it was a blessing to give and on days when I could not give, I would remind myself that “God will supply every need of mine according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” *Phil 4:19*

I give thanks to God that He has kept my parents healthy and having witnessed God’s faithfulness, they accepted Christ a few years ago and are now serving God.

My Dad has recently retired. Once again, I am reminded that God will provide for us. He will do more and beyond our imagination. He is *Jehovah Jireh*, my provider; He gives me what I need and in His perfect timing. I just need to keep obeying Him.

Dadina Wong
Christ Methodist Church

Day 7 – 30 March 2024 “Fostering unity within family”

Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!

God made man to be in family units

God did not create man to live in isolation. His intent was for mankind to be bound to one another, living in communities, loving and caring for one another. “There is neither Jew nor Greeks, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). We are one and the same in God’s eyes. No one is better than the other. God wants us to live in harmony as equal beings, united in Him. Unity in family strengthens us to face life’s trials and challenges together.

How to foster unity within family

In every family, each member will have their individual strengths and weaknesses as they are not born the same or endowed with similar characteristics or qualities. We recognise that not all family members are alike in thinking or behaviour, but by accepting one another’s differences, we can learn to live together in unity. Agreeing to disagree is a key element in fostering unity within the family.

Every member of the family must accept that each member is equally important no matter what role or function they play. This is also essential in fostering unity within the family. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, we are taught that each member of the body is needed for it to function as a whole. The foot cannot do the work of the hand, neither can the ear do what the eye does. Each body part has its own function and together they make the body work as a whole. “God created many parts, but one body” (1 Corinthians 12:20). By obeying God’s command to love one another, families learn to live together as one unit. United in Christ, each loving family will be able to function well and stay together as a thriving body.

Benefits of unity within family.

King David reminds us to focus on unity and the joy that it brings. “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity” (Psalm 133: 1). This Psalm came about as a reminder to the Israelites of the time when the tribes were fighting amongst themselves because of self-interest. But when King David united them, they discovered that unity brought about harmonious living. God blessed the Israelites abundantly through the peace they experienced.

Living in unity within a family can result in living harmoniously within a community. Like the Israelites, we too can be united in Christ and be blessed with peace and joy through Christ in our lives. To enjoy a good and pleasant life, we should therefore endeavour to always foster unity within the family.

Irene Ho and Josephine Tan
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