

# Katoomba Baptist Church Bulletin

*Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. Psalm 34:4*

41 Waratah Street, Katoomba NSW 2780.

September 2021.

Pastor: Steve Cooper. Contact: mob. 0451 954 675; email cooper.steve.j@gmail.com.

Sunday service 10am. The messages are available to watch on YouTube.

Katoomba Baptist Church website: <https://katoombabaptist.org.au>.

Bible Study: Second and Fourth Wednesday of the month in the church hall.

Church prayer meeting: each Saturday, 9am. Prayer for Israel: third Friday of the month, 1.30pm.

**\*\*\*All services and meetings in person are suspended until further notice  
in compliance with NSW government Covid-19 restrictions\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Please check the KBC website for resources and previous sermons\*\*\***

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## From the Pastor

The first Sunday of September is Fathers' Day in Australia. It's a day for each of us to reflect on our father (or step-father, foster father or father figures). As we think about our father, it's good to recall that God is our Father. Through Christ, we're sons and daughters of God. We're family. This is a precious truth at all times, especially during this season of lockdown and isolation. As long as this lockdown continues, I encourage you to say to yourself every day, over and over: 'Through the Lord Jesus Christ, I am a child of God. God is my Father. My Saviour is my brother; every Christian is my brother or sister too.' This is your true identity.

What does it mean for us to call God our Father? Consider this verse: 'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!' (1 John 3:1). Tim Chester writes: 'Your experience of your human father may be very mixed: he may have been distant, harsh or even abusive – or simply not there. But that's not what God is like. God is the loving Father you've always wished you had.' (*Enjoying God*, p.39) J.I. Packer adds that God '... is the perfect parent – faithful in love and care, generous and thoughtful, interested in all we do, respecting our individuality, skilful in training us, wise in guidance, always available, helping us to find ourselves in maturity, integrity and uprightness.' (*Knowing God*, p.184)

During this long lockdown, we all struggle with feelings of sadness, anxiety, lethargy, frustration, loneliness and boredom. Here is a truth that all Christians can hold on to, helping us find stability and security: God is your Father, and he loves you and cares for you (see Matthew 6:25-34).

Your companion on the journey,  
Pastor Steve Cooper

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## Remember our Mission Partners

Please keep praying for our Mission Partners. They all face challenges during the spread of the COVID virus. Rob and Bev Griffith serve in Thailand. Peter and Jo Ong (with children Lucas, Cay Cay and Teaghan) work in Malawi. We sponsor two girls, along with community projects in their villages: Alysa (The Philippines) and Martha (Uganda). John Burke leads Special Religious Education at Katoomba High School.

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## September birthdays

Michael W 14th, Joshua T 15th, Jamie G 16th, Peter C 17th, Loren H 22nd, Joy C 29th.

May the Lord bless you through the year ahead in your walk with Him.

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## Please pray

- for our Pastor Steve and our church leaders, for the Lord to guide and bless them.
- for the Holy Spirit to deepen and enrich our faith through the Word, prayer and communion with God.
- for the Lord to have mercy in this time of pandemic; for our nation to repent, turning to Him.
- for the Lord's guidance and strengthening of those in authority who daily have to make difficult decisions affecting the lives of millions.
- for the Lord to protect doctors, nurses, medical staff, paramedics, police and all who serve others.
- with thanks for the vaccines, that humanity has been given gifts of science, medicine and technology.
- for this church and faithful churches throughout our community to be as salt and light.
- that the Lord will minister to all who are undergoing trials and suffering, here and everywhere.
- for missions to be fruitful, especially those we support as a church, and for the preservation of converts.
- for Israel, for the "Peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122:6) and for the Gospel to reach Jewish people (Rom 1:16).
- for our persecuted brothers and sisters in nations rich and poor and for those who persecute them.
- for the Lord's mercy in these tumultuous times; for His love and comfort to every person in need.
- with thanks for all His blessings, in our lives, in our church, in our nation, in all creation.
- that the Lord will help us to use our gifts for His glory and to share the Gospel with others.
- that the Lord will draw to Him our unsaved loved ones and all for whom we have a burden.
- that we continue to grow in Christian love as a church, serving the Lord and each other.
- with thanks and praise for the blessed hope that purifies, the hope of the Lord's return.
- Maranatha! ("Come, O Lord!")

