



IMAGINE NATIONS  
CHURCH

our city  
and our  
suburbs

21 DAY FAST DEVOTIONAL 2019



## OUR CITY & OUR SUBURBS FAST 2019

### FROM PASTORS JACK AND CAROL

To our precious church family - in all our locations,

Once again, we join together for a season of prayer and fasting - a time of unity like no other. We may be separated by geographical distance but there is no gap when God's people come together with one heart and one mind. To quote the Apostle Paul: "Fulfil my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal." (Phil. 2:2 HCSB)

The theme of our 2019 fast is **Our City and Our Suburbs**. Because of this, our devotional is outward focussed and is meant to bring our attention to the needs around us. We want to pray for our home base and also for our locations.

#### **Specifically, who we will pray for:**

Our youth and children

Marriages and families - "all people"

Local government and leaders

First responders

Teachers and schools

Churches - our locations, others in our city

#### **What we are praying for:**

Salvation

Situations (specific needs)

Restoration

Church we want to pray! We want to pray as one people, sharing in the burdens of each location and believing the Lord together for answered prayer.

The readings in this devotional are contributed from all our locations, written by the pastors and members. Each devotion provides a glimpse into the special circumstances of each location as well as something of each writer. Use the devotional every day to help direct your prayers, knowing that your church family is praying too.

Each location will hold special prayer meetings and will advise you of the times and dates. Attend as many as you are able and as you do experience the power of agreement. (Matt. 18:19)

Much love from Pastors Jack and Carol

our city  
and our  
suburbs

## 21 DAY FAST

**PRAYER MEETINGS – JOIN YOUR CHURCH FAMILY FOR PRAYER AT YOUR LOCATION. DATES, TIMES AND LOCATIONS ON WEBSITE OR CHURCH NEWS**

**THE DEVOTIONAL IS ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [IN-CHURCH.COM](http://in-church.com)**

*The materials in this devotional are from the hearts and lives of Imagine Nations Church team across our locations: Darwin, Melbourne, Phoenix and Sydney (Penrith). We freely offer the personal use of these materials to our church family and friends. For other use, please seek permission from Imagine Nations Church. [in-church.com](http://in-church.com)*

# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED:

## 1. DEVOTIONAL

Set aside time daily for this devotional. Each day's reading only takes a couple of minutes, but allow extra time to reflect, pray and soak in the presence of God.

## 2. WORSHIP & PRAYER MEETINGS

One-hour meetings held at our locations. Dates, time and meeting location information available.

## 3. FAST

Participate with your church family in seeking the Lord through prayer and fasting. Each person should decide what works best for them.

## 4. PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNION DAILY

We suggest individuals and families participate in communion on a daily basis. The Lord's Supper is a powerful reminder of the power of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of Me."

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FASTING

Fasting is a powerful practice. The Christian discipline of fasting is self-denial for the sake of spiritual focus. Fasting is not dieting. In its most common definition it is abstinence from food entirely, for a period of time, or a limitation to only certain types of food, e.g. juice, bread and water, vegetables or other simple foods.

We advise you to personally seek the Lord and ask Him what you should do during this fast and we encourage all who are able, to truly give God their best. No one should feel under compulsion to participate in the fast but it is our hope that everyone will pray and consider what it is they can do.

We also advise you to seek a physician's advice before you approach any type of fasting. Certain individuals may need to limit how they fast because of their physical condition, illness, age or energy needs.

Some people may feel to abstain from food for one or two meals per day and then eat a regular meal at some other time during the day. Others may consider one or more full days abstaining per week.

Over a longer period of time, such as this, "Daniel" styled fasting is a good alternative, particularly for those with higher energy needs. Daniel's fasting practice is a partial fast and described in Daniel 1:8-16 and 10:3.

To try to interpret Daniel's fast into a modern lifestyle could mean the elimination of all sweets, desserts, soft drinks, dairy, meat and perhaps other animal protein. The core of the diet is built around fruit and vegetables, legumes, seeds, nuts, sprouts, soy products, grains and grain products such as pasta. Drinks would consist of water, juice and herbal teas.

We hesitate to make a list of foods "not to eat." Truly this is between you and God and what you feel you can and should do as a fast. (Romans 14:1-4)

### **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)**

**Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**



# DAY 1

## PS. CAROL HANES – INCHURCH SYDNEY

TITLE: OUR PRAYERS AS AN OFFERING

PRAYER FOCUS: LEARNING TO USE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER

### 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (GNT)

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; <sup>2</sup> for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct. <sup>3</sup> This is good and it pleases God our Saviour, <sup>4</sup> who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.

How would you like to have had the Apostle Paul as your mentor and teacher? That's the privilege Timothy enjoyed as a young pastor of the church at Ephesus, a major city of the ancient world. In the years that Timothy ministered there, the city was a centre of pagan worship (Acts 19). Timothy needed all the help he could get ... and today, so do we!

Paul instructed Timothy on how to pastorally lead the church. At the top of the list was prayer. "First of all ... prayers" – then Paul continued with the details of different types of prayer appropriate for the situation at hand.

Paul taught that we are to pray for *all people*. The ones we know and like as well as those we don't. Rather than complaining or gossiping, we can conquer negative thoughts and emotions through prayer. Jesus'

instructions are straightforward: "Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you." Luke 6:28 (NLT)

Paul underscored the importance of praying for rulers and those in positions of authority. This is not only the right thing as a matter of respect but also that our society be ordered and peaceful.

### DIFFERENT PRAYERS FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

Paul describes four different types of prayer. It's as if we have been given a tool kit and it's ours to discover which "tool" is the best one for the situation at hand.

**Petitions** – also known as supplication. Entreaty. A specific request to the King of Kings. This is the seeking prayer accompanied by a strong personal desire and emotional involvement. The heart is tied to this prayer. Zacharias petitioned the Lord for a child because he and his wife Elizabeth were childless. (Luke 1:13). Paul declared that his "heart's desire and prayer to God" was for Israel to be saved. (Romans 10:1)

**Prayers** – Prayer to God in a set apart place. This is something more than on-the-fly prayers (which thankfully God also hears!). It's prayer that is intentional and purposeful. It's taking

special time to be set apart for prayer as hopefully we can all do in some way during our fast. “And all things you shall ask in prayer ...” Matt 21:22

**Requests** – Also translated **intercessions**. The literal meaning of this word is: “A falling in with, meeting with, visit.” This is a sustained time of prayer wherein a person remains in the presence of God until they know within their heart that the “meeting” is finished. Often this type of prayer is initiated by a specific, urgent need or burden to pray. Moses met with God in this way. (Exodus 33)

**Thanksgivings** – This is grateful prayer that often is accompanied by the joy of the Lord. This is thanking God for what He has already done or with the eye of faith, seeing what you feel confident He will do.

## THE OFFERING OF PRAYER

As we pray together during these 21 days, it is likely that all of these types of prayer will be employed by you at some stage. It might be interesting to make a note in your journal as you use and experience the different types of prayer.

Revelation 8:4 speaks of the prayers of God’s people ascending up to God like the incense burned in the temple. When you speak to God in prayer, the words leave your heart and ascend to God. May the atmosphere over our cities and suburbs be filled with the prayers of God’s people during these 21 days! May our prayers be an offering of our lives to God for His glory and to the benefit of others.

AGNES BANKS BADGERYS CREEK BERKSHIRE PARK CADDENS CAMBRIDGE  
GARDENS CAMBRIDGE PARK CASTLEREAGH CLAREMONT MEADOWS COLYTON  
CRANEBROOK EMU HEIGHTS EMU PLAINS ERSKINE PARK GLENMORE PARK  
JAMISONTOWN JORDAN SPRINGS KEMPS CREEK KINGSWOOD KINGSWOOD PARK  
LEONAY LLANDILO LONDONDERRY LUDDENHAM MOUNT VERNON MULGOA NORTH  
ST MARYS ORCHARD HILLS OXLEY PARK PENRITH REGENTVILLE ST CLAIR ST MARYS  
SOUTH PENRITH WALLACIA WERRINGTON WERRINGTON COUNTY WERRINGTON  
DOWNS BLAXLAND GLENBROOK LAPSTONE MOUNT RIVERVIEW SPRINGWOOD  
WARRIMOO WINMALEE PHOENIX MESA CHANDLER GILBERT GLENDALE SCOTTSDALE  
TEMPE PEORIA SURPRISE AVONDALE GOODYEAR BUCKEYE CASA GRANDE  
MARICOPA APACHE JUNCTION EL MIRAGE QUEEN CREEK COOLIDGE FLORENCE  
FOUNTAIN HILLS ELOY PARADISE VALLEY CAREFREE CAVE CREEK GILA BEND  
GUADALUPE KEARNY LITCHFIELD PARK MAMMOTH SUPERIOR TOLLESON  
WICKENBURG YOUNGTOWN AINTREE BONNIE BROOK BROOKFIELD BURNSIDE  
BURNSIDE HEIGHTS CAROLINE SPRINGS COBBLEBANK DEANSIDE DIGGERS REST  
EXFORD EYNEBURY FIELDSTONE FRASER RISE GRANGEFIELD HARKNESS HILLSIDE  
KURUNJANG MELTON MELTON SOUTH MELTON WEST MOUNT COTTRELL PARWAN  
PLUMPTON RAVENHALL ROCKBANK STRATHTULLOH TAYLORS HILL THORNHILL  
PARK TOOLERN VALE TRUGANINA WEIR VIEWS COCONUT GROVE JINGILI MILLNER  
MOIL NIGHTCLIFF RAPID CREEK BAYVIEW CHARLES DARWIN DARWIN EAST POINT  
EATON HIDDEN VALLEY LARRAKEYAH LUDMILLA PARAP STUART PARK THE  
GARDENS THE NARROWS WINNELLIE WOOLNER ALAWA BRINKIN BUFFALO CREEK  
CASUARINA HOLMES LEANYER LEE POINT LYONS MUIRHEAD NAKARA TIWI  
WAGAMANG WANGURI ANULA BERRIMAH COONAWARRA KARAMA MALAK MARRARA  
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FOUNTAIN HILLS ELOY PARADISE VALLEY CAREFREE CAVE CREEK GILA BEND

