

Coronavirus: Constructive Thoughts

A 23-day Devotional



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The effects of Covid-19 are not to be treated lightly. People's lives are being impacted physically and financially and some have lost loved ones.

How are we to act as Christians?

Instead of only musing theologically, there are practical things we can do in the midst of these uncertain times to help ourselves and others in faith.

Let's focus primarily on what we can do rather than what we might not understand.

Ultimately, we are encouraged each day by Paul's words to the Roman church, reminding us that although many bad things happen in this world, not everything that happens is God's will and He has given us a scriptural promise that He can bring His good within even the darkest of times:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

[Romans 8:28 NLT]

Examine Yourself

Day_1

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

John 14:1

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

Thought

Times of public panic force us to align our professed belief with our actual belief. In this time of discomfort and uncertainty, allow yourself space to check your heart's deepest loyalties.

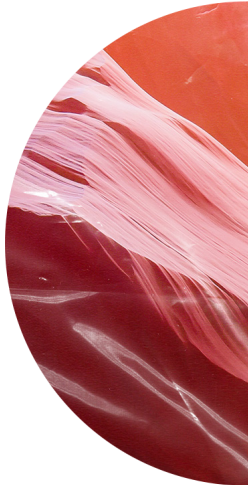
Humbly ask God to reveal to you where your trust really lies. Trust Him to transform you as you pray and read His word. Ultimately, faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

Become comfortable being uncomfortable, and allow your heart to rest in the one who is the anchor for our souls. Trust in God!

Action

Today, write down a list of things that you habitually rely on in your everyday life - perhaps your bank balance or your spouse. Surrender control of your life again to God in prayer. Spend a moment in scripture to allow your faith in Christ to be refreshed.

Jesus, I give you my life. Help me to transfer my trust from the material things to you. I am reminded of your loving and faithful character today.



Matthew 7:12

"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets."

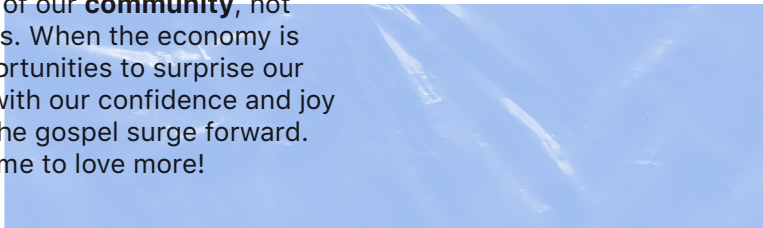
Matthew 6:19-20

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Thought

The Christian life is a selfless life, even when there is a global pandemic taking place. The scenes of panic-buying we have all witnessed exhibit a "me first" philosophy.

As Christians, we are not called to act like that. In this period, reflect on the vulnerable in our community. How can we be kind to them in the way that we act? Let us use our resources for the good of our **community**, not just ourselves. When the economy is volatile, opportunities to surprise our neighbours with our confidence and joy because of the gospel surge forward. Now is the time to love more!



Action

Today, consider how you can practically help those in need around you. Can you buy some food for someone elderly or self-isolating? Can you share some of your loot roll with someone that has none? Is there someone in your Group who works freelance who may need monetary support over the coming months? Perhaps you could even go old school and write a letter to someone that is lonely.

Don't forget to pray for our nation and our world today, as we remember those in need.

James 2:14-16

¹⁴ What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ¹⁵ Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, ¹⁶ and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

Thought

Times like these, while troubling, can help us to become aware of the privileged world we live in day-to-day.

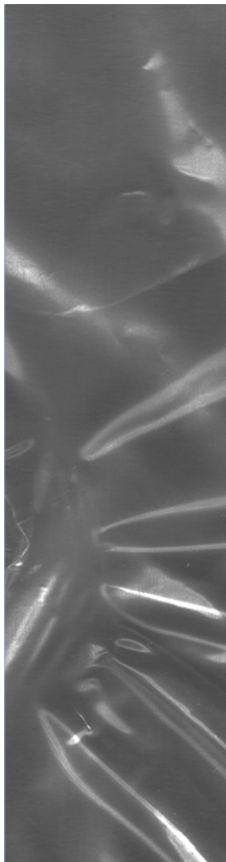
Let it stir gratitude in you that you are used to supermarkets with filled shelves, easily accessible medication and free healthcare. Also take time to realise that not everyone in the world gets to live like this, through no fault of their own.