**"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks:  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).**

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**“Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.” [John Bunyan]**

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**“God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless. The lips that uttered them may be closed to death, the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat, but the prayers live before God, and God’s heart is set on them and prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; they outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world.”**

**[E. M. Bounds, from *Purpose in Prayer*.]**

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### **Spurgeon on the essential virtues of Christian character**

*Three graces should be always conspicuous in Christians — faith, love, and hope. They are each mentioned by Paul in the opening verses of the epistle from which our text is taken. These lovely graces should be so conspicuous in every believer as to be spoken of, and consequently heard of even by those who have never seen us. These flowers should yield so sweet a perfume that their fragrance may be perceived by those who have never gazed upon them. So was it with the saints at Colosse. Paul says, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” May our characters be such as can be reported of without causing us to blush; but that can never be the case if these essential virtues are absent. If these things be in us and abound we shall not be barren or unfruitful, but if they be lacking we are as withered branches. We should, therefore, be rich in faith, which is the root of every grace; and to this end we should daily pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” We should strive to be full even to overflowing with love, which is of God, and makes us like to God; and we should also abound in hope, even that heavenly hope which causeth a man to purify himself in readiness for the inheritance above. See ye to it that neither of these three divine sisters are strangers to your souls, but let faith, hope, and love take up their abode in your hearts.*

**[Charles Spurgeon, from the sermon “The Hope Laid Up in Heaven”, Colossians 1:5.]**

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### **Keep praying for Israel:**

**“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” [Luke 13: 34-35]**

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**Giving:** Please remember that you can give online to Katoomba Baptist Church at BSB 704-922 and Account Number 100008926. Thank you for your faithful commitment to giving.

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**Contributions welcome:** The KBC bulletin is available in print on the first Sunday service of the month and as a PDF version on the church website: <https://katoombabaptist.org.au/library/bulletins/>. Contributions of a devotional nature and enquiries can be made to the editor, Bill Fewer (email: [hillbillyfewer@gmail.com](mailto:hillbillyfewer@gmail.com)).

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### **“Call to Prayer : For our brothers and sisters in Haiti and Afghanistan” from Carolyn Altman, Prayer Coordinator, Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT**

*Dear Praying Partners*

*The Director of APBAid (Asia Pacific Baptist Aid) has sent the following information through assisting us to know how to pray for our brothers and sisters in Haiti and Afghanistan, which I think is so helpful. Please circulate this amongst your people as we lift our prayers up to God together. You may like to use this prayer as an interactive prayer during your Churches services or in your small groups, or you may even hold a special Call to Prayer via Zoom.*

*Many thanks  
Carolyn Altman  
Prayer Coordinator*

*Dear Friends,*

*It’s been a little over a week now, as two tragedies unfolded almost simultaneously in Haiti & Afghanistan leaving me with the questions of “what next?” and “how next?”*

*One man-made the other by natural circumstance. I have found it hard to put together what I had seen of the rugged beauty of the land of Afghanistan and the hope and resilience I encountered in my brief visits with the people of the land and those who served there with what I saw on the new channels. Captures of children thrown over fences by their families, into military bases for protection, and the image of a real person like you and me, falling off a aircraft, carves out to us the desperation and helplessness felt by them, when the only way of escape from terror deemed possible to a human mind is to cling to an aircraft!*

*The devastation of the earthquake that has left 1.5 million people homeless and over 2000 people dead in a land still recovering from one a decade ago raises a lament of not again. These people lack medical assistance, shelter, running water and food. The disaster seems to have affected approximately one in five buildings in certain areas to*

more in others. To compound this catastrophe, they've had to deal with flooding and mudslides brought on by tropical storm 'Grace' (what a misnomer one may think), in addition to the armed gangs that control certain key supply routes, with risk of gang violence threatening the convoys carrying goods to those affected by the earthquake, squeezing out the aid for the needy. (Source : Reuters)

*These stories and images of the families in Afghan and Haiti are hard to erase from my mind, images of those who have lost their homes and have no place to rest in Haiti and those in fear, in anticipation or cut off from their rescue, sleepless at the Kabul airport... it's real and it's happening right now, this right here is a global moment, and as a world we are at a place I believe in which we are all hurting. We feel the pain, one and all. AND that's not all that seems to blight the world we know... with accompanying grief of known names and people from COVID and those still struggling for freedoms from oppressive regimes and military control.*

*The thoughts that fill our minds as our heads fall upon our pillows, make these headrests tell us many stories perhaps from our own past, stories of the times where we have personally had to hold hopelessness and heartache. Groanings and tears that we let flow in the dark of night for the vulnerable spaces of pain we feel within us. And if there is one thing we know that is — **God hears us, He hears our cries, He grieves with us and He is still working in the midst of this chaos.***

*And so we gather distantly but together in our hearts and sit in quietness and ask the Holy Spirit to lead and intercede for us in prayer, with groanings too deep for utterances of words, I invite you to reach across the borders in links of prayer with Him;*

*We pray for those who have lost loved ones and that which they treasure and are grieving.*

Father, you who wept with Mary for Lazarus, empathise with those who grieve their losses and grant them comfort in their pain.

*We pray for the women, children and those who are suffering in the hands of their persecutors.*

Father, give them safety, protection, peace and free them.

