

W@WEph1

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APPOINTED FOR GOD'S SERVICE

Read Ephesians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: (NIV)*

Welcome to Ephesians! Check out the map and description of this amazing city at <http://bibleatlas.org/ephesus.htm>. The site also shows you where to find the narrative accounts of how Paul got involved and stayed involved with the church there. God chose apostles and saints to be essential parts of the church, although both are misunderstood today. But Paul wastes no time in introducing us to them.

'Apostle' comes from a general 'missionary' word; but the remaining 11 disciples plus Paul had 'apostle' as a unique title. Each of these 12 apostles, including Paul, had a personal encounter with Jesus, were personally commissioned by Him and had a very special role, that exceeds that of other missionaries. They had the special task of defining the ministry of Jesus in the light of the Old Testament illustrations - so that Christians could be confident about what is true, and know how to live it out. Paul accepted this responsibility from the Lord as a 'foundation messenger' (cf. [Acts 9:15](#); [Acts 26:15-18](#); [1 Cor 9:1](#)), although he felt unworthy because of his shameful past (cf [1 Cor. 15:8-9](#)). As Paul's letters make a large contribution to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian, it is important that we realise that God had specially chosen to speak through his writing, to us.

The 'saints' are not just pictures in stained glass windows; the word that refers to everybody who is faithful in trusting Jesus Christ. So if you believe that Jesus died for you, and you want to follow Him - you are a saint! This letter is for saints like you! It was initially sent to the biggest commercial city of the area, but from there it got carried to many other places - by people who heard God speaking to them through it. Perhaps you might be the person who passes it on in your workplace - possibly by forwarding this email and encouraging others to [sign up to Word@Work](#). It could also be a good basis for a workplace Bible discussion group each week too!

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for letting me read Your thoughts through what You gave Paul to write. Help me to grow more as a Christian as I read Ephesians, and to help others by passing it on. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WEph2

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ESSENTIAL GIFTS WE CANNOT GET - BY OURSELVES

Read Ephesians 1:2 *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)*

It may seem like a familiar greeting. And it was; but there was something different about it. The difference lay in the givers. Here Father God and the Lord Jesus are equally giving grace and peace. They do not just preside over human affairs, they are personally involved in sending something of themselves directly to the 'saints' (Christians) in Ephesus. Paul does not adopt a priestly function in dispensing grace and peace on behalf of God. The apostle is a teacher: his job is to explain that these essentials of Christian faith and life, come directly from the Father and the Son to the believer.

'Grace' is shorthand for all the goodness that flows from Jesus' sacrifice for us. Central to grace is forgiveness through Christ's blood - it is undeserved and unattainable by ourselves, so it can only come to us as a free gift. Peace is not just an emotionally warm feeling: it is a declaration that war is over between our souls and Father God, as we repentantly welcome Christ into our lives.

One of Satan's tactics is to convince Christians that they are not properly forgiven, and that God has got something against them. Those lies trap their victims into spiritual paralysis. So we need the Apostle to tell us that if we are saints, we can be certain that the Father and the Son have agreed to give us full freedom from the burden of sin - and to welcome us into full fellowship with them! Perhaps you need to appreciate that truth afresh; then maybe share it with a fed-up Christian who thinks that they are worthless. Also, your non-Christian friend needs to know that there really is a way to live again. When anybody welcomes God's call to belong to Him, He will personally give His grace and peace.

Prayer: *Dear Lord God, thank you that you have promised to supply grace to me, and to assure me of your peace, as I trust in Jesus. Help me to share this truth today, especially to those who have run out of answers in life. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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POWERFULLY GOOD WORDS

Read Ephesians 1:3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (NIV)*

Are you confused about 'blessings'? Are they things or thoughts, words or works? In this verse, 'praise', 'blessed' and 'blessing' all come from the same Greek root word from which we derive 'eulogy'. Simply put, a blessing is a 'well word' or 'good word'. We can use it to praise God; but also to describe God's words spoken over us - 'blessings'. Of course, when God speaks He always acts, and so the words of blessing become synonymous with God's amazingly kind actions towards us; because God's words have great power.