As Christians, we are called to reflect God's heart of justice within this unjust world. How can you use your privilege to help others?

Action

Today, consider how you can practically help those in need that are far from you. Many around the world live in danger and fear everyday - whether in war-torn or disease-stricken countries.

You can find out about and get involved with Hillsong's social justice initiatives at www.hillsong.co.uk/socialjustice.



Be faith-filled, not God-testing

Day_4

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶ and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! ...

⁷ Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'

Thought

While on earth, Jesus demonstrated to humanity what a perfect, faith-filled and obedient relationship to His Heavenly Father looks like. However, he never abused His faith to pull off unnecessary stunts. Our faith is not to be used to test God. It is to be exercised with wisdom and obedience, in order to glorify God and to reflect His love to a lost world. Marry faith with wisdom within these ever-changing circumstances.



Action

Today, consider doing a "word study" on faith in the Bible, and learn how it is used by the Biblical writers. You can do a word study using both a hard copy Bible or on an app like YouVersion. Perhaps jot down some thoughts on what you understand faith to be and chat them through with a friend (in person or over the phone!).

Are you intentionally acting with wisdom over this period? Do not just consider the implications for yourself, but also those around you in the wider community.

Mark 1:35

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

Thought

These next few weeks / months may afford you opportunities you do not usually have. You may be working from home. You may have more time with family and/or friends as you are quarantined or self-isolated.

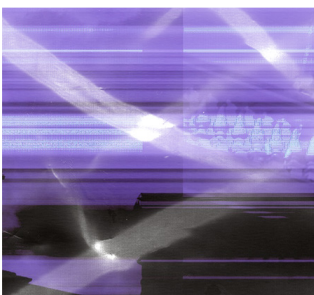
In a world of over-stimulation and noise, what can you do in this new environment to care for yourself and build stronger relationships? Perhaps put your phone down, and spend your extra quality time with the close people in your life - including Jesus! Perhaps set some time aside each day to be quiet - to enable your mind and spirit to find the quietness it craves.

I wonder how your prayer life could profit over these next weeks.

Action

Today, consider minimising your phone use and screen time. Give your senses some space! If you have more time because you are self-isolating or working from home, schedule in some much-needed quiet time.

If your business travel has been restricted, or you are a contract worker finding yourself with more free time (or anything similar!), think about joining a Group to encourage others and be encouraged in this season. You can find a group at www.hillsong.co.uk/groups.



Let Your Heart Break For The Lost and The Hurting

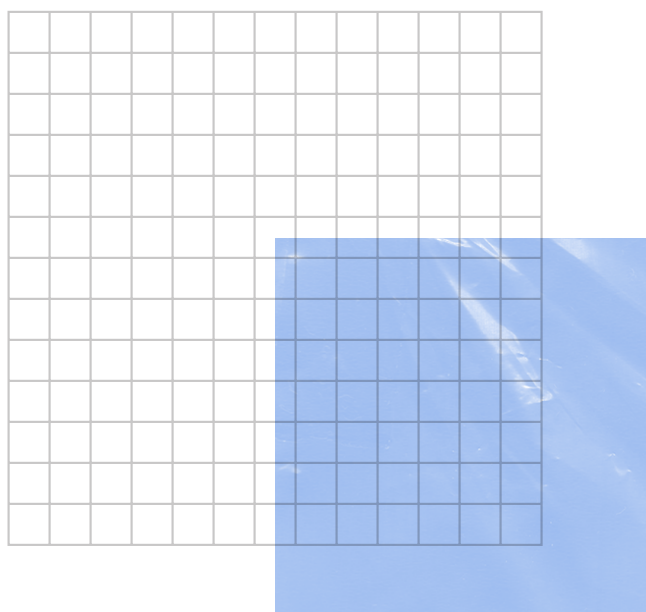
Day_6

Romans 9:2-3

² My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³ for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.