*We pray for those who have lost homes, loved ones, livelihoods together with their hopes and dreams in the sudden upheaval of their circumstances in the very heaving of the earth around them.*

Father, be with those who are hurting and need your touch of comfort right now.

*We pray for our Brothers and Sisters who have lost their faith in this time of crisis.*

Father, remind them that you are closer to them right now, than ever before.

*We pray for churches, aid agencies and grass root networks who are doing everything they can.*

Father, we ask for your wisdom and guidance to them at this time, protect them and keep them safe, grant them favour and remove any obstacles that they may face so that the people will receive the help they need.

*We pray that you send your angel armies to meet those who are in hiding and need your protection.*

Father, keep those in hiding miraculously hidden, protect them, be their refuge.

*We pray also for the persecutors, grant us grace to bless them in your name.*

Father, we ask you to foil the plans of the enemy, confuse them and show up in their lives in a radical way.

*And even as I invite you to join me in prayer, I am reminded of how in the midst of the pain and darkness, we hear the whisper of a Saviour — **"Fear not, for I am with you..."***

*And we repeatedly whisper to ourselves — **He can, He has done it and He will do it again.***

*Thank you for your generosity with your prayers and giving, we ask you to continue to uphold Haiti and Afghan in your prayer list.*

*In Him,  
Roshan*

*Roshan Mendis  
DIRECTOR, APBAid  
EMAIL: roshan.apbf@gmail.com*

*A regional organization of the Baptist World Alliance representing 33,000 local churches, 65 conventions in 22 nations of Asia Pacific*

**[From Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT. You can receive the bi-monthly prayer email and prayer alerts like the one above by visiting the website and requesting that you are added to the list: <https://nswactbaptists.org.au/contact-us-2>]**

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## **From Voice of the Martyrs Australia website**

### **Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world (source: Pew Research).**

*More men and women are being persecuted today for Jesus than at any other time in human history. Millions of Christians face intense persecution and risk their lives for the sake of the gospel.*

- **Millions**  
*of Christians Persecuted World Wide*
- **Over 60 Countries**  
*around the World have Persecuted Christians*
- **Tens of Thousands**  
*of Christians Killed for their Faith Every Year*
- **1,000's in Prison**  
*across the World for their Faith*  
[www.christianpost.com](http://www.christianpost.com)

### **WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?**

*Throughout the world today, millions of Christians are experiencing persecution for the sake of Christ. Pastors are imprisoned or killed for proclaiming the Gospel in their churches and villages. Young people flee for their lives when their families discover they have converted to Christianity. Believers are beaten, tortured, pursued.*

*They are falsely accused, threatened, abused, starved, maimed and harassed.*

*Their homes and churches are burnt down, their Bibles and Christian material confiscated, and their businesses destroyed.*

*They are expelled from school and college, fired from their jobs, treated as criminals and rebels, forbidden to evangelise, and forced to meet and worship in secret.*

### **WHY ARE CHRISTIAN'S PERSECUTED**

*Wherever Christians go, they experience opposition. But in certain countries, this persecution is particularly severe.*

*Government policy or practice in some nations prevents Christians from obtaining Bibles and meeting together. Anti-Christian laws lead to harassment or imprisonment of believers for their witness.*

*Christians in other areas are routinely persecuted by family, neighbours or rebel groups despite the protection the government provides.*

*In other countries, civil wars and other conflicts result in Christians facing opposition for their faith.*

### **Hinduism**

*Majority-Hindu nations enforce anti-conversion laws, attempting to force new Christians to revert to Hinduism. Evangelists who supposedly perform forced conversions to Christianity are prosecuted. Political groups wanting to establish a purely Hindu nation, such as in India or Nepal, sometimes use violent tactics to try to eradicate Christians from the area.*

### **Communism**

*Communist governments want control. But they can't control the rapid growth of Christianity in countries like Vietnam and China. Government restrictions make Christian life and ministry very difficult. Pastors and leaders are arrested, interrogated and imprisoned in an attempt to stop the church.*

### **Islam**

*According to more radical streams of Islam, apostasy (rejecting your religion) is a crime that demands the death penalty. When a Muslim converts from Islam to Christianity, they bring shame on their family. They are abandoning their heritage, their very identity. Muslim background believers often face harsh opposition from the government, their family and friends.*

### **The Real Reason for Persecution**

*Persecution should not surprise us. Jesus tells us that persecution from the world is part of what it means to follow Him.*

**Jesus says:** *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John 15:18,20.*

**Paul writes to Timothy that** *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12.*

**Just as Jesus went to the cross, He said,** “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it.” Mark 8:34-35.

*Christians in more hostile nations may live far from us, but as believers we know that we are one with them in Christ’s body. We cannot ignore their suffering. Voice of the Martyrs works to help, love and encourage persecuted Christians in partnership with the church in Australia.*