# PRAYING FOR OUR CITIES AND OUR SUBURBS

**During the next four days, we will focus on the city and suburb of each of our locations. As you read, use the information provided and pray as the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray.**

**Please offer special prayer for the pastors and their leadership teams at each of our locations. May they sense the strength of your support in prayer.**

**When it is the day for your location, know that there will be hundreds of other believers praying for the city where you live! Look for particular opportunities on those days to share the love of Jesus, knowing that others are standing with you to see break-through in your city.**



## DAY 2

### PS. ANDREW PAECH, DIRECTOR WESTCARE COMMUNITY SERVICES – INCHURCH SYDNEY

OUR CITY: SYDNEY

OUR SUBURBS: PENRITH AND BLUE MOUNTAINS

PRAYER FOCUS: PENRITH AND BLUE MOUNTAINS,  
INCHURCH SYDNEY (PENRITH)

Jesus loves Penrith – and so do we!

With the Blue Mountains rising to our west, the Hawkesbury to the north, greater Sydney bordering the east and all kinds of activity to our south including work on Sydney's second airport now underway – the Penrith region grows in significance every year.

The population of our local government area has now reached 201,000 and is forecast to grow by 70,000 over the next thirty years.

Our rich history includes the first European sighting in 1789, just eighteen months after the arrival of the First Fleet, of the grand waterway later named the Nepean River.

Long before that the area was home to the Mulgoa tribe of the Darug people. Today, 3.9% of all Penrith region residents claim indigenous background, the highest Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander proportion of any NSW metropolitan area.

Politically – Penrith is significantly situated on every level.

In the upcoming March NSW State Government elections, the area will

cover three key electorates including the seat of Mulgoa, currently held by the Honourable Tanya Davies, a member of Imagine Nations Church with her family for many years. Since being appointed Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women and Minister for Ageing in 2017, Tanya has regularly been in the spotlight taking a strong faith-based stand on various contemporary issues.

Federally, Penrith sits within the seat of Lindsay which is also due to head to the ballot shortly afterward in May. In all of these elections we pray for God's will to be established in and through all those who are elected.

Locally the Penrith City Council are known for strong community-oriented values.

INChurch member, Councillor Mark Davies, husband of State Government Minister Tanya, has twice been appointed Mayor of the Council. Our current Mayor, Ross Fowler is well respected across the community and we pray God's wisdom and guidance across him and the other Councillors.

Penrith is also well known as a pre-eminent sporting and adventure centre

with world class Olympic rafting and rowing venues, Panthers NRL stadium and developmental facilities, and fun local adrenaline activities including iFly indoor skydiving, the Jetpack/ Flyboard experiences and Cables Wake Park. When we add to that a diverse arts and culture scene, thriving dining precincts and fun family activities – Penrith is the place to be in Sydney!

But we also have some very real social challenges including homelessness, drug usage and a particularly high level of Domestic Violence. In 2017 Penrith had the second highest rate of reported Domestic Violence in metropolitan NSW of 554 reported incidents per 100,000 people (just below Blacktown/ Mt Druitt on 582), compared to the overall Sydney average of 309. These incidents are only the reported cases with police involvement, realising that many domestic violence situations are not reported.

Our church is very active in the DV sector through WestCare who provide refuge accommodation for women with children and a range of vital support activities through local frontline services. We pray for WestCare's ongoing and growing work among the socially challenged of our community.

Families play an important role in our community and are a significant part

of Penrith's population base. 'Couples with Children' households constitute 37.2% or just under 25,000 Penrith homes. Single parent households add another 9,500 homes or 14.1% of our total households which is significantly higher than greater Sydney.

We pray for an increased reach and impact into these homes, families and particularly schools through our Scripture teachers, Chaplains, Student Wellbeing officers, WestCare and Imagine Nations Kids, Youth and Young Families ministries!

There are many varied and diverse people and groups that come together to make up our wonderful city. Each one of us have been placed somewhere within this 'community matrix' we call Penrith, or a nearby adjoining town or suburb.

So, as we pray for our city, its needs and community leaders, let's also keep in mind perhaps the most important aspect of all – you and me! That we would be that shining light in the midst of our neighbours, work colleagues, customers, kids at school or the stranger we meet – that wherever we live, we would *"let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)



# DAY 3

## PASTORS TROY AND NICOLE DAVIS INCHURCH DARWIN

OUR CITY: DARWIN

OUR SUBURBS: DARWIN AND PALMERSTON

PRAYER FOCUS: DARWIN REGION AND PALMERSTON,  
INCHURCH AT TWO LOCATIONS

### **PRAYER POINTS FOR DARWIN:**

- » Pray for those in our church trying to start a family.
- » There has been an economic downturn in Darwin. This has a flow-on effect to people experiencing job instability/ job losses and difficulty gaining employment.
- » The population of Darwin is not growing. Pray for people to want to move to Darwin and to put roots down.
- » Pray that God would provide us with our own building so that we can expand our outreaches for the community.

- » Pray for more kids church volunteers who love to serve the next generation.
- » Pray for our Darwin youth ministry. That teenagers would come to know Christ and be disciplined. Pray for a team of dedicated volunteers to support this ministry.
- » Pray for effective university outreach and willing volunteers with a heart to serve.
- » Pray for effective outreach to our indigenous brothers and sisters.
- » Pray for a harvest of souls and disciples who make disciples.



# DAY 4

## PS. CRAIG MAHER – INCHURCH MELBOURNE

OUR CITY: MELBOURNE

OUR SUBURB: CAROLINE SPRINGS

PRAYER FOCUS: MELBOURNE, CAROLINE SPRINGS,  
INCHURCH MELBOURNE

Melbourne is the capital city of the State of Victoria with a population of over 4.8 million which accounts for 19% of national population. It ranks second most populated state capital in Australia after Sydney. Melbourne is Victoria's business, administrative, cultural and recreational hub of the state. On an average day around 854,000 people use the city, and each year Melbourne hosts over a million international visitors.

Caroline Springs is a north-western suburb of Melbourne which commenced construction in 2001. Combine with the surrounding suburbs of Taylors Hill, Burnside, Burnside Heights & Hillside currently approximately 75,000 people call the area home. Caroline Springs is located within the Melton City Council area. This local government area has become the fastest growing population centre in Australia not just Victoria. Between 2008 and 2017, the estimated residential population of the City of Melton increased from 92,552 to 148,896 (56,344) or by 61 per cent. Population projections indicate that the City's population will be more than 477,900 by 2051, making it almost the size of Canberra (Australia's National Capital) today.

On 1 September 2014 Melissa & I, together with our daughters Rachel, Laura, Reanna, Bethany, Esther & Heleana, arrived in Caroline Springs to pioneer INChurch Melbourne. We letterbox dropped 20,000 homes (combined 500kms of walking) and commenced Sunday Services on 26 October 2014. We then officially launched the INChurch on 8 February 2015. During the last 4 years we have lived here, the church has met in 7 different locations, but we have managed to not miss a Sunday! The congregation has now grown to around 200 people. In September, 2018 we became self-supporting. We are tremendously grateful to have been supported by INChurch Sydney until then. On 28 October, 2018 we launched a Land and Building Fund for the future.

One of the outreach strategies the Lord has led us to is hosting major Community Family Fun Days. These low-cost family friendly events focus on Primary Aged School Children and their families. We hold 4 of these per year and are now regularly seeing crowds of 4,000 - 5,000 at each one. We have grace and favour with Melton City Council who sponsor our annual Carols by

Candlelight. The business community have also supported our initiatives. We also regularly hold 2-hour Estate Outreaches - where we bring a BBQ Trailer and provide lunch or dinner and kids games in the local estate park. We share the gospel and build friendships. Each of these initiatives sees the church continue to grow!