Thought

Life can become so comfortable that it blinds us to the practical and spiritual needs of others. Sometimes, an uncomfortable situation can remind us of those who are lost and hurting and stir us to do something about it. Paul, as he himself was persecuted intensely, remained highly empathetic to the lost. Perhaps Coronavirus could inspire us to be the same. Use the disruption and discomfort to motivate you to love the lost.



Action

Who is that one person in your life that you believe God will use you to reach? Spend some time praying today for an opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love to them.

Pray the dangerous prayer: *Jesus, break my heart for what breaks yours.*

Hold On To Hope. Live From Love Not Fear.

Day_7

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Thought

In times of turmoil, in seasons of distress, Jesus is more feelingly with his people than ever. Hebrews tells us that Jesus experienced all the horror of this world that we do, minus sin. So apparently, he knows—he himself knows—way down deep, what it feels like for life to close in on you and for your world to go into meltdown. We can go to him. We can sit with him. His arm is around us—stronger than ever—right now. His tears are larger than ours. WE HAVE A HOPE, and that hope is JESUS.

The opposite of hope is hopelessness and despair. Without hope there is fear. Hope may not always change the outcome but it can help us to cope with the journey – even enjoy it.



Action

Choose hope today. Choose faith. God is for you and He is on your side. Consider writing down 3 things you are grateful for today, and 3 things that you can hope for as a result of God's promises to us.

Pray: *Jesus, I thank you that you are with me and that you are my hope, which is an anchor for my soul. Help me to live for you every day, putting others before myself and loving others like you have loved me.*

Follow Jesus Through Economic Uncertainty

Day_8

Matthew 4:18 – 20

¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Thought

Think about a time when you literally “followed” someone somewhere. Did you actually know where you were going? Or did you simply trust the one who did?

In the midst of this economic uncertainty, it can be genuinely scary as we consider how we will pay rent, eat, stay warm or just generally “get by”.

Think about today’s startling description of the first disciples – how they left their jobs (and economic security) entirely to follow Jesus. A bold move! Yet, we learn from the rest of the gospels that during their time with Jesus on earth, they didn’t lack once. They didn’t know where they were going. But trusted the one who did.

Although our individual circumstances may be different during this season, God hasn’t changed. He is still our provider. He is still our source. We are still called to “follow Him” and trust Him with our lives.

Action

Today, focus on God’s promise to be our Provider. One of the names for God in the Bible is Jehovah Jireh which means “God Provides”.

Just as Jesus taught us to pray, let’s ask our Father to “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6), and trust Him each day to give us what we need.

If you are in a position to be generous, think of one person who may need your help today. Be Jesus’ hands and feet towards them.



John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

Thought

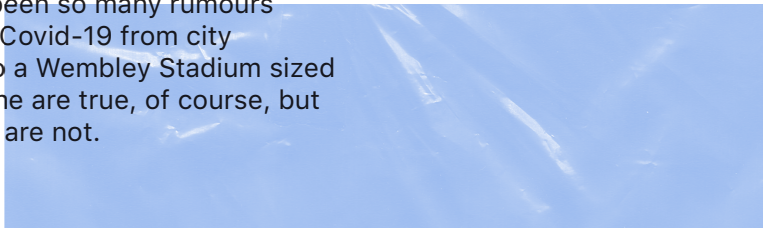
Are you getting more input from the media or from the Word of God?

Have you reminded yourself today that not everything we see in the media or social media is the 100% Gospel Truth? Are you aware that everything you read subtly affects, manipulates or distorts your understand of reality? Careful of what you are listening to!

There have been so many rumours surrounding Covid-19 from city lockdowns to a Wembley Stadium sized lasagne. Some are true, of course, but some simply are not.

It's hard to know what to believe. Amongst the hysteria and conflicting opinions, it's important to remember that there is one Truth that IS 100% reliable and sure. Jesus. Truth is a person. He is the living Word who will never wither, fade or die.

Choose to base your life off this truth, over and above any other.



Action

Put your phone on "Do Not Disturb." Take a quiet, reflective moment to be totally honest with yourself on whether you've lost sight of Jesus in all of this.

Be intentional today to "adjust your input". Reconnect with the one sure person in this time: Jesus. Ask Him to help you.

Pray: Jesus, help me to prioritise your Word over my experience. You are the way, the truth and the light.