**[Sourced from Voice of the Martyrs Australia website, <https://vom.com.au/christian-persecution/>, viewed 26/8/2021]**

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**“Are church closings an appropriate response to a pandemic?”**

**[from Got Questions web site, <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-closings.html>]**

*Churches around the world have chosen to respond in various ways to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some are complying with the government mandates; many are live streaming their sermons; others are finding a different work-around, such as hosting drive-in services in a parking lot; others are meeting outside in undisclosed locations and changing the meeting place every week; still others are openly defiant and holding services as usual. Should we be shutting down the church, or keeping it open? Here are some things to consider:*

1. *The church is not a building; the church is the people of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ. So, in an important sense, no one can shut down the church. A building may sit empty, but the church can still be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).*

2. *Followers of Christ should always seek to obey civil authority unless that authority requires that we do something sinful. We see this principle played out in the lives of Daniel (Daniel 6:10–28) and the apostles (Acts 5:25–42) and in the response of Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem to register for taxation (Luke 2:1–5). Paul states that we are to obey those who rule over us, for they were placed there by God Himself for our good (Romans 13:1–7; cf. 1 Peter 2:13). So, it’s always wise to obey governmental authority unless compelled by Scripture not to obey.*

*Those churches who defy the mandates of civil authorities, claiming that “we must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29), may be overlooking the fact that the orders are not designed to stop us from worshiping and ministering. In the early days of the church, when Peter and John defied the Sanhedrin, at issue was a direct order to stop preaching in the name of Jesus Christ (verse 28). Similar restraints are in place in many nations around the world where the church is persecuted. But neither parallels the current situation involving COVID-19; the stated motivation of federal, state, and local governments for the personal distancing rules is the protection of the general public, including our own congregations. No one is trying to keep us from preaching the gospel.*

3. *Churches have their good testimony in their communities to consider. We do not want to be seen as rebellious and reckless. Rather, we want to follow the biblical command to “be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:17–18). The church’s response to the COVID-19 crisis should be to show the love of Christ, finding ways to minister to our hurting, fearful neighbours.*

4. *There’s wisdom in staying out of harm’s way. For instance, we wouldn’t allow our children to be in a cage with a wild animal, even if we have “faith” that God will protect them. It’s not an issue of having faith vs. lacking faith—it’s an issue of wisdom vs. foolishness. We should always choose the path of wisdom.*

5. *Given that the COVID-19 virus is very contagious and potentially deadly, the church is right to take steps to ensure the physical well-being of God’s family. Temporary social distancing and the cancellation of larger public gatherings (such as church meetings) may be necessary for the protection of people. Pastors are right to be lovingly concerned for their congregations. Churches sometimes close their doors due to harsh weather conditions: ice storms or snowstorms can make travel dangerous. Churches who call off services because of weather emergencies are not disobeying God; they are showing appropriate concern for people’s safety.*

6. *The situation churches face due to the COVID-19 outbreak is unique and temporary. Once the threat has passed, we will be free to return to our meetings and ministries as before. Pastors should not feel they are disobeying God by obeying the governing authorities during these unique times.*

*The days of COVID-19 are difficult, to be sure. Yet churches are still finding ways to minister: through the internet, email, texting, and good, old-fashioned letters and phone calls, pastors are staying up with God’s people in the churches they serve. The uncertainty and hardship surrounding the pandemic will not last indefinitely. This time will conclude, and things will get back to relative normalcy. In the meantime, we are patient. We stay faithful. We obey the law to the degree that we are able.*

*We may be isolated, quarantined, or forced into a temporary separation, “but God’s word is not chained” (2 Timothy 2:9).*

**[Sourced from Got Questions web site, <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-closings.html>, viewed 28/8/21]**

**Patterns for Daily Prayer — Excerpts from Timothy Keller's *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2016.**

### ***Martin Luther's "A Simple Way to Pray"***

*Cultivate prayer as a habit through regular discipline, praying twice daily. Take the words of the Scripture and ponder them in such a way that your thoughts and feelings converge on God. Meditate on the Word as a kind of bridge into your own prayers*

*Martin Luther: "I divide each biblical command into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is I think of each commandment as first, instruction, which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer." This turns every biblical text into "a school text, a song book, a penitential book, and a prayer book."*

- 1. Discern the instruction of a text ... distil its essential content, what the passage wants us to believe or do.*
- 2. Once we have drawn out the "instruction" - put the teaching of the text in a nutshell - then we ask how this teaching particularly leads us to praise and thank God, how it leads us to repent and confess sin, and how it prompts us to appeal to God in petition and supplication.*
- 3. After mediating on the Scripture, you should pray through each petition of the Lord's Prayer, paraphrasing and personalizing each one using your own words and concerns.*