It is true that we should speak well of God, because of who He is and what he has done; we certainly owe it to Him. So Paul instructs the Ephesian believers that they must declare how good the Lord has been: firstly to God Himself, and then to the rest of the church. After that, evangelistic testimony is just an extension of the overflow from a grateful heart.

Why be grateful? Well, through Christ, God has pronounced a personal welcome into His Kingdom, a place in His family and a home in heaven! Even though we do not yet experience a sinless paradise, God's Word assures us that one day we will be with Him for ever. And in the meantime, we have the power of God to strengthen faith and weaken cares; the liberty of forgiveness, and peace with God. [Romans 8:32](#) says "*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*" (NIV). That is powerful talking from God - and it is personal for you!

Now it's your turn to thank Him in private, and then don't forget to praise Him in public! It's not just personal piety, the workplace desperately needs news of Somebody who keeps His Word and can do all that He says!

Prayer: *Father God. I am amazed that you should have spoken your love into my life, and provided me with every good thing according to Your Word. Forgive me for saying little to You and even less to others. I really am grateful, help me to say so. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE

Read Ephesians 1:4a *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (NIV)*

If you are a Christian, it is no random accident! You are in Christ because that is what Father God wanted. Indeed, you have been wanted for a long time, even before the world was made - God knew that He wanted you to belong to Him and the matter was discussed between Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Those 'well words' inviting you into God's Kingdom were the start of all the blessings ('well words') we looked at yesterday (cf [Eph 1:3](#)).

It is nice to be wanted and included, especially by God. However, 'nice' is such a limp word for the immense privilege of being the object of His choice. But it is not only a matter of privilege, because God always has a purpose in mind. His purpose for our relationship with Him is that we should be holy (special for God, saints) and blameless (spotless, without any stain or imperfection). Although we all have some way to go before that becomes reality, God has spoken that 'well word' over us, and we can be confident that He will make it happen! His powerful Word guarantees that it will, and when we see Jesus face to face, all that God has spoken will be completed in us!!

Those believers, who despair because of their weakness in temptation, should be encouraged ... God has pronounced holiness over you and He will work on you and with you to ensure a good result. Those who feel that they cannot be of any use to God, should know that He has a totally different idea. So today is a good day to accept the privilege of being chosen by the Almighty, and submit to the process of being a 'work in progress'. Knowing that, should give the confidence we need to speak good things about the One who has spoken well about us. Your confidence will show; and when colleagues notice, do tell them who has selected you for a special purpose.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father. Amid all the rejection around me, thank You for choosing me to belong to You. Help me to see the disturbances in my life as the necessary inconvenience of being Your 'work in progress', Your masterpiece in the making! For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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ADOPTED AND WANTED

Read Ephesians 1:4b-6 *In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (NIV)*

All of God's blessings (powerfully good words that He will fulfil) stem from His love. He does not bribe us with nice words and then fail to keep His promise. It is wonderful to know that we have been chosen; not just to be part of His 'team' or in his 'business' but to be personally related to Him. It is even more than the privilege of being a distant relative to royalty: it was always God's plan that Christians should have the full status, rights and affectionate closeness of being sons of God. Ladies need not be bothered here; 'son' is not being used as a gender word but means having the legal right to inherit the Father's estate!

You may say, if I am created by Father God, then why did I need to be adopted? It is simple. Like the prodigal son who left home and squandered his father's money, so we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (cf. [Rom 3:23](#)). In the words of the prodigal, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son..." (cf. [Luke 15:19](#)). Our adoption is therefore all the more remarkable - God has deliberately chosen to adopt children who have rebelled against him ... and restore to them all the rights that they have abused. Indeed to reinstate unworthy sinners is not only His purpose, but also His pleasure. It can only be that God loves sinful people so much!