Remember It's Not About You

Day_10

Philippians 2:3-11

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

Thought

Chancellor Rishi Sunak recently said "When this is over, and it will be over – we want to look back on this moment and remember the many small acts of kindness done to us and by us". It's a powerful sentiment. As our passage today reminds us, Rishi is not the first to call us to servanthood.

If you serve at all within the life of our church, you will know how important it is, not only to our church, but also to the people in our cities and country not involved with our church.

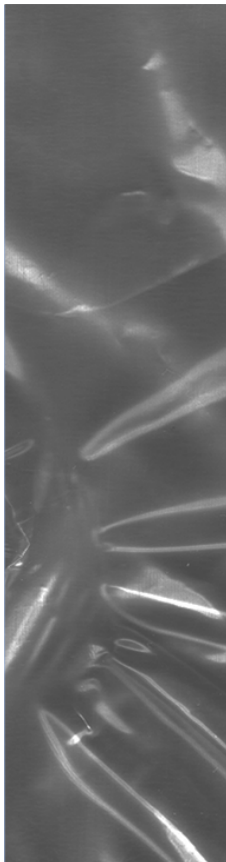
Although we may not be able to serve on a team the way we usually do each Sunday, this is the perfect time to take Jesus' example and serve anyone we possibly can.

Do you know your neighbours? Do you call people other than family and close friends? Do you have the time or resource to be able to volunteer with initiatives in your area? Maybe now is the time!

Action

Call one person today for longer than 5 minutes and just chat, pray, encourage each other. While we may not be on a "team", THIS is the real strength of the church more than ever.

Head to www.hillsong.co.uk/spreadkindness to see how you can get involved in our community initiatives during this time.



1 Timothy 2:1-2

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. ² Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity.

Jeremiah 29:7

And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare."

Thought

As a church in this season we have committed to pray at 7pm every day.

It doesn't have to be long or even well-articulated, but it is definitely powerful.

It's an unprecedented, unpredictable and challenging time to lead anything right now let alone an entire country.

More than ever, it's vital we pray for our Government and world leaders regardless of our personal political leanings or ideologies. It's a time for unity not division.

Why don't we start with prayer? And, like Jeremiah 29:7 states, as we pray for our city and nation to prosper, so will we.



Action

At 7pm this evening, join with our whole church and pray for our Prime Minister and his government: For wisdom, resource, patience, rest and anything else you feel led to pray for.

James 1:12

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

John 15:7

But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

Thought

In 1606, the Plague hit London. Hard. Life stopped completely.

This included public gatherings including church meetings, sporting events and theatre outings.

During this time, William Shakespeare was becoming an incredibly prolific and well-respected playwright. However, his work and livelihood was suddenly threatened as London theatres closed for 3 years.

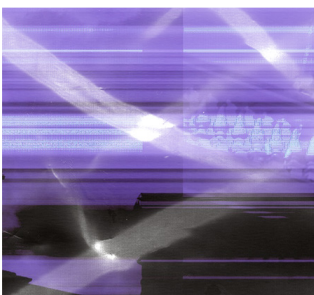
He had a choice: Bow down and give up all his hard work or persevere. It was during this time period that he wrote some of his most well-known plays including Macbeth, King Lear and Antony & Cleopatra.

What dream has God placed on your heart regardless of every obstacle you may currently be facing?

Action

Write out 3 dreams that you have in your heart, big or small, and pray into them.

Today, no more procrastination. Start the business plan; start to write that book; run the first 5k (as long as you are not self-isolating). Persevere in what you believe God has placed on your heart. Embrace this season. Make it productive for His kingdom.



Expect God's Intervention

Day_13

Exodus 23:25

"You must serve only the Lord your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness."

Mark 6:56

Wherever he went—in villages, cities, or the countryside—they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

Thought

We may not fully understand why God appears to heal at some times and not at others, and that's ok.

However, may our lack of understanding never be a reason to stop us expecting God's intervention and healing touch.

God's character has not changed, and we believe what His word says about Him. He is Jehovah Rapha (Our Healer).

Have you stirred your faith to pray for God's hand to be on someone who has contracted the virus or even, one step further, for the whole epidemic to stop?