Currently the City of Melton is 8 schools short and we have 11 new suburbs currently being constructed next to Caroline Springs. We believe the Lord is calling us to get ready to purchase acreage to build a Regional Community Centre with facilities for families, children, youth and seniors. We also sense that in the medium to long term we will construct a Christian School.

### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)**

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.**

This Scripture has taken on new significance for us during our 4 years living in Caroline Springs. We had no blueprint or experience in church planting. The key words of 'trust' and 'submit' have been vital for us as a married couple, as a family and as pastors of a growing new congregation.

We have had, in many respects, to learn not to lean on our own understanding and experience, but trust Jesus' call and the leading of His Spirit to have courage to try new things and move out of our comfort zones. At every point, He has been faithful and literally made our path straight.

### **PRAYER:**

- » Please pray with us that we keep in step with the Holy Spirit as the INChurch Melbourne continues to grow. Pray that we would have wisdom to manage growth!
- » We are seeking to raise initially \$1million for land and we need the provision of God for this.
- » Please pray that we can bring our Children's Pastor on to salaried staff in 2019.

Join with us praying that there would be a mighty move of God in the North West of Melbourne and that many who have not known Jesus would discover Him as their Lord and Saviour.



# DAY 5

## SCOTT ALLOWAY – INCHURCH PHOENIX

TITLE: DOES PRAYER MATTER?

OUR CITY: PHOENIX

OUR SUBURB: DEER VALLEY

PRAYER FOCUS: PHOENIX, DEER VALLEY, INCHURCH PHOENIX,  
THE REFUGE YOUTH MINISTRY

Does prayer change what God does, or is the outcome the same whether I pray or not?

In Numbers 16 we read about how the Israelite people of Korah became upset at Moses and felt that they were just as close to God as he was and that they didn't need to be under his leadership. Moses stood up to them and as a result God made the earth "swallow them up". The next day, the remaining Israeli people complained about the event and about Moses and God sent a plague immediately to "consume them in a moment".

This is the moment that we often find ourselves in, except for maybe the life and death part. What do we do? Do we settle for God's initial answer as the final answer, or are we able to change it through faith? Do we have an opinion on the matter? Does God care? What did Moses do?

Both he and Aaron "fell on their faces". They sought God for a different outcome. Ultimately Moses instructed Aaron, who took a rod with incense, and ran out to the people; and, where he met the plague it stopped (but not before it consumed nearly 15,000 people!). God was ready to wipe

out the entire congregation! But 2 men, obedient to God, had sought Him for a different outcome and God showed them through prayer what they must do to alter His action.

In John 11 we read that a man that Jesus knew, named Lazarus, had died. When Jesus got to where his tomb was, Jesus yelled: "Lazarus, come forth!" and he came forth out of the tomb alive in his grave clothes.

But what did Jesus say before that? Do you remember? "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they might believe that You sent Me."

The miracle of Lazarus happened, but it's clear that we are to understand that Lazarus was raised because Jesus prayed for him to be raised. Without Jesus making that prayer, and taking the action to act on it, would Lazarus have gotten up on his own? Clearly prayer changed what wouldn't have happened!

One of the kings of Israel named Hezekiah was sick and near death. In 2 Kings 20 we learn that the prophet

Isaiah even confirmed that he was about to die. But, when Hezekiah turned his face in seclusion toward the wall and prayed to God and said: “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart and have done what was good in Your sight.” and he wept bitterly, God did something different.

God listened and told Isaiah to go back to Hezekiah and tell him: “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you.” And that’s exactly what He did – 15 years’ worth! Hezekiah’s prayer changed what would’ve happened!

In Luke 22 we learn that Satan has asked to sift Peter away like chaff from the wheat. I don’t know exactly how that would turn out, but it wouldn’t be good. Was Peter left on his own? Not at all! Jesus said: “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” If Jesus is praying, shouldn’t we be also!

Philippians 4:6 says: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;” We are to pray. We are to pray!

What have you seen in your own

life? Has an answer to your prayer ever been given exactly as you asked for it? Or maybe it came about through a series of circumstances and you dismissed it as coincidence? Perhaps you’ve had a powerful healing that doctors can’t explain?

I admit that I don’t have the magic formula for getting everything I want in prayer, but it’s a fact that God answers and even alters what He does because we pray. Sometimes He answers with actions and results we want and sometimes He just answers with “no”.

Since we’ve seen proof in the Bible and so often in our lives that what we pray matters, is there any reason we shouldn’t be praying about other things – expanding our reach to make an even larger impact on the lives of others... many others?

## **LET’S PRAY FOR THE AREA OF INCHURCH PHOENIX**

“Father, we need you and need your help. You change us in ways that can only be changed by you. And we all need to be changed. We need to realize that you’re the God of the entire universe and that includes our neighbours, our family, our spouses, our kids, our co-workers, those we like, and those we don’t like. It’s not always about us. You’ve saved me to

be a voice from you to others. To be a disciple. To love what you are doing in the lives of other people and to see them grow in Christ and be changed.

We need you desperately. I pray for marriages. The difficulties and challenges that pull us away from a right relationship. Selfishness that steals our love. Entertainment that brings temporary pleasure but fades away and leaves emptiness. We need your truth, your substance and your love to conquer the “me” in us.

I pray that you would touch each and every young person in our church that they would come to the realization of the truth of what you’ve done for them and the great length you have gone to show them your love. Give them courage to believe and to stand up against the thinking that is so easily absorbed from this world. Teach them to cling to your truth.

I pray for parents that they would seriously look to you for how to raise their kids, for how to discern the right course of action for correction, to trust You when things aren’t going right and to have hearts that love.

I pray for my church. That we would have every resource needed to carry Your gospel to everyone everywhere. Be with Pastor Dan and Pastor Regan

that they would have the strength and energy to carry out your mission.

I pray for every individual who is alone, who is hurting, who is without someone to love or to love them. Encourage them Father in a way that touches and changes them, that brings them to you and to their knees. Find them the right person to share their life with and to experience your love and forgiveness and your peace.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.”



# DAY 6

## PS. ROB DE MARTIN – INCHURCH SYDNEY

### TITLE: SPECIFIC REQUESTS

I love our theme for our 21-day fast: Our City, Our Suburbs.

Penrith is a suburb and major centre in the metropolitan area of Sydney. It is located in Greater Western Sydney, 50km west of the Sydney central business district on the banks of the Nepean River.

I have lived in Penrith for 45 years. I grew up here, I went to school here, I got married here, my children were born here, I work here...and most importantly I got saved here and found my calling here. I love my City, my Suburb and thank God for the privilege to serve it.

As we stand together as one church, in many locations, fasting and praying together in unity for Our City, Our Suburb, I am reminded that a key to answered prayer is to be specific in what we ask for.

#### **Philippians 4:6 (NLT)**

**“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”**

If we want specific answers to prayer, then we need to make specific requests.

If our prayers consist of general requests, how will we know if they’re answered?

Knowing a prayer has been answered clearly builds up our faith, builds relationship with God, and encourages us to pray more boldly and specifically in the future. Vague prayers don’t build up much anticipation. Vague prayers don’t cause us to wait expectantly for an answer from God. Specific prayer does.

Nehemiah (cup-bearer to the king) wept when he learned that the remnant of Jews in Judah, who had survived the exile, were in distress and that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. He mourned for some days and fasted and prayed.

#### **Nehemiah 1:11 (NLT)**

**“O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.”**

Nehemiah needed to ask the king for permission to return and rebuild, so he prayed for success by making the King favourable and kind towards him.

God answered his prayer.

The king granted Nehemiah's requests and sent him to Judah with a mission to rebuild, letters explaining his support for the venture, and provision for timber from the king's forest.

Wow! What are you praying and believing for Our City, Our Suburb? Be specific!

### **Mark 10:46-52 (NLT)**

<sup>46</sup> Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road. <sup>47</sup> When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

<sup>48</sup> "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him.

But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

<sup>49</sup> When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here."

So, they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" <sup>50</sup> Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

<sup>51</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked.

"My Rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!"

<sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road."

Bartimaeus was specific  
"I want to see!"

### **IN CONCLUSION:**

What do you want to see in  
Our City, Our Suburb?

Be specific!

### **1 John 5:15 (NLT)**

"And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for."



# DAY 7

## PS. SONYA DE MARTIN – INCHURCH SYDNEY

TITLE: GOTTA LOVE FISHING!

PRAYER FOCUS: SALVATION

We enjoyed hiring a BBQ boat to go fishing on holidays in Port Macquarie when our older boys were little.