That is why we should praise God for His glorious grace (like the angels do, cf. [Luke 15:10](#)). His adoption is free to us, although it was very expensive for Christ. It was also so painful for both the Father and Son, as they were separated for our sake, when our sin was punished in Jesus' body on the cross. Although the unbeliever may mock our Lord, we know that 'it was for us He hung and suffered there'. So don't let your sense of unworthiness make you back off from God - it was because you are unworthy that He has chosen to adopt you with full family rights! The unworthy-feeling Christian who grasps this truth is often the best person to recommend Jesus to others.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for wanting me to be a full member of Your family, even though I am not worthy. I am so grateful for what Jesus has done so that I can be included, and tell others that You want to include them too. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THE LAVISHNESS OF GOD'S GENEROSITY

Read Ephesians 1:7-8 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (NIV)*

In the days of slavery, it was possible to make a payment to buy freedom for the slave. Jesus did that for us when He died. He bought us back (redeemed us) from our slavery to sin and Satan. That is a big part of the Gospel - that people who submit themselves to their Saviour are completely forgiven, and freed from the weight of all their sins. But, what an expense to Jesus, to do that for all of us! It just shows how rich God's love is.

God never does anything in a stingy way. When he forgives us, He does so, lavishly. But that is not the careless generosity of someone who is too rich to notice. All of God's abundant giving is done with astonishing wisdom. He knew that without His help we would have hell and no hope. In His wisdom he could not just excuse our wilful rebellion, justice had to be done. So in order to redeem us, he paid the price in His own blood. You see, He fully understood our predicament and also knew how much He loved us: his extreme expenditure was the wisest investment heaven could make.

Current concern over global toxic debt, give us a brilliant illustration of the grace of Christ. The Divine 'bail out' of morally bankrupt people is without any clawback later. The Gospel reminds us, both of God's exceptional generosity (to stimulate our thanks) and of our obligation to let other people know where their own personal toxic debt can be relieved.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. How kind you are! How generous You have been towards me, even while I was helpless and hopeless because of my sinful nature. Help me to show my gratitude to You in my prayer, praise and proclamation of your lavish grace. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WINNING PLAN

Read Ephesians 1:9-10 *And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (NIV)*

Politicians leak good news in order to keep ahead in the polls. The promise of benefit tomorrow is electoral credit today. However, God has never worked like that. He has no need to impress opinion polls - because He is God. But at the same time, He delights to share what He is going to do (so that when He has done it, people know that it is from God's kind heart and powerful hand). So the Old Testament is littered with open clues about Jesus. Indeed the whole of the Jewish Bible was intended to prepare them to recognise Jesus when He came.

But God has His strategy: while wanting to share the salvation-plan with His friends, it was indecipherable code to His enemies (cf [1 Cor 2:7-8](#)). But the Christian believer is now able to see that the whole Bible is intended to reveal Jesus as Saviour and King. And the story is still not over. The physical revelation of Jesus as King of kings is yet to come. There will be a time (known only to God) when His Kingdom will be completed - and when that comes, everybody will know it!

Until then, we have the huge benefit of being allowed to know the plan, to be a part of the plan and to benefit from it. And even that is a part of God purpose, because the days between here and there may not be easy. The hope of the Christian is the certain confidence that God will complete all that He has started. Suffering, persecution, hardship and grief are all a part of the package that comes as we trust Jesus: if He suffered, so too may we (cf [Phil.1:29](#)). Our comfort and encouragement may not come from present circumstances, but from the confidence that He will reward all those who endure and persevere. One day, Christ will be seen as the undisputed King, and Christians will be recognised with honour! So keep on keeping on, with Jesus.