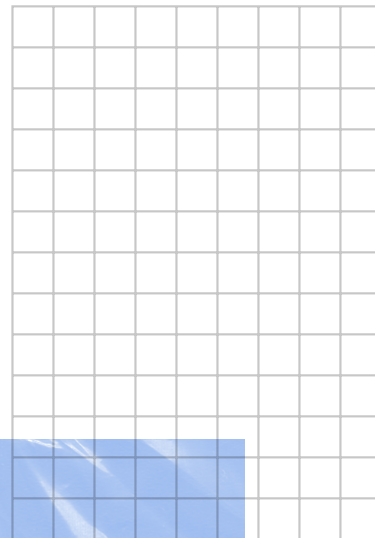
How amazing would it be if tomorrow morning we woke up and the news read "Corona Virus suddenly disappears!" and we can respond "It was Our God".

Let's believe big today. For His glory.

Action

Take some intentional time today to pray for a divine intervention to miraculously stop the virus in its tracks and proclaim Our God as Healer.

If you know someone with symptoms of the virus, why not call them to pray for them over the phone. Let's believe for miracles together.



Ephesians 1:19-21

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

Hebrews 8:1-2

Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honour beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven.² There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands.

Thought

When Jesus was raised from the dead, he then ascended into the sky and sat on the throne in heaven, where he still sits today.

The throne represents ultimate power and authority.

This means that **all** power and authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus.

We often quote this famous verse from the Book of Revelation that Jesus is "*The King of Kings*". It is time to remember where our ultimate authority comes from. Not a virus, a friend, a job or even church but the One True King.

News flash: Jesus is still ruling and reigning.

Action

God is described as our Father and our friend in scripture, but He is also our king.

Today, simply praise The King. Whether it's playing some worship music, singing, praying or creating something, let's worship The King through the trial no matter how hard or unnatural it may feel.

He reigns!

Be People of a Different Order

Day_15

1 Peter 1:1

I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Thought

As these unsettling and uncertain times continue, with no clear end in sight, we have a continuing opportunity to examine who we are as the church of Jesus Christ. Over the next seven days, we will reflect on scriptural insight into the primitive church (the explosive growth of the church of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD) as we seek to understand our own identity.

'Ekklesia', the word that Jesus used to initially describe His 'Church' in Matthew 16, was originally a secular term that invoked the idea of a people called aside for a purpose - namely to make political decisions. It was used in the contexts of like-minded people gathering together.

The first Christians ('Christian' means 'Little Christ') saw themselves as citizens of a different political order - 'foreigners' and 'strangers' to the state. They had been called out of darkness into light, and were no longer citizens of the kingdom of the world. Instead, they were part of this revolutionary kingdom of God's love.

You are God's child. You are a citizen of His kingdom. You do not need to be a slave to the ways of the world. Choose Christ's way today. Choose love. Choose servanthood. Choose selflessness.

Action

Peter teaches us that as we understand our identity as a 'chosen people', it will release us to 'show others the goodness of God'.

Take 15 minutes to reflect on God's love for you today. Meditate on your identity in Him.

Then: call someone to encourage them with God's goodness.



Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

Thought

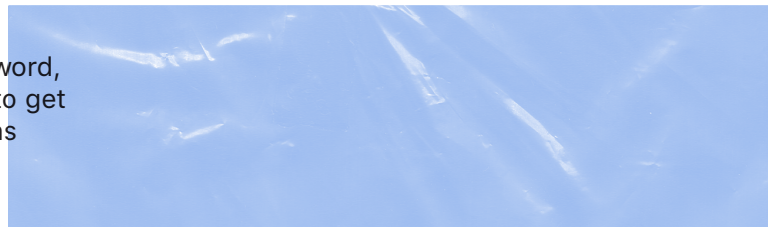
The book of Acts provides a stunning narrative insight into the activities of the primitive church. As you read it, you can witness the story of the Gospel message travelling from 'Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

One of the foundational passages on how the church conducted itself is the one you have just read. Over the next few days, we will study the application of this in detail.

Today's focus is on the idea of 'devotion'. It's an old-fashioned word, but one that is important for us to get our head around. Devotion means

a 'love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person or activity.' The early disciples demonstrated all of this for Jesus. They were 100% all in. The depth of their devotion determined their discipline in lifestyle. They filled their lives with the things that would bear spiritual fruit and, as a result, they had an enormous impact on the world.