Now, once you get a fishing rod in Rob's hands he has nothing else on his mind. This is the thing though, I'd be fishing in the same spot, same day, same bait – but never had as many catches as Rob. Repeatedly questioning if fish were biting at all!

There's a saying that 10% of anglers catch 90% of the fish. They seem to have an unnatural ability to find and catch fish. They out fish everyone else. Fishing surely is an art!

Four of Jesus' disciples were fisherman by trade (Mark 1:16-20). When Jesus called them, He said **“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”** (Mark 1:17 ESV). As a result of them following Jesus they were to *become* fishers of men.

Christianity Historian Eusebius of Caesarea wrote about the disciples that they could have responded by saying to Jesus *“But how can we do it?” the disciples might reasonably have answered. “How can we preach to Romans? How can we argue with Egyptians? We are brought up to use the Syrian tongue only. What language shall we speak to Greeks? How shall*

*we persuade Persians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Indians and other scattered nations to give up their ancestral gods and worship the Creator of all? What abilities in speaking have we to depend upon in attempting such work as this?*

1 Timothy 2:4 GNT says **...{God} wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.**

God wants all of us to *become fishers of men* because He wants *everyone to be saved*. Our families, friends, work colleagues, all those around us – *to come to know the truth*. We can think to ourselves – *I'm not bold enough to share my faith. I don't know what to say, how to break the ice. What if they ask a question I can't answer?*

Just as fishing has 'tools of the trade' like rods, bait, sinkers, lures & hooks and if you're really serious maybe you'd use a GPS Fish Finder, so also *becoming a fisher of men* has certain tools that can be gained.

Based on a few fishing tips from the website [worldfishingnetwork.com](http://worldfishingnetwork.com) about Great Anglers, let's reflect on our discipleship journey of *becoming fishers of men* together:

**1. Patience** – A truly great angler has spent countless hours on the water.

### **1 Corinthians 3:6 NLT**

I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow.

Soul winning requires patience on multiple levels. Some plant seeds, others water but we all patiently wait for God to make it grow.

**2. Adaptability** – A great angler knows that fish are fickle and is able to alter his or her offerings to suit the occasion.

### **1 Corinthians 9:23**

I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

Two keys when sharing about Jesus' saving grace to others is firstly, listening to the Holy Spirit to give you direction in the conversation and secondly to be sensitive to where people are at in their spiritual journey. One size does not fit all!

**3. Self Confidence** – Trying something new and experimenting with different ideas may very well lead to failure before it leads to success but a

passionate angler will test out theories and make discoveries anyway.

### **Luke 5:10**

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

Do not allow fear to stop you from sharing your faith with others. Push on, move forward and continue to step out in faith.

As we follow Christ, He makes us *become* fishers of men. Invite your neighbors, be a bold witness with your friends, speak about Jesus' love with your family, pray with co-workers and become that fisherman who has and learns to use all the 'tools of the trade'.

### **Romans 1:16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.



# DAY 8

## GARY NINNEMAN – INCHURCH DARWIN

PRAYER TOPIC: SALVATION

### 1 Timothy 2:1 – 4 GNT

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; 2 for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct. 3 This is good and it pleases God our Saviour, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.

If you are like me, you probably find it easier to pray for yourself than for others. Not that that's a bad thing. I believe God wants us to come before him with our problems, needs, burdens, requests and thanksgiving. That's a good thing; He wants to hear our prayers and I believe He wants to answer them. However, here in 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul urges (the same strong word he uses in Romans 12:1 which encompasses the idea of, "you would be foolish not to do this ...") this relatively young and inexperienced pastor of the new Ephesian congregation, to pray for others.

While Paul identifies four types of praying, namely requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving, I don't believe that that's necessarily his prime focus. And whilst I believe his focus is the lost – and them being saved and coming to a saving knowledge

of the truth – I find his strategy both intriguing and insightful. If I may take poetic licence and paraphrase Paul's counsel (and no, I'm not trying to establish a new doctrine), it would appear to me as if Paul is saying something like this: "God wants all people to be saved and to come to a saving knowledge of the truth, and this requires circumstances wherein we can freely share and demonstrate the Word and the Gospel. In order for us to enjoy that kind of freedom – the kind that allows us to live peaceful, quiet lives in all holiness and godliness – we need to pray for our Government, for those in authority who are entrusted with legislative and judicial leadership, so that they will govern and legislate in such a way so as to facilitate that."

We want our city and our suburb to be impacted by the Gospel, and for them to be saved. And I believe Paul wanted the same. But being an apostle and a visionary, I believe he had a revelation of the big picture, and how to pray into it. I believe there is wisdom in his strategy: that we should be praying for our Government – both Federal and State/Territory – so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives. But this is not for our own comfort and convenience; it's so that we may live in all holiness and godliness. Being holy simply means,

“Set apart for God”. Being godly means, “To become more Christ-like”. And the endgame is: so that people can be saved. Such wise counsel!

Let’s take some time right now to pray for our Government. Spend some time praying for Prime Minister Scott Morrison, for all our Ministers, Senators, legislators, decision-makers and their advisors. Let’s also pray for our State and Territory Governments. Let us pray that they will debate, argue, promote, campaign and stand for truth and righteousness; that they will promulgate, legislate and make decisions so that you and I can live peaceful, quiet lives in all godliness and holiness, so that we may preach the Gospel freely and reach the lost. This is all part of God’s will – Paul says in verse 4 that God wants all people to be saved. Let’s do it now, and let’s keep on doing it. Let’s believe it now, and let’s keep believing it! In Jesus’ Name.

# A TESTIMONY – GOD ANSWERS PRAYER!

STEF AND PHIL MAINEY - INCHURCH DARWIN

Phil and I were saved just after we got married in 1988. We knew God was revealing Himself to us at a Gold Coast Youth Alive rally where Ps. Wayne Alcorn was sharing the message. We had known only a little of religion and nothing about personal salvation growing up, so it was an amazing revelation that we were cherished by a personal God who loved us beyond measure. We were both passionate about the Lord and His House and not much else mattered. But I remember as a young mother often feeling totally overwhelmed. With 3 young children, chronic fatigue-related illnesses, a husband working as a carpenter and also as an associate pastor, and a passionate but somewhat misplaced understanding that I had to serve the Lord's people no matter the cost, I was too busy to do what really mattered. Prayer was most often limited to "Help me, God!", and personal Bible study was almost non-existent. How could I fit those in my days that were filled with the needs of others?

But God knew my need. In our home church in a small country town in NSW, there was an elderly Polish lady whom I shall call Mrs. S. She had fled Poland during the Second World War and came to our town in the 1950s. She stood about 5 feet 3 inches tall, but she was a fearless prayer warrior

who prayed and fasted for days at a time. Her husband was not open to the Gospel and life was far from easy. None of her 5 children were followers of Jesus as adults, and she was constantly persecuted for her faith in our town.

Mrs S sought only God, never accolades. And when she prayed, God heard and God moved. One night, God woke her with a vision in which some young fathers in our church were in serious danger. She prayed for hours. Later that day, we found out that 3 of our very good friends had been swept off rocks into the water while fishing at night and almost drowned, but somehow miraculously were swept back onto the rocks. If Mrs S. had not prayed in obedience to God that night, the outcome for 3 young families, with 9 children between them, may have been very different.

Phil and I would often visit Mrs S, and the minute we entered her house, she would say, "Come, we pray". You did not question or disobey! Phil and our senior pastor would also spend hours in her company in prayer and then she would feed them stews and desserts she had prepared from her garden until they were so full, they could hardly move. Her passion for her Lord and prayer was matched only by her hospitality and her

consuming passion for crocheting rugs for those in need across the world.

Mrs S taught me so much about the power of persistent prayer. She prayed daily for her family, she prayed for her church and its leaders and she prayed for our town, often in tears over the way that young people were following the ways of the world and turning their backs on God. She never stopped praying for her husband. And, after almost 50 years of marriage, Mr. S finally admitted his need of Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and was miraculously saved. From that day on, this man, who had been so angry and silent when Christians entered his home to see his wife, became the biggest hugger and smiler in our church! His salvation brought tears to our eyes and joy to our hearts, and taught us that God does answer our deepest cries, but in His time, not ours.

Mrs S passed away a number of years ago at the age of 85, but her legacy lives on. In America, our daughter Annie has on her bed one of Mrs S's crocheted blankets, remembering this powerful woman of prayer with love, as she seeks to serve the Lord in ministering to children from dysfunctional and abusive backgrounds.

Many lives have been saved and changed through dear Mrs S's prayers. I am so grateful to her for leading the way. I am sure her prayers brought peace and quiet to many a struggling soul, including my own.

And now, with many other saints that have given their all for Jesus, she stands with the cloud of witnesses, cheering us on as we run the race of our salvation. Let us run it with grace and passion and let us 'lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author AND finisher of our faith...'. Heb. 12: 1-2.