Prayer: *Father God. Your Word is such an encouragement to me. To know that my future is as safe as Yours, is wonderful. So help me to keep on trusting You, and keep on speaking about Your kindness and goodness to me - so that my colleagues may desire to be found by You too. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

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SEEING THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Read Ephesians 1:11-12 *In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. (NIV)*

Life is messy! It is fine to talk academically about life-cycles and business cycles; but being caught in the middle of personal trauma or economic 'down-turn' (which means bankruptcy for some) is real life - in which there is often more panic than hope. However, the Christian has a huge advantage. We know that we are chosen without accident, and designed to live with an ultimate purpose - to bring praise to Christ so that His glory may be seen. We are a significant part of God's global rescue plan that has been carefully formulated and immaculately executed.

Do we use God for our ends or let him use our life for His glory? Unlike governments who need to satisfy their populations, or politicians who crave votes at the next poll, God's kingdom works differently. King Jesus is not kind to us because He needs to be elected, He has already been appointed and His Kingdom will last for ever (cf [Rev 11:15](#)). Democrats may argue that there is no place for them to exercise power - and they are right ... and that is a very good thing! It may be humbling, but we cannot contribute anything to God's kindly love in choosing us or to Christ's sacrifice that redeems us. The only thing we can do is to accept His choosing and His sacrifice, and then live in gratitude so that all Heaven may rejoice at the goodness of God in saving us: "What a wonderful Saviour, He even chose you"!

Wanting God to be praised, is a theme of this chapter (cf [v. 6,12,14](#)). That is the shout of angels (cf [Luke 15:7](#)), it is the song of heaven (cf [Rev 7:9-12](#)), and should be the heartbeat of the church (cf [Gal 1:3-5](#)). But, and it is a big 'but', where is the reality? When churches prefer social engineering to discipleship, Christian families rely on community wisdom more than covenant grace, and believers react to business crises like worldlings - where is the confidence in the sovereign planning of God who has all power? Not just the power to 'fix things for me', but the power to demonstrate His amazing character ... so that everybody will worship and adore Him. When His glory becomes our daily objective, all other goals will find their right perspective!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Please show me afresh how much You have done for me; so that I will live out this day in a way that will glorify You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THE CONFIDENCE OF BELONGING

Read Ephesians 1:13-14 *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory. (NIV)*

Any right-minded Christian should quietly glow with the thought of being 'included in Christ'! This passage pivots on the idea of being marked with a seal. A seal is a sign of being owned, a mark of authenticity, a mark of security and 'not to be opened' except by God! This seal is the Holy Spirit who is the resident evidence that the believer belongs to Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit's presence not only witnesses to the Godhead that we belong to heaven, but also to the powers of darkness that we don't belong to hell. To us, the Spirit is a personal guarantee that we really do belong and that our place in God's eternity is assured, and that all Christ has invested in us will be seen, when we are given a new body in His undiluted presence. It will be a great day when all that Christ has worked for in us will be seen in perfection!

So don't let the noisy din of a screaming world drag you away from the confidence of belonging that the Holy Spirit wants you to have each day. The truth is: that, having trusted in Jesus - you really do belong to God; you are safe for every day and through all eternity; you are not your own (or alone) because you have been bought by Jesus ([1 Cor 6:19-20](#)); and your treasure is being stored up in heaven. So relax and then stand up straight! Whatever anybody else says, Christian; you belong to Jesus! The Holy Spirit is in you to affirm that truth, so that you may live this day to Christ's glory. Your colleagues may not say much, but your fresh confidence in the Lord will inevitably affect the workplace too ... when they ask you can tell them how!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I know that I do not deserve the privilege you have given me - that I might belong to you. But I am so glad that I do! Throughout this day, whatever happens, please assure me by Your Spirit, that I am safe now and my future is assured every day until forever. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WEph10

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BELIEVING, LOVING AND PRAYING

Read Ephesians 1:15-16 *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (NIV)*

Although Paul spent several years in Ephesus, he did not know everybody who would read this letter. The church had continued to grow, and the Word rapidly spread out through the trade routes of what is now Turkey and Greece. The Apostle, like every Gospel proclaimer, saw that the Gospel had done its work in calling people to put their faith in Jesus Christ; and then they found they loved other believers. But for Paul, his job was not over yet.