What you are devoted to will determine the fruit that you produce. What are you devoted to today?



Action

Look back over your last 7 days. Consider how you spent your time. Consider what you spent your money on. Consider what you spent time thinking about. What do you think you are devoted to?

Our challenge is to shift our **devotion** to Jesus. Come up with one practical way to help you to do that over the next 7 days.

Listen to the Scripture's Teaching

Day_17

Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Thought

The primitive church made the living and active word of God the foundation of their community. Today, the Bible must hold similar weight for us. It is our anchor that constantly points us to Jesus.

The early disciples believed, as we do today, that all of the Scriptures (that is, the Bible) are God's words to us.

As Paul reminds and encourages Timothy in the passage from 2 Timothy, the Bible is not an impersonal and objective rulebook. It's not there to judge us and declare to us: "you have broken the rules". Rather, it is a God-breathed runway towards our loving Father.

Just as a coach trains an athlete to become better and fitter in their sport, so God, through the Bible, lovingly

teaches us to "train in righteousness" so that we can become like Jesus, living exactly as God intended: a full and abundant life.

Ultimately, all biblical teaching and correction leads back to one thing: God. The disciples knew this and were joyful in their reception of correction and teaching, and joyful in their dispensing of correction and teaching no matter the season they were in.

They knew God's Word was true whether they were being persecuted, in the middle of a plague or facing other hardships and so they applied it to every area of their lives.

Where do you need to listen to what God is saying through his Word? How can you devote yourself to the Bible's teachings today?

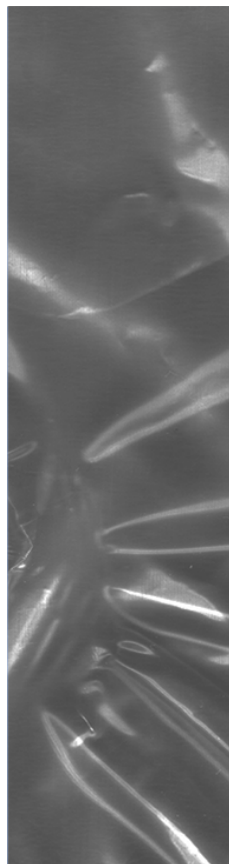
Action

Today, allow God's word to speak to you and confront you.

Be honest and ask yourself: is there somewhere where my thinking doesn't align with what God says in his Word? This may be somewhere where you've accepted the world's explanation or definition of something instead of the Bible's, or where past experience has shaped your view detrimentally. Perhaps your view of yourself doesn't line up with what God says about you – a masterpiece, a child of God, made in His image.

This can, and probably will get uncomfortable – embrace that. Take 5 minutes and reflect on it for a moment, repent if you need, but also thank God for his grace and love that he lovingly corrects us so we receive more of him as we become more like Jesus.

This process led the disciples to love God and each other more deeply. Let it do the same for you today.



Acts 2:42-47

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. ⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property

and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Thought

Today, we will consider the primitive church's devotion to 'Fellowship'. The word fellowship in Greek is *koinónia*, which refers to an intimate bond that unites people (in this case believers) by joint participation in community. In other words, the early Christians prioritised connection with each other through genuine and authentic relationships.

These 5 verses list amazing things that, if we saw today, would leave us awestruck. Miraculous signs, wonders and healings were happening; the needy and poor were fed and clothed; and possessions became blessings for others. What do all these things have in common? They all occurred because the believers "devoted themselves to fellowship".

Just as the early church knew a building was a welcome instrument, but not a requirement, in them being a community of believers who obeyed

Jesus' teachings and demonstrated God's saving love to others, so can we take a similar attitude. For the foreseeable future, we ought not to meet physically, but like the disciples, we can absolutely devote ourselves to fellowship and be "all the while praising God."

Be encouraged that as all those miraculous things happened, Jesus continued to "add to their fellowship". Your invitation to online church could be the reason that your friend finally engages with a Sunday service. Your prioritising of your group Zoom catch-up might demonstrate to your flatmate that believers do really care about one another. Who knows what impact our fellowship could have?