*Here then is a summary of Luther's method for prayer: Start with meditating on a text we have previously studied, then after praising and confessing in accordance with or meditation, we should paraphrase the Lord's Prayer to God. Finally, we should just pray from the heart. This full exercise, he adds, should be done twice a day.*

### ***A Summary of "The Prayer of Prayers"***

***Our Father Who Art in Heaven*** — *An address, a way to start by asking God to "implant in our hearts a comforting trust in your fatherly love".*

***Hallowed Be Thy Name*** — *A request that faith in God would spread throughout the world, that Christians would honour God with the Christlikeness or holiness of their lives, and that more and more people would honour God and call on his name ... to have a heart of grateful joy toward God - and even more, a wondrous sense of his beauty.*

***Thy Kingdom Come*** — *The "Lordship" petition: asking God to extend his royal power over every part of our lives - emotions, desires, thoughts and commitments.*

***Thy Will Be Done*** — *Trust in God; "grant us the grace to bear willingly all sorts of sickness, poverty, disgrace, suffering, and adversity and to recognize that in this your divine will is crucifying our will."*

***Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread*** — *To come with our needs expectant of positive response, but we do so changed by our satisfaction in him and our trust of him. It is also to pray for a prosperous and just social order.*

***Forgive Us Our Debts as We Forgive Our Debtors*** — *Seek forgiveness, both with God and others; see our sin and withhold any grudges.*

***Lead Us Not into Temptation*** — *Pray against entertaining and considering the prospects of giving in to sin.*

***Deliver Us from Evil*** — *Protection from evil outside us, from malignant forces in the world.*

***For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Forever*** — *After descending into our needs, troubles, and limitations, we return to the truth of God's complete sufficiency.*

### ***John Owen's Three Basic Movements, or Stages, Within Meditation***

*"Fixing the thoughts", getting a clear view of a text.*

*1.1. Read the text slowly, answering four questions: What does this teach me about God and his character? About human nature, character, and behaviour? About Christ and his salvation? About the church, or life in the people of God?*

*1.2. Ask application questions. Look within the passage: for any personal examples to emulate or avoid, for any commands to obey, for any promises to claim, and for any warning to heed.*

*1.3. Take one crucial verse and think through it by emphasizing each word. Ask what each word uniquely contributes to the meaning of the text, or what meaning would be lost from the statement if that particular word were removed.*

*1.4. Paraphrase the verse in your own words. Read it and close the Bible and try to restate it. Then look back at the passage and you will see how much you missed.*

*1.5. Memorize it.*

*Inclining the heart until its hope and joy more fully rests in those things.*

*2.1. Work the truth into your relationship to God, to yourself, and to the world.*

*2.2. Ask yourself what wrong thoughts result in you when this truth is forgotten, the excessive and hard-to-control feelings that result when it is not fully believed and embraced, how a loss of orientation to this truth may lead to inordinate hopes, what actual sins and wrongdoings result, or what specifically must we start or stop doing.*

*2.3. Consider the timing of your insight. Why is God showing this to you today? The third stage depends on where we are. If we sense the presence of God, stop and savour — “gust and relish” it. If we feel bored, hard, or distorted, simply turn to God and make brief, intense appeals for help. Spend time doing this and then come back tomorrow. Trees don’t grow overnight.*

### **Tim Keller’s Pattern for Daily Prayer**

*1. Evocation. “To bring to mind. Recap in your mind the Trinitarian theology of prayer. Ponder verses that bring to mind these truths. Read a traditional Psalm used at this time. Use a tested prayer of the church (such as from “The Valley of Vision”, “The Collects of Thomas Cranmer”, or Matthew Henry’s “A Method for Prayer”).*

*2. Meditation. Meditate upon passages from your daily reading that call out for more reflective reading and mediation.*

*3. Word prayer. Pray what we have read.*

*4. Free prayer. Simply pour out your heart in prayer.*

*5. Contemplation. Taste and see that He is so in our hearts.*

### **Morning Prayer (25 minutes)**

#### *Approaching God*

*Ask him for his presence and help as you read and pray. Choose from one of these scriptural invocations: Psalm 16:8; 27:4, 9-10; 40:16-19; 63:1-3; 84:5-7; 103:1-2; 139:7-10; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 11:28-30; John 4:23; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16-20.*

#### *Bible Reading and Meditation*

*(Keep in mind that no one can do all of the following in any one session of meditation and prayer.)*

*To study the passage: Read it three or four times. Then make a list of everything it says about God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); list anything that it tells you about yourself; and finally, list any examples to be followed, commands to be obeyed (or things that need to be avoided), and promises to claim. When this is all done, choose the verse and truth that is most striking and helpful to you. Paraphrase the thought or verse in your own words.*