God bless you all.



# DAY 9

## PS. DAN BRODEUR – INCHURCH PHOENIX

### PRAYER FOCUS: SALVATION

**Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father but through me. (John 14:6)**

It is true that God’s desire is that none should perish, and what an example of God’s relentless love that he should desire to save all men. Think of that - all men! Not just the good men, the kind men but all men ...even the truly despicable men.

**2 Cor. 5:14: For the love of Christ compels us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.**

For if one died all have died! If all have died then there remains a hope for all to be saved.

For God so loved the world! The Author of all things, the perfect, majestic, all knowing, omnipresent God so loved us that He became flesh, dwelt and dealt with all that is human just so He could offer His life in an incredibly shameful and painful sacrifice for our sins. His intention was not to purchase us like slaves but to purchase salvation and offer it to all and guarantee it to those who would confess and believe in Him.

How grateful I am for Him and His sacrifice, the totality of which I will never fully grasp. It is so easy to find ourselves focused on what He has done for us, but may I remind us that during

this fast as we pray and intercede for our city, our suburb, that there is a living sacrifice that His love calls us to.

But as we so often do, “get lost in His love”, let us not forget He is not a man that He should lie, nor is He unjust but He is righteous and even when we are unfaithful He is faithful, meaning He cannot deny himself - not even for the deep and powerful love that He has for the lost. Oh, how it must tear Him apart to say “Depart from Me, I never knew you”.

I say this not to condemn us but to remind and compel us. The great accuser of the brethren, the deceiver of this age is seeking to pervert the truth - to convince not just the non-believer but the son or daughter of God that maybe the good can get to heaven, maybe just maybe God’s love is so great and He is so compassionate that He would not turn away kind, decent people, right? This is much easier to believe, leaving us less burdened to share the truth with the unbeliever.

Jesus Himself asked if there was another way, not once but three times. The fact remains that Jesus is the only way, He is the truth and He is the life. Isn’t it wonderful that the one path He has chosen for us to find salvation, through Him, is one of relationship and strength? One in which He gives

us peace and hope beyond earthly reason or explanation. He doesn't just point out the way in which we should go, He says "Come walk with Me".

While the devil may want us to believe in the modern version of grace - that God's love is too great to turn away good people, which by the way, lightens the mandate to reach the lost, the truth is, that by faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ, can one find salvation. It is *that truth* that will set you free.

Let us soberly and sombrely remember that there is no hope or salvation without Jesus Christ.



# DAY 10

## PS. MELISSA MAHER – INCHURCH MELBOURNE

TITLE: SOULS TO BE SAVED

PRAYER TOPIC: SALVATION

### **Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)**

**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**

One thing I noticed when we moved to Caroline Springs, Victoria, is the road sign that allows a U-turn. These signs are seen everywhere, often on major roads. They allow a driver travelling in one direction to change their mind and travel in the exact opposite, usually at a set of traffic lights. I love the analogy of this to salvation. We were headed away from God, but when we get a revelation of Jesus, His offer of forgiveness and new life then we get to change direction or you could say we get to do a U-turn and head straight back towards God!

### **John 3:16 (NIV)**

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

I remember Ps Jack saying once that he and Ps Carol were travelling into the city for a show. They were noticing all the people around but they started to not just see people as people but they started to see them as souls. They saw each with a destiny of either Heaven or Hell. Each soul had a need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and needed to be saved! Ps Jack said that night that God gave him and Ps Carol a new revelation and urgency to spread the gospel.

It's so easy to get busy with good things, work, family, even ministry. However, we don't ever want to lose sight of peoples need for salvation. Jesus left us with a command to spread the gospel and we need to do it. People's lives depend on it!

### **1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)**

**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

We have the power of God in our hands and we need to passionately, urgently, and deliberately share this power with

others. How do you see those around you? Maybe the lady at the checkout or how do you see the man who delivered your mail? These are people with souls that need the love of Jesus! You might be the person to share with them. Let's not miss opportunities.

## **PRAY**

Today Jesus, we pray that You would give us a fresh urgency to spread the gospel. Help us see people as You see them. Give us more strategies to spread Your word in a way that will attract many. Please give us opportunities to share with others the difference that Jesus has made in our own lives. We pray specifically that every Imagine Nations Church will continue to grow through new believers! We pray Your Kingdom will come.



# DAY 11

## PAUL & ANDREA TATE – INCHURCH MELBOURNE

PRAYER FOCUS: GOVERNMENT, FIRST RESPONDERS

TITLE: PRAY FOR WELL RUN GOVERNMENT

### 1 Timothy 2:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. <sup>2</sup> Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. <sup>3</sup> This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live. <sup>4</sup> He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we've learned:**

The longevity of a local church is as much dependant on the goodwill of local government as it is on the love and compassion of the members and sound doctrine. Paul recognised this when he gave this advice to Timothy.

Paul was well versed in the protocols and politics of government at all levels. This was evident in the way he boldly confronted and negotiated his way from the local governors Felix and Festus, right through to the emperor, Caesar (Acts 24-28). Although this meant pain and imprisonment for Paul, his purpose was to share the gospel and his personal testimony with these powerful men and in doing so he has set an example of how the gospel must be boldly shared in order to establish God's church all over the world. Paul's self -sacrificial influence saw the gospel rapidly

permeate through the gentile world. He fought and died for God's purpose above politics and self-preservation.

Thankfully, 20 centuries later, establishing the church in our corner of the world is not so brutal. As soon as the suburb was chosen for INChurch Melbourne, our Pastors set about establishing a strong relationship with the Melton City Council and looking at ways for INChurch (that is you and I) to serve the local and wider community. Pastor Craig has nurtured this relationship and made himself available to the mayor and councillors when they have had need of prayer and personal support.

Every community event run by INChurch is seeking the same purpose Jesus intended for His disciples (that is you and I), to spread the gospel and freely share His love.

The council building, we now meet in is clear evidence that we are in a season of God's grace and favour. Us needing more room coincided with a new extension and we are blessed to be allowed to use it. Council's support has also extended to the provision of a BBQ trailer and financial assistance for the carols event. Although Council's grace and favour can never be taken for granted, God is working amongst local government for His plan and purpose.

*“The primary role of the church is to reflect God’s value system in society and to train people in that value system. It’s not the government’s responsibility, nor are they equipped to do that on the most local level where the need exists.” -Tony Evans*

INChurch Melbourne is blessed with a diverse church community full of amazing gifts and talents. Being first responders in a crisis is another avenue to bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ to our local community. We have professional first responders, Police and Ambulance officers as well as those in our midst who readily respond to those in crisis around them. One example was after an evening service one night several church members stopped to give aid to a man who was seen lying on the ground having had seizures.

Whether it is providing meals for those in need, praying with those in crisis, giving money and practical help to those finding themselves in financial crisis or just being a friend to one who has none, Jesus calls us in John 13.35 to reveal ourselves to the world as His disciples by loving one another.

## **REFLECTION:**

*“A glass of water is not really full until it overflows. Similarly, the fullness of the Spirit in our lives is measured by the overflow of the Spirit through us in order to touch the world around us.” -Ps Bill Johnson.*

» Am I giving what God has blessed me with to help build Imagine Nations Church? This might be time, resources, gifts/abilities, prayer, encouragement.



# DAY 12

## PS. ALLYSON PARKER – INCHURCH SYDNEY

### PRAYER FOCUS: CHILDREN

#### 1 John 5:1 (AMP)

**<sup>12</sup>He who has the Son [by accepting Him as Lord and Saviour] has the life [that is eternal]; he who does not have the Son of God [by personal faith] does not have the life.**

25 years ago, a little girl entered my world and left it again just one hour later. I don't remember her name. In fact, I'm not sure if I was ever told her name.

I was working in Emergency and she came via ambulance. Her family were refugees from Vietnam. They hadn't been in Australia long. Their English was limited and they did not know how to call an ambulance. Their little 10-year-old girl had an asthma attack. By the time they got a neighbour to help, she was no longer breathing.

For an hour, we tried to resuscitate her.

We tried. We used every possible medical intervention we could use. We willed her to live.

But she died.

Her family were Buddhist. She never heard the name of Jesus. She never knew the hope of heaven. She never heard that healing was in

His Name. She never saw the feet of those who bring Good News.

Not once.

And she deserved to know. She deserved the chance to hear.

To this day, I still believe that every child on earth deserves to know, to hear, to experience the wonder, grace and love of God found in Jesus.

The truth is, that while 25 years ago, it would have been mostly immigrant children who had never heard the name of Jesus; today it would be closer to the 97% of children who never attend a church in this nation- certainly in this city. Children are now coming into our scripture classes who have never heard of God, let alone hearing of the wonder of Jesus. We now have a generation of children in this city who are as unreached as any people group on earth. They do not have life!