Action

God hasn't stopped working because we're not meeting in a building as a church, or because we're not sitting in an open-plan office, teaching in the classroom or walking the store floor.

Tonight at 19:00 as we all pray together, pray also for the unity of our church and your group, if you are a part of one. Pray to be "together with one mind and purpose" (Philippians 2:2) in the big picture (church) and the little picture

(group). Ask God how you can *prioritise fellowship* in a new way this week.

Take some time to **call** someone in your life that you haven't spoken to for a while. Encourage them!



Do Not Neglect Communion

Day_19

Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. 21 For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. 22 What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

Thought

Today's focus on how the primitive church conducted itself is on communion, a 'recreation' of the Lord's Supper, found in all four Gospels, including Matthew 26:17-30.

Communion physically reminds us of Jesus' saving work as we break and eat bread, signifying his body broken for us, and drink grape juice/wine, signifying his atoning blood poured out for us.

Paul harshly rebukes the congregation at the church in Corinth for merely performing the act, rushing through it and forgetting its true purpose. They had become actors instead of participators.

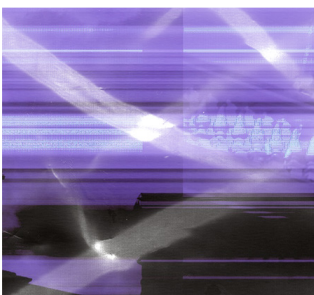
This demonstrates what a high a regard Paul and the other church leaders had for Communion. This wasn't just a common meal that people shared; this was a daily reminder of the very real sacrifice Jesus did for us.

You were bought by Jesus at infinite cost because of God's infinite love for you. Choose today to not be an actor in how you honour God, but a participator.

Action

Consider having communion tonight. If your group is meeting, do it over Zoom. If you have a self-isolating flatmate, do it through the closed door while praying with each other. If you are alone, call a friend and do it together through a video call. You don't specifically need pitta bread or wine!

Take a few minutes before to read through one of the Gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper. Find three reasons you are grateful for Jesus' finished work on the Cross and praise God for it.



Pray Until Something Happens

Day_20

Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

Acts 4:29-31

And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.³⁰ Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹ After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.

Thought

Charles Spurgeon once said *"I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach"*.

Imagine what our church could look like if we all embraced a devotion to prayer. The early disciples knew that prayer was how they could converse with God, and how the teachings they heard went from their head into their hearts and settled there. It can be the same for us.

Prayer is powerful. Prayer is intimate. Prayer changes things. Prayer changes us. Any relationship requires communication, and prayer is the gift that God has given to us to commune with Him. In our second passage today, we see how prayer stirred the disciples to share the Gospel. Prayer is not only relational; it is also missional.

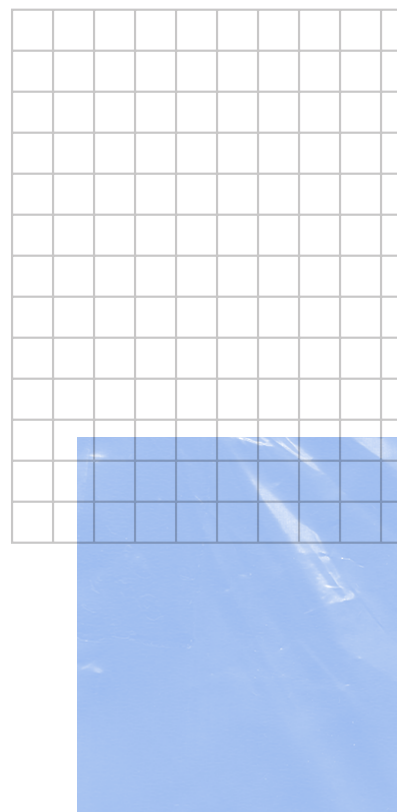
It's easy to feel in times like this, where the need of the world is so obvious, that we shouldn't come to God in praying for our personal needs. If that's how you are feeling, be mindful of this today: Our God is the God of the Universe. Not a single word of our prayers falls on deaf ears. He wants to spend time with you. He wants to hear from you.

As a Christian today, commit yourself again to prayer. Make it your first priority rather than your last resort. As Corrie Ten Boom asked: *"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"*

Action

Navigate to hillsong.co.uk/prayer.