*To meditate on the passage: Write down answers to the following questions:*

- What does this text show me about God for which I should praise or thank him?*
- What does the text show me about my sin that I should confess and repent of? What false attitudes, behaviour, emotions, or idols come alive in me whenever I forget this truth?*
- What does the text show me about a need that I have? What do I need to do or become in light of this? How shall I petition God for it?*
- How is Jesus Christ or the grace that I have in him crucial to helping me overcome the sin I have confessed or to answering the need I have?*
- Finally: How would this change my life if I took it seriously; if this truth were fully alive and effective in my inward being? Also, why might God be showing this to me now? What is going on in my life that he would be bringing this to my attention today?*

#### *Prayer*

*Pray each of the meditations—adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving for Jesus and his salvation.*

- Pray for your needs and pressing concerns.*
- Take a final moment just to enjoy him and his presence.*

### **Evening Prayer (15 minutes)**

#### *Approaching God*

*Ask him for his presence and help as you read and pray.*

#### *Bible Reading and Meditation*

*Read a Psalm, eventually working through the Psalter twice a year.*

#### *Prayer*

*Turn the Psalm into a prayer and pray it back to God.*

- Think over your day and confess where you sinned or failed to respond as you should have.*
- Think over your day and pray for people you met or heard about who have needs or are in difficulty.*
- Pray for some of the more urgent and important needs on your heart.*

## A Starter Plan for Daily Prayer (15 minutes)

### Approaching

Think of the privilege of prayer. Realize God is present. Ask him to help you pray.

### Meditation

Read a Scripture passage. Discern one or two truths you learn there. Choose the one that most impresses you and write it in a sentence. Now ask: How does this truth help me praise God? How does it show me a sin to confess? How does it show me something to ask God for?

### Word Prayer

Now turn the answers to the three questions into a prayer — adoration, petition, supplication.

### Free Prayer

Pray about whatever needs are on your heart. Also spend time thanking God for the ways you see him working in your life and caring for you.

### Contemplation

Take a moment to thank and admire God for what he has showed you today. End with a note of praise.

### [Sourced from

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c011e3e4b088c37bb9551a/t/566f06bfc647adc6542320b0/1450116799019/Tim+Keller%27s+Patterns+for+Daily+Prayer.pdf>, author unknown, viewed 26/8/2021]



### From J.I. Packer's *Finishing Our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for engaging with our aging*

... the image of running was central to Paul's understanding of his own life, and I urge now that it ought to be the central focus in the minds and hearts of all aging Christians, who know and feel that their bodies are slowing down. The challenge that faces us is not to let that fact slow us down spiritually, but to cultivate the maximum zeal for the closing phase of our earthly lives.

Why zeal? Because it is zeal that will keep us running. But what is zeal? Rarely do we hear the word or use it ourselves these days, so it is no wonder if we are less than clear as to its meaning. But Nehemiah 3—6 tells us how, against all odds, in fifty-two days Jerusalem's able-bodied inhabitants rebuilt all but two miles of the ruined city wall, which is a classic display of zeal in action. And then early in John's Gospel we read of Jesus cleansing Jerusalem's commercialized temple with awe-inspiring ferocity, and we are told, "His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me'" (John 2:17, citing Ps. 69:9).

Zeal for his kingdom is a character quality of God himself (Isa. 9:7). So zeal for God's cause, his kingdom, and his glory, all of which the temple symbolized, is one element of the image of God in his incarnate Son—the image in which, so we are told, Christians are to be renewed, and actually are being renewed, by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:10). Nowhere does Scripture suggest that this divine renewing process is programmed to go on hold as we age, however it is true that we can clog it up at any stage by our own follies and wrong attitudes.

It follows, then, that as zeal for God and godliness and God's honour was integral to God's image in Christ, so it should be in us, and we should cultivate zeal, along with the rest of Christian virtues, up to the ending of our lives on earth—or at least, for as long as we can consciously focus and direct our thoughts. (As we all know, various kinds of heart failure and dementia, along with the palliative techniques of modern medicine, may involve for us extended spells of comatose or semi comatose existence near the end of earthly life, but these are outside our present concern.)

*So again we ask, what is zeal? Zeal means priority, passion, and effort in pursuing God's cause. In the second half of the nineteenth century J.C. Ryle, "the best man in the Church of England," according to the Baptist C.H. Spurgeon, produced the following classic statement on the subject:*

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do his will, and to advance his glory in the world in every possible way. ...