#### Matthew 23:37-38 (NLT)

##### Jesus Grieves over Jerusalem

<sup>37</sup> **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks**

beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me. <sup>38</sup> And now, look, your house is abandoned and desolate.

When we lose a generation, not only do they lose all chance at life, there is an enormous impact in our churches and in our nation. We give permission to the enemy to have free reign. The future looks completely different.

So, if we want to change the future, where do we start?

### **Psalm 78: 1-7 NLT**

<sup>1</sup> O my people, listen to my instructions.

Open your ears to what I am saying,  
<sup>2</sup> for I will speak to you in a parable.  
I will teach you hidden lessons from our past—

<sup>3</sup> stories we have heard and known,  
stories our ancestors handed down to us.

<sup>4</sup> We will not hide these truths from our children;  
we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord,  
about his power and his mighty wonders.

<sup>5</sup> For he issued his laws to Jacob;  
he gave his instructions to Israel.  
He commanded our ancestors

to teach them to their children,  
<sup>6</sup> so the next generation might know them—

even the children not yet born—  
and they in turn will teach their own children.

<sup>7</sup> So each generation should set its hope anew on God,  
not forgetting his glorious miracles  
and obeying his commands.

We must be passionate about teaching and reaching children! The future of their lives and the future of our nation is actually at stake. They deserve to know.

Let's pray for the children of our city and our nation, that they would hear the Gospel and know the wonder of the love of Jesus; that they would set their hope anew on God and would spend a lifetime serving him.



# DAY 13

## PS. CHRISTINE PETTITT – INCHURCH MELBOURNE

TITLE: SALT & LIGHT IN OUR SCHOOLS

PRAYER FOCUS: CHILDREN, SCHOOLS, TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Caroline Springs and the surrounding suburbs are a beautiful, multicultural melting pot of people. Church planting in an area with so many different cultural and religious differences has been both a gift and challenge. Phrases, anecdotes, and words have various meanings and sometimes, no context at all. Mealtimes with church family offer wonderful, new experiences ... times to treasure.

Now put this melting pot into the school system. Principals must ensure that all people groups are represented, not discriminated against, and also, supported. Teachers need to be aware of religious and cultural expectations when setting lesson plans. For example, cross-country running during the period of Ramadan, becomes an issue of safety, when students haven't eaten anything all day. A simple science lesson of making jelly, requires thought into what setting agent is to be used, so that all students can participate (Gelatin is a beef product and prohibited by some religions).

Through all this, schools are responsible for teaching generations of children, born into a radically changing society. They are forced to question their ideologies, yet teach what they are instructed to. In Victoria in particular, truth and the protection

of the innocence in children, is under constant threat. They are dealing with overworked and overcommitted families. Modern parenting styles have greatly impacted on the way parents and teachers interact, and unfortunately often, not in a positive way.

So, what is *our* role in schools?

### LOVE:

**“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”.** Matthew 5:44.

Our teachers and principals may not be persecuting us, but it can feel that way when the curriculum being presented to our children is often in direct opposition to what God has intended. We need to speak with love and grace to those caring for our children, while holding true to our beliefs.

### TEACH:

Matthew 5 <sup>13</sup> **“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?...**

<sup>16</sup> **In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Teach your children the truth of God's Word and His love. Teach them first how to receive and then apply God's love and compassion to others that He has shown them. Teach your kids (by example) how to be salt and light, within your neighbourhood, extra-curricular activities, and workplace.

**PRAY:**

For our children – that they remain steadfast to God's truths.

**Romans 12:1-2 (MSG)**

So, here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Pray for our principals and teachers – that their eyes would be opened and that they would receive salvation. They need wisdom and guidance as they assist to prepare our children for the world. That they would build up our children and families, not bring discord or harm.

Pray for our government leaders – for wisdom, integrity, compassion and salvation. We need leaders who will stand up for those things that are right and just, and care for those who are vulnerable.

**LET'S PRAY AND BELIEVE FOR:**

- » A generation of children who will seek God passionately and follow Him diligently
- » Schools that uphold families and safety for our children
- » Government that is guided by Biblical truths



# DAY 14

## BELLA RODOSTA – INCHURCH PHOENIX

TITLE: LOVE GOES A LONG WAY

PRAYER FOCUS: YOUTH

### John 13:34-35 (NIV)

**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**

There's just something about being loved. It makes you feel valued, important, welcomed, and accepted. But this generation of youth struggle with the concept of "real, everlasting" love. I wonder why?

In today's society, you find that the kind of love this world offers is temporal and constantly changing. You see daily, people buying into counterfeit love that disappears right in front of their eyes.

This generation of teens are the first to be constantly surrounded and consumed by mobile technology and social media. They get to deal with judgemental comments to their pics and posts and from this, they determine their own self-worth.

Discouragement and rejection have become a normal everyday thing. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Suicide is the one of the leading causes of death among youth in the United States. Now if that doesn't affect you then I don't know what will!

The reason behind all these problems is the lack of the steadfast love that only Jesus can provide. The love Jesus shows and extends to us must be a part of our everyday life. His love must be evident in everything we do. He commands us to love others as He loves us, we need to obey this by sharing and shining His rich and real love to all people.

How are we going to do this? We must understand Jesus's reason for why He came to this earth. John 12:47 says **"For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world."** Whenever Jesus was around others, He made an intentional decision to save, not to judge. His goal is to get everyone saved (1 Timothy 1:4) no matter their past. He saw what people were dealing with but he never judged them for it. He welcomed everyone everywhere. The children, the elderly, the whole, broken, saved, lost, good, bad. He came to save literally everyone.

I can say that I don't always do that. I sometimes judge before anything else, it's like an automatic response. In moments when I should be kind and loving, I can become judgemental. Have you ever judged a book by its cover, a person by their problems, or a teen by their troubles? Me too, but if we are going to call ourselves "Christians" then

something must change. The youth need Jesus, and the first step to this is to drop ALL judgement and show the unconditional love that Jesus shows!

We each get opportunities to share the love of Jesus. I am a teenager and I have that same opportunity and responsibility as you.... to love others and it's such a cool thing to be a part of.

### **Colossians 4:5 (GNB)**

**Be wise in the way you act towards those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have.**

Maybe you have met a teen who refuses to come to church though you have invited them 20 times, or maybe you have a child or young person in your family who is in a rough spot. Live out the commandment, love them, be there for them, and don't judge them. Every opportunity you are given make sure you represent Jesus.

Youth are waiting to find a peace and love that only Jesus offers. God can use you to welcome them in, accept, and love them. A little bit of love and encouragement goes a long way.

### **REFLECT:**

You can make a difference in a person's life. Stop waiting and start welcoming. It only takes a little bit of faith for Jesus to do a miracle.

What are you going to do? Ask Jesus to show you people/teens who you can minister to. Be ready for that moment because Jesus is listening.



# DAY 15

## PS. MATT RAU – INCHURCH SYDNEY

TITLE: WHAT DOES THE GOSPEL OFFER A YOUNG PERSON?

PRAYER FOCUS: YOUTH

The world presents endless philosophies on how to live and almost all of them are glorified. If you want to be successful – pursue it with all your heart. If you want to be lazy – be lazy. If you desire something, no matter how trivial or detrimental it may be to yourself or others – go for it.

This creates an identity problem for our young people. Whenever I've asked a young person what they'd like to be after they finish their studies, most share the same doubt. "I don't know" or "I'll figure it out later" suggests a lack of knowing their God-given calling. Often, young people get stuck in a rut for years without a clear vision for their future.

Christians, however, already have a strong calling from God about how they should live their lives and what they are to be doing each and every day. We're all called to be a witness of God's transforming grace over our lives.

### Ephesians 4:1b

**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

So how should we share the gospel with our young people?

What does the gospel offer the youth of our city?

### 1 Corinthians 13:13

**<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

### FAITH IN THE MIDST OF REJECTION

Rejection is a reality for so many young people each day.

A young person I chat to weekly in one of our local high schools in Penrith always has a list of rejection stories from the week. From the class mate who made fun of him by posting a video online, to the name calling in the playground, or the family member who doesn't want to live with him anymore – the onslaught of rejection makes it hard for this young person to trust anyone or anything.

But we understand the power of faith to overcome the chaotic nature of the world we presently live in – and we can share this faith as an antidote to the rejection young people experience.

### HOPE IN THE MIDST OF FEAR

Anxiety rates as the top mental health condition in young people.

My weekly job as a school teacher has revealed just how prolific anxiety

is in today's world. There are always large numbers of students who are unable to complete their exams in large halls due to fear. They need to be in proximity of a trusted adult and in a sheltered environment before they can even pick up the pen.

Our hope in Jesus reminds us that He is the one who stills the waves in our life – and we have the chance to model this hope to our youth.

## **LOVE IN THE MIDST OF EVIL**

Evil feels like it lurks around every corner.