He had plenty of experience of people who eagerly took to the Gospel but then fell away (the parable of the sower shows different ways in which people can miss the point of the message of [Luke 8:1-15](#)). So he knew there was more work to do - in reiterating the message (which he does in this letter) but also to thank God for them and pray for them (Samuel said that it would be a sin not to pray for God's people cf [1 Sam 12:23](#)). It may seem strange to us his prayers are so constant, but that is the mark of personal devotion to the Lord and His family. If we are only interested in the process of the Gospel and not the people it reaches, we are merely theological technicians - and are not behaving as those who live and serve in Christ's body.

Believing, loving and praying all go together. Faith not only produces changes in social relationships but also in spiritual passion. We should find that we have spiritual longings for those who have come to Christ (cf [Rom 1:11](#); [Phil 1:8](#)). Like people in our family (and we are really all brothers and sisters in God's family!), we desire that they shall be satisfied, provided for and make a difference. So, we need to stir ourselves to thank God for them, and to pray with the loving passion of a parent or sibling. If there are other believers in your workplace, do you regularly pray for them? If not, why not?! They need your prayers and you need theirs ... and if there is a Christian Fellowship where you work, do you support it consistently: if there is no fellowship, why not start one?

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank you for your grace that is engulfing some of my colleagues. Help me to show Your love in my actions; and to pray for them - as believers, as those with responsibility at work, and as very human people with families and personal needs. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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PRIORITY PRAYING

Read Ephesians 1:17 *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (NIV)*

Do you find it easy to pray for people? It is easy to be stirred to pray for an immediate need (especially if we have personal experience of a dilemma), but often that peters out all too soon. An immediate prayer need, with an immediate answer, does not demand endurance: undefined needs and delayed answers do. So here, Paul focuses on essentials. Rather than the day-to-day matters of health and welfare, the Apostle prays about the 'stuff of spiritual life' - the Holy Spirit who infuses God's people with truth and wisdom.

God's truth cannot be made up or logically deduced - it needs to be revealed to us. And even Bible truth needs to be personally explained to our hearts ... which is what the Holy Spirit does. God's wisdom is His way of applying truth practically; so that we will rejoice, others will be blessed and God will be glorified. These should be major priorities for every Christian, despite (or even because of) the intense pressure at work. It is not 'strength to cope' that we all need, as much as 'knowing the Strong One'. It is the believer's greatest need, that we might have a much bigger awareness of the Lord who knows, both, what is right, and how to do it.

It is right to ask Father God that the Holy Spirit will open our Christian friends' eyes to His wise truth, and give them the way to do it so that Christ will be glorified. We can sometimes assume that our relationship with the Lord runs on auto-pilot. It cannot; like any relationship, we need to get to know Him better (an active process that we choose to engage in) and find out what pleases Him (cf [Eph 5:10](#)). So why not start by selecting one Christian you know, and pray this prayer for him/her? Then why not ask the friend to pray the same for you? Start today?!

Prayer: *Please help my friend ... [name] to get to know You better. Please send Your Holy Spirit to show him/her what is right and how to please you. And help me to keep on praying for him/her as You do Your gracious work. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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VISIONARY PRAYING

Read Ephesians 1:18-19a *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (NIV)*

There is a little ditty about prisoners' vision: "Two men stared out through prison bars, one saw mud, the other, stars". Where we look, determines much of our state of minds and confidence for the future. Much C21st praying is obsessed with mud ... and there is a lot of it, if you want to dredge for it! But that was never the Apostle's approach to living or praying (by the way, where you look sets the frame for your prayer life too).