On this webpage, there are some examples of things that you can pray for. If you scroll to the bottom, you can also download a simple "Prayer Guide" that will help you to understand a little more about prayer throughout the Bible.



Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Thought

As a result of the primitive church's devotion to the things that we have been reflecting on over the past days, they had a tangible and practical impact on the communities around them, and many were saved by the powerful message of the Gospel in action.

Indeed, these Spirit-led Christians revitalised life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many of the urgent urban problems of the day. To cities filled with the homeless, impoverished, and strangers, Christians offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with

orphans and widows, Christians provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christians offered a new basis for social solidarity.

As the church, we are called to be counter-cultural, bringing answers to many of society's problems by our tangible and practical demonstrations of Christ's love. Step out in faith, knowing that God is with you. You are empowered and equipped by His Holy Spirit. Continue in His mission!



Action

Today, head back to www.hillsong.co.uk/spreadkindness

Consider if there's anything more you can do to help others. What can you share? How can you be generous? Stay challenged. Keep your eyes open. Your community needs you.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

1 Peter 2:21

For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

Thought

If you have been keeping up with us, then today is Good Friday. Don't panic if it's not Good Friday for you as you read this: The principles still stand!

The Easter weekend is one that is filled with both deep sorrow and great celebration for the believer. Sorrow as we pause to consider the Saviour of the Universe hanging in agony on the cross, rejected and crucified by the very ones that He created. Celebration as we are reminded of God's astonishing sacrificial love for us; his mercy, grace and forgiveness that are on full show in the Resurrection.

The pain of the cross contrasted with the joy of the resurrection is a powerful journey for us to reflect on over the next couple of days. It is a journey that demands a response. While you were

dead in your sin, Jesus died to save you and bring you life. You cannot stay the same.

So, as the Corona Virus continues to take its toll on the world, let this Easter weekend stir your faith in Christ again and give you fresh perspective on your purpose in the shadow of the cross. Marvel at His grace and majesty. Be mindful of your own shortcomings. Thank God for His work in Christ on the cross. Resolve to imitate Him and to show the same love to others that He showed you: a love that is willing to lay down your own life for the benefit of those around you.

Action

Today call a friend and discuss the question with them: *"What does it practically look like to imitate Jesus?"*. Try to come up with 3 actions points of things that you can do over the next week to put your conversation into practice.

Secondly, take 15 minutes simply to meditate on what Jesus did for you on the cross. Consider His love for you. Reflect on the fact that you are forgiven. Thank God for His goodness!



Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Him

Day_23

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?

Thought

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday, let us take one more opportunity today to reflect on the cost of following Jesus. A re-commitment to pursue Jesus and to live as He is calling you to live could be the most constructive thing that you do across this entire season.

One of the opportunities within this season of lockdown has been to consider our own ways; to be shaken from our normal routines and our potential complacency in faith and forced to reckon with the question: Am I actually following Jesus? If the corona virus is enough to shake your faith, may I be bold enough to suggest that maybe your faith was in the wrong thing all along.

Jesus willingly humbled himself, with all of his divinity, to death on a cross. He laid aside his heavenly privileges, did

not demand the rights he was entitled to, and gave up his life so that we could be forgiven, set free and redeemed. It's the most radical message of good news of all time.

Our challenge, as Christians, is to reflect that same attitude. We are called to give our lives for this cause – to sacrifice our own luxuries, rights and privileges to help a lost and broken world. Sometimes we will suffer. Sometimes it will be inconvenient. Sometimes it will hurt. But we have a hope that is an anchor for our soul. We are children in God's kingdom, and eternity awaits. God's unchanging character provides the unshakable object of our faith that will carry us through any trial. How can you step up today and live the purpose-filled life God is calling you to live?

Action

We need the Holy Spirit's help to live the way of Christ. Today, pray the simplest of prayers if you are up for taking your walk with God deeper than ever before: **Jesus, help me.**

We cannot live this Christian life alone. The sacrifices and costs required of Jesus' followers are to be undertaken in the contexts of a hope-filled community: The church. It is our home of encouragement and accountability. *Identify one Christian relationship that you would like to invest into more often. Schedule in a call with that person.*