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness—whether he is rich, or whether he is poor—whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offense—whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish—whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise—whether he gets honour, or whether he gets shame—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it—he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such a one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill (Ex. 17:9-13). ... This is what I mean when I speak of "zeal" in religion. (Practical Religion [Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1959], 130)

*Maintaining zeal Godward as our bodies wear out is the special discipline to which we aging Christians are called. Realism requires us to remember that memory, particularly short-term memory, will weaken; logical tightness of speech will loosen; powers of concentration will diminish; physical exhaustion will overtake us sooner or later, and energy levels will keep going lower. Zeal, however, should be unflagging every day, all day, and all the way. But if this is to happen, zeal must be fed by hope. That is the final point that I have to make ...*

**[Sourced from Packer, J.I. *Finishing Our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for engaging with our aging*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014, pp. 72-7.]**

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**"If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus' fist, but by His nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him."**

**[A.W. Tozer, from *Preparing for Jesus' Return: Daily Live the Blessed Hope*.]**

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**"How a day of prayer saved Britain at Dunkirk"**

**By J. John, 21 July 2017**

**[Sourced from Premier Christianity web site, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/home/how-a-day-of-prayer-saved-britain-at-dunkirk/1756.article>, viewed 31/8/2021]**

*It's beginning to look as if one of the unmissable films of summer is going to be Christopher Nolan's Dunkirk. Released in UK cinemas today, the film reminds us of one of the more extraordinary events of the Second World War.*

*Most of us are uneasy about war stories, particularly those that revel in the quantity of death and destruction we unleashed on our enemies. In fact, for the Second World War there are now only three big military events that retain a hold in the public memory. These are Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and D-Day.*

*I find it significant that each of these echoes with the great themes of the Bible: Dunkirk is about rescue; the Battle of Britain about deliverance and D-Day about liberation. Dunkirk, however, is a uniquely enthralling story. Who can resist the tale of how, surrounded by overwhelming enemies and faced with imminent annihilation, an entire army escaped to safety by sea? It almost seems like a reworking of the miracle of the biblical Exodus, with the English Channel replacing the Red Sea.*

*Yet Dunkirk is not simply a gripping story; it is also a thought-provoking one because even today the word 'miracle' hangs over it. Nevertheless, even for the most sceptical, the reality of what happened at Dunkirk is intriguing.*

*On 10th May 1940, Hitler unleashed a military onslaught on France and Belgium. Within days the British Army – outmanoeuvred and unprepared – along with soldiers of other Allied nations, found themselves with their backs to the sea and hemmed in by enemies. The German High Command was able to boast with confidence that its troops were 'proceeding to annihilate the British Army'. That the total destruction of an entire army was imminent was a view shared by many in the military and political leadership of Britain. Prime Minister Winston Churchill found himself preparing to announce to the public an unprecedented military catastrophe involving the capture or death of a third of a million soldiers.*

*But it didn't happen. On 23rd May, King George VI requested that the following Sunday should be observed as a National Day of Prayer. Late on the Saturday evening the military decision was taken to evacuate as many as possible of the Allied forces. On the Sunday, the nation devoted itself to prayer in an unprecedented way. Eyewitnesses and photographs confirm overflowing congregations in places of worship across the land. Long queues formed outside cathedrals. The same day an urgent request went out for boats of all sizes and shapes to cross the English Channel to rescue the besieged army, a call ultimately answered by around 800 vessels.*

*Yet even before the praying began (in my experience, prayer often works like that) curious events were happening. In a decision that infuriated his generals and still baffles historians, Hitler ordered his army to halt. Had they continued to fight, the destruction of the Allied forces would have been inevitable and the war would have taken a different, darker and more terrible path. Yet for three days the German tanks and soldiers stood idle while the evacuation unfolded.*

*Not only so, bad weather on the Tuesday grounded the Luftwaffe, allowing Allied soldiers to march unhindered to the beaches. In contrast, on Wednesday the sea was extraordinarily calm, making the perilous evacuation less hazardous. By the time the German Army was finally ordered to renew its attack, over 338,000 troops had been snatched from the beaches, including 140,000 French, Belgian, Dutch and Polish soldiers. Many of them were to return four years later to liberate Europe.*

*Now you could argue it was all a coincidence, but I think not. It certainly wasn't considered so at the time. Sunday 9th June was declared a National Day of Thanksgiving and, encouraged by Churchill himself, the phrase 'the miracle of Dunkirk' began to circulate.*

*We live in a world where people are not simply cautious about miracles but they prefer to rule them out entirely. In much of public culture it is an unchangeable and unbreakable rule of life that the miraculous cannot and does not occur. The view is that while we may pray, there is no one on the other end of the line. It's curious how we have come a full circle: in the past, few dared argue with the religious faith that saw the hand of God everywhere; now few dare argue against the atheistic faith that sees God's hand nowhere. The events of Dunkirk might make us want to reconsider the elimination of God as an actor from history and politics. On a more practical level, looking at the challenges facing the British nation, the idea of praying to God for deliverance seems to be something well worth encouraging.*

*Indeed I think Dunkirk stands as an extraordinary encouragement to pray in faith. However great our problems, God is greater than them all. That 'Dunkirk encouragement' to pray in times of need applies at every level of life and to every challenge, from what may be a petty domestic crisis to a national disaster. And although our nation may not face imminent military catastrophe on the scale that it did in 1940, you don't have to look hard to see major and overwhelming problems. Dunkirk may have been a military epic that should be remembered but, far more importantly, it is an encouragement to pray.*

**[Editor's note:** Our sister Irene Robertson has been reminding us at recent prayer meetings how Britain gathered together as a nation to pray for God's deliverance during World War II. A lesson for Australia!]