Despite many problems, Paul wanted the believers to focus on the joy that was to come, as Jesus did ([Hebrews 12:2b-3](#)). As with driving, where you refuse to focus on the kerb (if you do your drive will be all over the place!), and set your sights on the distance: so the Christian life is best lived with heaven in view. That is the Christian's hope. All the near-points can be calibrated from the straight line between the cross and the glory. There is no doubt in Scripture that God has called us to something infinitely greater than anything we experience now. We will receive the fullness of His pleasure of us, and he will receive us ... to His great pleasure! It will only be possible because of God's extraordinary and unique power - both on the cross and in our lives.

As all this is only possible through God's provision and power, we need to pray for each other, that we will keep on holding onto the long view, and not be mesmerised by the incidental details along the way: not that they have no significance, but they can easily distract us. So, setting our sights on the Lord in His glory, will definitely reshape our prayer life. And we should want to pray that our Christian friends and colleagues will let God reshape their goals too ... as we pray for them.

Prayer: *Father God. Please help me to set my vision on Jesus in glory and not be so sidetracked by the little inconveniences of every day. I need You to do this work in my life and I pray that You will do the same for my friends who are in the race with me. In Christ's Name. Amen.*

You can read more of this [Bible passage](#) online - in English and other languages - share the Bible with your friends!

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POWER UNLIMITED

Read Ephesians 1:19b-21 *That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and other languages

Power is either dangerous, or wonderfully useful, or both. God's power is like that too. Dangerous for the devil, demons and all disobedient people: but wonderfully constructive in giving new life to dead people. The most startling demonstration was not in the healing or feeding miracles, nor nature's obedience to the words of Jesus: it was the resurrection of Christ that began the greatest cascade of powerful action since the creation.

Although the cross was the place of atonement, the empty tomb was the place of unleashed Divine power. The early church used the resurrection as the convincing proof of the power of God in Christ. Although Frank Morison's book '[Who Moved the Stone](#)' makes such a compelling case that Frank was converted through researching it, not many Christians discuss the resurrection with their friends. So why not break the mould and introduce the subject ... it cannot leave Jesus as just a 'good teacher'!

His resurrection means that Jesus is alive and therefore it is possible to have a relationship with Him. Such a connection is beyond the wildest of human dreams, because nobody is higher or more important or more authoritative than Jesus, nor ever will be: and we can be His friends. More than that, Paul is praying here that Christians might go on putting their trust in a God who powerfully raised Jesus; not just from the dead, but to a position of supreme authority. Trusting that God should put every weakness in the shade today.

Prayer: *Father God, help me to know your power, not so much by my small personal experiences, but by trusting what you have done in raising Jesus to the highest place of authority. In His Name. Amen.*

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CHRIST FULFILS EVERYTHING

Read Ephesians 1:22-23 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

The 2008 global banking crisis has reminded ordinary people that even the clever people in finance and government are not all-mighty. Only God is! This verse says that all of the infallible power of God has been invested in Jesus Christ. He was the Chief Executive of creation; and is the Chief Executive of the church, which cannot be overcome.

Everything is placed under the feet of Jesus. Everything must either serve Him, or be crushed by Him. It is Jesus who commands all of creation and the church. The miracles of Jesus were a sign that one day the natural order will be totally submissive to Him: and despite all the imperfections of the church (the people who are trusting Jesus), there is plenty of evidence of Christ's powerful authority in the changed lives of believers. As believers, we are appointed to be the physical manifestation of Christ's body. Of course, we cannot do it on our own, so it is as well that everything Jesus does is to build up His church.

This should encourage us. If we belong to Christ, we belong to the only person who has the power to subdue all His enemies; and completely fill His friends with His goodness, love, peace and joy. This is true, but do we believe it? Do we go into each day confident of the supremacy of Jesus over everything, including our relatively small circumstances? If not, then today is the day to decide that the Bible is right and that Jesus really is King ... and when somebody notices that you are not shaken by the systemic workplace anxiety or despair, you can tell them why!