The recent Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse has exposed the severity of the evil a broken humanity can display. If there is one sliver of hope to be found from the commission, it would be the unanimous feeling from everyone that evil must be stopped and that we are not going to be a generation who allows evil to triumph.

The love we experience from our Father allows us to have victory over our sin and evil nature – and we can show this love to our young people.

Our youth need role models who present the faith, hope and love of

Jesus. Christians should be agents of change in their city for young people, but we typically view young people as the revolutionaries. *How consistent is your witness to our young people?*

I pray that we would lift our young people up in prayer and devote our time to their life. They are the future of the gospel in our city and the future of our church.

*Lord, I pray you would heal the hearts of the broken youth of this city. Empower them to experience the faith, hope and love of the Saviour. Open their hearts to our church as we open our doors to their lives.*



# DAY 16

## SERGE & RACHEL POLUJNICKOFF INCHURCH MELBOURNE

TITLE: A PEACEFUL FAMILY – YES PLEASE!

PRAYER FOCUS: FAMILIES

### Proverbs 3:6 (TLB)

In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.

I love our key verse in 1 Timothy for this fast, and I had a little laugh out loud as I read 1 Timothy 2:2b *“may we live a quiet and peaceful life”*, meanwhile our 9-month old teething baby was crying in the background!

As a parent, or anyone in a family, we LONG for some peace and quiet yet find it’s pretty rare. There is an ever-growing list of things grabbing our attention, jobs to do, places to be and constant social media updates. The demands sometimes compete against each other leaving us more unsettled than ever. It can be hard to focus and set a priority. Then the routine of life’s demands might become so overwhelming that we are just trying to get through the never-ending tasks. We might find ourselves in an unsettling routine, doing things in our family because no one else will.

Stop and ask yourself, why do I do what I do?!

Despite the challenges of family life, I love my family.

This love is not just a word said, but an action shown.

We love because God first loved us and this was demonstrated through His Son Jesus.

### 1 John 4:19 (TPT)

Our love for others is our grateful response to the love God first demonstrated to us.

As Jesus gave everything for us, we ought to give our everything to Him.

When God is first in all things, the love of Jesus will overflow into your family.

This brings me back to Proverbs 3:6, to put God first in everything.

When God is our number one PRIORITY, everything else will fall into place!

Now we aren’t talking about putting God first by DOING task x, y or z. We mean by BEING in RELATIONSHIP with Him.

God created us to be in relationship with Him. He wants us as we are, imperfections and all. In order to find this peaceful life, we need to stop looking and striving for it.

Peace is given by Jesus - all we need to do is receive it.

Jesus says in

**John 14:27a (TPT)**

**“I leave the gift of peace  
with you—my peace.”**

Despite the daily chaos, as we choose to spend time with God in prayer, worship and in The Word, we will receive His gift of peace. This can totally change the atmosphere in our home!

Being in relationship with God will flow into all areas of life including our marriage and family. This helps us be a better spouse & parent by showing unconditional love for each other. As we make and plan time for God we need to do the same with our spouse. Waiting for spare time won't just happen, we need to **MAKE** time to spend together as a couple and as a family. But be flexible!

As our relationship with God deepens, our marriage will too and that will overflow into our family. I love my baby boy with all my heart however I need to love God first, then my spouse, then my children. I know that modelling an authentic relationship with God and a healthy, godly marriage is the best thing we can do for our kid/s. Even secular health professionals know that a healthy relationship between

Mum and Dad enhances a child's development more than any activity or other resource you could provide.

When Jesus is at the centre we can receive peace in our family. We will be led by the Holy Spirit and receive wisdom for when we become overwhelmed by circumstances. When we live God's way we can effectively serve Him and our family.

Yes, mistakes happen, we aren't perfect, nor will your household necessarily be a silent tranquil sanctuary, but put God first in everything, in your marriage, in your family, in raising your children and you will find peace through Jesus.

What a light we can be in Our City and Our Suburb when we receive God's peace in our family!

### **CONSIDER:**

What is your Priority?

What changes in your daily routine can you and your family make to have God's peace, so you can be a family that shines for Jesus in Our City, Our Suburbs?



# DAY 17

## PS. MITCH VARLOW – INCHURCH SYDNEY

### PRAYER FOCUS: FAMILIES

#### Joshua 24:15 NLT

**“As for me and my family,  
we will serve the Lord.”**

I love navigation. I used to love the “old days” before we had maps on our phones, where we would open up the map book for our city and plot our course to our desired destination. I loved the sense of achievement at finding your way across the other side of the city through back streets and lanes. Today, the fun has gone... We simply plug in the address and let Google or Siri take care of the rest. Tell us where to turn, when to turn, when we’re going the wrong way...

I’m sure you’ve also been stung, like me, when you’re blindly following along to your programmed navigator only to find you’ve put the wrong address in or it’s taken you in a completely wrong direction. Or the confusion of knowing exactly when or where to turn when you haven’t plotted the course yourself. To add on top of this, not only is it frustrating for you as the driver but for everyone travelling with you. I’m sure we’ve all experienced marital “discussions” as a result of some wrong directions.

Direction is important. I always love to have a sense of direction. Being missions pastor I have the privilege

of travelling to many foreign places and it’s always disconcerting when you’re in an unfamiliar place and have no sense of direction.

Likewise, in life, direction is important. When we as individuals and as families don’t have a sense of direction we can easily end up distracted, off course or worse still incredibly lost. But when you know where you’re going it makes life so much easier. You know what you can say “yes” to and what you can say “no” to. You understand where to turn and where your desired destination is.

In Joshua 24, Joshua is challenging the people of Israel to choose the direction that they are going to go. He encourages them to “fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly” and to lay aside their idols from their ancestors. Joshua then makes a powerful statement about his direction, that “as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

It’s so important to know that as Christians, we can determine and set the direction of our lives and also our families. One of the most powerful ways that we can do this is through prayer. As we pray we are speaking things into being in the spiritual and at the same time, directing our own hearts and minds.

Spending time in prayer isn't about me giving the directions to God, but rather getting the directions from Him. When you are attuned to His voice, to His nudging, He will guide you and direct you in the paths you should take.

### **Psalm 37:4 NLT**

**“Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.”**

Every day I pray for my children, yes that God would be with them, but mostly that God would give me the wisdom, the patience, the strength to lead and guide them.

Every day I pray for my marriage, not that God would change my wife, but that He would change me to be the best husband I can be.

Whether you are married or single, whether you have children or not, we can all choose the direction we go through the prayers we pray. Not that God would change everyone else, but rather that he would change me, and in doing so, change my family.

For Joshua, he didn't just say, “as for my family...” he said, “as for ME and my family...”

It all starts with me. With God shaping me, challenging me, strengthening me, building me, comforting me, loving me...

If we choose to go this direction, we will never be lost.

### **PRAYER**

“Lord God, would you help me this day to be strengthened and encouraged. Help me to be the best that I can be for my family. Help me to shine a light for you in my home. Let those around me be blessed because I am here. I pray that your presence would be with me and would fill my home with your peace, love and kindness and that those in my house would know that you are with them. Amen”



# DAY 18

## PS. MELISSA MAHER – INCHURCH MELBOURNE

TITLE: STRONG MARRIAGES

PRAYER FOCUS: MARRIAGES

### Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)

**Marriage should be honoured by all.**

Contrary to what the world says, marriage is important. Marriage was instituted by God in His word so it must be! Whether we are married or not we should honour it in obedience to God. As usual, the enemy has worked hard to mess up God's plan. He has created and spread the lie that marriage is not necessary and quite pointless. The 'try before you buy' mentality is common thinking. Then we have TV shows and media that totally disrespect the God-given institution of marriage.

However, no matter how many people believe this lie, it won't ever change the truth of God's Word. Marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman. It was created to protect children and build character. Strong marriages are the basis for a strong society. Marriage also symbolises the Church's union with Jesus Christ.

### Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.**

As Imagine Nations churches we are passionate about the word of God and what it says about marriage. We won't be drawn into the lies spread by the devil through media and popular opinion. We need to set the example to our community of honouring and valuing marriage whether we are personally married or not. We need to take this seriously.

### Matthew 19:4-6 (NIV)

**"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."**

God is passionate about marriages. He wants us to value them and he has given us everything we need to have vibrant life-giving marriages. His word shows us how to live. As Christians, we need to support anyone who might be struggling in their marriage.

### Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

**With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

## **PRAYER**

- » Pray today that we will stand firm in our convictions in the truth of God's word.
- » Pray that for those who you know to be struggling in their marriage, that they would stand firm, get any help they need and have their relationship renewed.
- » Pray for those that long to be married that they would trust their future to God and live in His peace.



# DAY 19

## PS. TROY DAVIS – INCHURCH DARWIN

PRAYER FOCUS: CHRISTIAN UNITY. PRAYER FOR OTHER CHURCHES IN OUR SUBURB.