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***I will bless the Lord at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;  
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.  
Oh, magnify the Lord with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.***

***Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;  
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!  
Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!  
There is no want to those who fear Him.  
The young lions lack and suffer hunger;  
But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.***  
**[Psalm 34: 1-3; 8-10]**

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#### **From the editor**

We are blessed in the Upper Mountains with all the beautiful flowers in spring. It's a joy to experience God's handiwork in the infinite variety of blooms and fragrances. Just to look out your window, enjoy your garden, or admire all that you see on your favourite walk gives many reasons to praise our great God. The trees, the sky, the clouds, sunshine, rain, the birds and indeed all His incredible creatures, the moon and the stars — how wonderful are His works in creation. What a blessing to worship the Creator, not the creation as so many in the world are tempted to do! [See Romans 1:18-25].

Our God is a God of regeneration. After the dark, cold months of winter, spring brings warmth and colour in a glorious display as all the flowers and green leaves emerge from stark, bare limbs. It's astonishing to realize that the beauty of the natural world is actually a marred masterpiece, one that has been vandalized by sin. Can you imagine how astonishing creation will be when it is no longer under the curse?

We read in Romans, Chapter 8, that “the whole creation has been groaning as in childbirth right up to the present time” [Romans 8:22]. In the Psalms [65 and 96] the hills and trees celebrate at the coming of the Lord. As we wait for the Lord Jesus so does the natural world. We wait for the Curse to be removed and then the “creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” [Romans 8:21]. Waiting for the times of refreshing, for the Kingdom to come, for a world abounding in righteousness, for the Lord Jesus to rule the nations, for the Church to reign with Christ as His Bride. What a hope we have!

We give praise to our Saviour that He has taken each of us from the winter of sin and regenerated us, changed us, that day by day we are spiritually growing as we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, being slowly conformed to His image [Romans 8:29]. We can testify of His love in our transformed lives and spirits and how the Fall is being overcome with righteousness. This righteousness is from the Lord and is not from ourselves. It is the fruit of the Spirit.

Let us give praise to our great God and Creator for all He does and for all He is. We are in readiness for the springtime of His coming Kingdom. Everything that was lost to sin and Satan in the early chapters of Genesis is abundantly restored by God in the closing chapters of Revelation. The earth will be like the Garden and humanity will once again have open, unbroken fellowship with God. For our God truly is the God of resurrection, regeneration, restoration, renewal. He *lavishes* unimaginable blessings on His children [1 John 3:1].

What does He look for in those who are His? A humble and repentant heart. A heart that is faithful and loving. Those whose hearts were once cold and hard and dark with sin, now warm and filled with life, overflowing and bountiful with the beauty that is Christ. Eternally bringing glory to Him, our Lord and Savior.

Your brother in Christ,  
Bill.

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### **Luke 10:38-42**

***As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"***

***"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."***

Editor's devotional:

This is perhaps an obvious text for the lockdown situation. We must all be 'Marys' now as there's so much activity that we can no longer do. Right? ... Maybe not. Paradoxically, I think that more than ever we need to guard against becoming 'Marthas'. Martha's problem was that she was worried and anxious, and acting in her own strength. It's an understandable response in these troubling times but remember that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” [2 Tim. 1:7]. However, it is a reality that the pandemic has brought suffering to a great many people and we have all been affected in some way.

As in all times of testing, this is when the Church can really rise up in the power of the Holy Spirit. By prayer, by renewed zeal for study and meditating on God's word, by fellowship through the phone or Zoom, by helping others in whatever form we can, this is when Christ's light can shine through us. It is not the time to be distracted like Martha, but focused like Mary. She listened to the words her Lord was speaking. Her quiet attention was a demonstration of pure, loving worship of Him. She was truly “abiding” in Christ [John 15:4-7].

If you are being buffeted by all the stresses of this pandemic situation and, particularly, if you are being drawn down into the darkness of theories and counter-theories that are swirling through the internet and social media, then my prayer is that you come to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, rest in the glorious light of the truth in His word, surrender all your worries to the peace and assurance that lives in the Holy Spirit who indwells you.

And in so doing, apply what we have studied in Colossians:

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory. [Col. 3:1-4]*

For this blessing, as it was with Mary, can never be “taken away” from you [Luke 10:42].

May the Lord bring you His peace and keep you and your loved ones safe.

Your brother in Christ,  
Bill.