Prayer: *Father God. I am so glad to be reminded that You will not allow anybody or anything to be greater than Jesus. Please give me renewed confidence that this is true; and to trust that Jesus will fill me afresh today - so that I can resist fear and serve Him wholeheartedly. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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THINK BACK TO GO FORWARD

Read Ephesians 2:1-3 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

"Yesterday's news is dead", said an editor. He was right. The normal dynamic of business life works in the same way - 'never mind yesterday, get on with tomorrow'. There is wisdom in that, even the Apostle Paul said, "Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead ... ([Phil 3:13](#))". Being bound to the past is the route to failure. Yet ignoring where you have come from is the route to ingratitude and making the same mistakes again. It is only as Christians recall what Christ has saved us from, that we develop thanksgiving for where we have been brought to, and stop slipping back.

Before Jesus came into our lives, we were spiritually dead, and unresponsive to God. We followed the crowd like sheep because we did not know any better. At the same time we were being manipulated into serial disobedience by Satan (the ruler of the kingdom of the air), and our lustful cravings were never satisfied. Our thoughts and actions were always pulling us down. From God's point of view, we were fit only for condemnation. Our 'yesterdays' were indeed deadly news.

In the next few verses, this sober assessment of our past will be contrasted by what God has done for us in Christ, and how much we have changed. But what is the point of remembering those dark days? Firstly to stimulate our gratitude: and secondly to help us to understand that many others around us at work and in the community are still in the dark. They often do not know what to think or how best to act. They are consumed by their own thoughts and cannot get out of the holes they dig. They rightly feel that all may not be well between them and God. So as well as giving thanks for our salvation, we should pray for our friends; and help them to understand that they will only be able to find the life that they need, with Jesus' help.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, when I think of what my life was like before I knew You, I am amazed at what You have done for me. Thank you so much for your grace and mercy! But it makes me realise how much you want to do for my colleagues and friends. Help me to live gratefully and joyfully, and please speak to my friends too. I am willing for You to use my mouth so that they can hear. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THE BIG BAILOUT

Read Ephesians 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Insolvency is a terrible thing. Everything you have worked for, for a lifetime, has no value whatsoever. More than that, there is the shame of a sadly deflated image ... everybody knows that you are not what you made out to be. And then the practical rearrangements by bailiffs, and that might stretch as far as homelessness. Every year thousands face bankruptcy and try to struggle through with a brave face.

Before we knew Jesus, our spiritual debts were overwhelming, and there was no hope. Desperate circumstances demand desperate measures, but there was nothing we could do for ourselves. And then we heard that God loved us, and that Jesus personally wrote off all of our moral debts to God, by being punished for us on the cross (and that was even before we wanted to be saved). Amazing! God then not only forgave us all of our sins as we confessed and repented from them; He also gave us a brand new life ... like the life He gave to Jesus. That is the meaning of grace: we deserved no help and should have lost everything, but Jesus paid for our bailout.

In the hard world of the workplace, we rarely think of anybody wanting to be generous to us when we have messed up. But that is what God did, and in a big way. Like the bankrupt rescued at that last minute, we should be overflowing with thanks. Just try saying, out loud (or quietly if you are in an open office, hot-desking or on the train!) - "Thank You Jesus for saving me, thank You Lord for loving me"! His grace is big so why is our thanksgiving so small? And if anyone does overhear ... you can explain why you are so glad!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Your love is amazing, I do not deserve it and cannot repay you. But help me never to forget Your grace and always to thank You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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ASTONISHING BONUS

Read Ephesians 2:6-7 *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

The resurrection of Christ was amazing, but that was only the beginning! Not only does it provide hope of our resurrection on the day that Jesus returns; but we have already been raised! Although we still have our old bodies, and alas, our old sinful natures, God has already transplanted us from the world of the spiritually dead (where Satan rules), to His Kingdom. That is how we are able to respond to Him and to enjoy His company. Already we have our own special place in His family. Without being given that privilege, we could never have the confidence to come to Him as our Father, in prayer or praise.