### 1 Timothy 2:1 MSG

**The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know.**

I'm so thankful that we can pray in various ways, styles, lengths, places and times.

One thing that is super clear that the Lord desires is UNITY. You can be assured that if there are several different commands and pleas for unity throughout Scripture, then it will be definitely something we are going to have to fight for.

Jesus said in **John 13:35** **'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'**

In John 17, we see an entire chapter recording Jesus' prayer. In that we see Jesus pray for Himself, His disciples and for all believers. In verses 20-21 Jesus says **'I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me'**.

Unity won't be something that happens unintentionally but rather it is something we are going to need to pray for and be intentional for.

In my own experience, too many times instead of praying for unity and for one another, I have spent my energy comparing and complaining about the church down the road.

I personally have tried (unsuccessfully at times) to make it a habit each time I drive past a church in Darwin to simply pray 'bless them Lord' and 'let them change lives Lord'.

Scripture says that we are better together, and it is no different for the church. I didn't always see this as a young Christian. I was convinced that our style of church was the only real God-pleasing church. If a church wasn't singing Hillsong and Planet Shakers, they were just wasting peoples' time. Now, these days, I am thankful for the differences across our churches.

I like to use the imagery of a pizza to illustrate my point. My favourite pizza (when we have a coupon) is a thin and crispy, pepperoni, anchovies and chilli flakes. (I just realized you might be fasting when you read this so pizza stories may not be helpful!)

Nicole likes the Deep Pan (YUK) and her ingredients will vary. The kids just like a simple traditional cheese pizza, and Scratch (our dog), well he will eat anything that resembles a pizza, including the box.

Some churches will be simple, some go longer, some have short services, some are more traditional, some are loud, some are quiet, some are young, some are older, some have smoke machines and some like organ music.

But like a pizza, what hopefully makes us the same is the base. In all churches where Christ is the foundation, I'm not too fussed anymore. I know we are on the same team, we serve the same God, and one day we will go to the same heaven.

There is an outcry that some would dare put pineapple on pizza! Many have the strong opinion that "pineapple" simply doesn't belong on a pizza.

At times, honestly, I wonder why some things happen in other churches. Sometimes they practice things that I'm just not sure is totally right. I have learnt to look at the foundation, look at the key values, and instead of denouncing the "pineapple" on the pizza, I choose to celebrate that it is indeed a pizza, even if it's not the pizza with pepperoni and anchovies that I prefer.

Jesus also warned us to watch out for wolves in sheep's clothing. So, every now and then a cult comes claiming to be a pizza and you just know that this 'is not a pizza'

I'm pretty confident that in heaven there won't be a Pentecostal section, an Anglican section, a house church section. No, we are part of one big family. We are sons and daughters of the King.

Let's cheer each other on, let's spur one another on, let's take up the challenge to love one another and live out in unity.



# DAY 20

## PS. REGAN BRODEUR – INCHURCH PHOENIX

TITLE: COMMAND Z

PRAYER FOCUS: RESTORATION

“Command Z”. If you are among the Apple users of this day you know this term well. Nearly finished with a document, I have spent too much time putting together, complete with images and tables, a graph made with various colors and fonts – then my Benny comes in and in an instant – a literal 6-year-old 2 second distraction – my eyes look back to the screen... and it’s white! Empty. All my work vanished. In a panic, I called a friend, who just happens to be an “Apple Genius”. As I explained my crisis he laughed (as he usually does) before giving me the simple solution to my problem: Command Z. And just as quick as it had disappeared, it was back. Exactly as it had been – like it was never gone.

My life has never been the same! I type away, cut and paste, bold print, underline – with this confidence about me like I can do no wrong! Command Z has given me this amazing power – that no matter what mistakes I make – with the touch of just two keys – my wrong can be restored – back to original even!

Restoration: The act of returning something to an owner, place or condition.

In Deuteronomy, Moses goes to great lengths talking with the children of Israel – recounting their days of captivity and slavery, reminding

them of being fed in the desert, and walking for days and miles and their sandals never wearing out. He shares the rewards of God’s promises, His blessings for obedience, curses for those who walk in their own selfish ways and certain destruction in the wake of unfaithfulness.

And “when all of these come upon you” in chapter 30 is the glimmer of a chance...the promise of a hope, V.2 – **“and you return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey His voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and He will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.”**

Restore... the older I get the more meaningful this word becomes to me. Looking back on my life story, it can read like a checklist of Deuteronomy... blessings and curses, trusting and fearing, obedience and selfishness, chasing after God and running away from Him as well. The times of looking around or waking up and thinking “how did I get here?” Or worse, “how do I get back?”

While my finite mind will never understand how holding down two keys at the same time on my keyboard

can fix what seems unfixable, my God in heaven explains in simple black and white and red exactly how He gets me back to where I am meant to be.

God restores me through honor and comfort. Through forgiveness, grace and compassion. Through His loving-kindness.

Psalm 71:20–21 says this “though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once more.”

### **Nehemiah 9:17**

They refused to listen, and forgot your wondrous deeds. They became stubborn, to the point of returning to their slavery—but You! Are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness; and you did not forsake them.

God also restores through reason (talking with Him) and restoration – even unto our original condition.

### **Isaiah 1:18**

“Come now and let us reason together”, says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as

white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

My prayer of thanks for restoration comes from David, in Psalm 138:10–3 (MSG)

Thank you! Everything in me says thank you! Angels listen as I sing my thanks. I kneel in worship facing your holy temple and say it again thank you! Thank you for your love, thank you for your faithfulness; most holy is your name most holy is your word. The moment I called out, you stepped in, and made my life large with strength.



# DAY 21

## PS. NERALIE CLARK – INCHURCH SYDNEY

### PRAYER FOCUS: RESTORATION IN OUR CITY AND OUR SUBURBS

I always find it exciting to read stories and testimonies of how prayer - corporate and individual prayer - has changed and impacted cities and countries all over the world.

To name just a few - the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 against all odds; the transformation of South Korea from destitution and hopelessness at the end of World War II after the Japanese occupation, to millions turning to Christ - and becoming known as a nation of prayer; and the huge changes in Rwanda - a country torn by hatred, killing and genocide, transformed as the Christian message spread and thousands turned to the Lord and began forgiving their enemies. Prayer was a key to transformation in each case. Prayer changes things!

It is with confidence and assurance that we can pray for our nation, our city, our suburbs and our people. In verse 2 of 1 Timothy 2 NIV the apostle Paul asks us to pray for those in authority over us. Why? **So that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.** He then goes on to say in verses 3 & 4 that: **this...pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** Quiet and peaceful lives can facilitate the spreading of the Gospel as our minds are free to focus on this goal.

God offers hope to our city and to our suburbs. He wants us to live calm and peaceful lives, not lives full of turmoil, confusion and drama. So many in our city are living lives that feel out of control and they have no rest in their souls. Rather than the daily unfolding dramas pumped up by the media, God offers us a place of peace and quiet when we look to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28: **Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.** This is not only a promise for us who know Him, but it is a promise for our city and for our civic leaders who carry such burdens of responsibility. It is also a promise for the people of our city who often are living lives of quiet desperation and hopelessness.

God's heart is for restoration. God said about the people He created: **I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord and they shall be my people and I will be their God. For they shall return to me with all their heart.** Jer. 24:7 ESV

As we remind ourselves that this is God's desire, let us commit ourselves to pray for the restoration of our city and for the hearts of our civic leaders and for the people in our city to be turned towards our God. Let us also pray for those in authority over us who love the Lord and are seeking to influence our

city for good. The Lord wants to lead us beside still waters and restore the soul of each one of us, whoever we are and whatever role we play in our city.

It starts first with us. The psalmist reminds us that it is easy for us as believers to become complacent or lukewarm in our own walk with the Lord. He prayed: **Restore to me the joy of my salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.** Ps 51:12 AMP. **For God has not given us a spirit of fear,** and sometimes we can feel fearful when we look at the things taking place in our cities and in our nation. No, instead of fear He has given us the spirit **of power, love and of a sound mind** 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV.

Allow God to fill you with His love for our city today! First let us lay down our burdens at His feet and focus on Him as He restores us. From that place of Him restoring us, our hearts can then go out passionately to our city, to our authorities and to all those in need - to the hurting and to the hopeless.

As you pray regularly for your city also **let your light so shine before men, that they may ... glorify your Father in heaven** (Matt 5:16 NKJV) and in so doing, turn their hearts towards Him.

1 John 5:4 ESV encourages us that **everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.**

Don't underestimate the power of faith-filled prayers - your prayers do make a difference. Think about incorporating into your daily prayer life a time to pray for our city and its suburbs, that there will be a turning towards God, that restoration will take place and our city and its surrounds will begin to look like what has been planned is in the very heart of God.



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