And that is not all! One day we will have new sinless bodies with which to enjoy His presence. Many have asked, "What will we do"? A better question is, "What will He do"?! Verse 7 says that God will display the evidence of His rich grace ... and it is us that God will exhibit. We will all be amazed at what Christ has achieved. We will see how astonishingly kind God has been to us; and that it has all been made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Today, at work, we may not feel any different from our unbelieving colleagues: but we are! Through faith in Jesus, we are spiritually alive, we have a place in the family of God; and we are living with an eternal perspective. The benefits of our salvation are not just for heaven, but are real today. So, start the day by giving thanks, and take a moment to realise just how special you are, because God has chosen to be astonishingly kind to you.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank you for this reminder of Your kindness, making me to part of Your kingdom. Help me to revel in Your goodness and to appreciate the privilege You have given me, so that I may work with a fresh confidence that I am special to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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NO BOASTING

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no-one can boast. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

Every human success has its hero. From the Olympics to exam pass lists and political or military triumphs, the winners are feted and the losers are left in the shade. Every faith system, apart from faith in Christ, shares the same rule; the most diligent and devoted followers are honoured the most while the spiritual failures are ignored. But that is not true about those who are saved by faith in Jesus. They have no cause for any boasting.

None of Christ's saints are worthy of heaven, all are stained by sin and have missed the Divine standard. Like in the children's board game, every ladder you climb has a snake waiting to drag you down. God's perfect standard has not been achieved by anybody. That is why the Gospel is so unique. Righteousness has been given only to those who admit their failure, and entry to heaven is open only for those who know they could never earn it. That is what the Bible means by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, through His substitutionary sacrifice: all our wrong was loaded onto Him so that all His righteousness might be loaded onto us. We cannot claim any personal achievement at all. It was His initiative, and His sacrifice, even while we were unaware of our need (cf [Romans 5:8](#)).

But this benefit is not for all. It is only for those who take God's Gospel at His word: for those who believe Jesus died instead of them. To have faith is simply to receive the free gift of salvation, not to earn it in any way at all. Christians are not accepted because they are any better than others, but because they are awarded the prize that should have only gone to Jesus. He shares it with us, and as we accept His gracious salvation, all we know is that there is no way that we could have reached his presence by ourselves. Without Him, we would be totally lost. So let's forget how good we are, and, with John Newton the slave ship captain, humbly thank Him for His amazing grace.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You that you planned that Christ's death might be for my salvation. I admit that all I can offer you is sin and failure, but that You offer me forgiveness and release from the burden of guilt. I accept your offer of free pardon and a place in Your family - with no boast except that Christ has done everything to save me. In His Name. Amen.*

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POETRY IN MOTION

Read Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

The disciplines of engineering and art are intended to have radically different end points. Engineers produce function and artists induce emotion. However, in product design and architecture both are combined. It is the same of God's people. We are both functional and beautiful, because the word 'workmanship' comes from the Greek word that gives us 'poem'. God has designed us to be fully functional in His Kingdom, and to bring much pleasure and glory to Him.

But we are not intended to be museum pieces: to be admired either as trendy modern art, or as relics of a more graceful age! God intends that His artistry shall be revealed in the dynamic of our walk of faith: poetry in motion. However, the motion is no free-style choreography; it has been carefully planned in advance by the God who fits all our little roles into His big purpose. We have been created to work according to His purpose, and our new birth brings with it a fresh confirmation that we are responsible to get on with the job.

Working for Jesus does not start in some far flung mission field, it begins where we are. The work place is the ideal place to be a fully functional spiritual masterpiece (in the making!). It is the place you spend the most time with the people you see most often. So start each day and ask the Lord to lead you into those good things that will glorify Him, which He has already planned for you to do.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Help me to realise that You have created me to work according to Your plan, today. In Jesus' Name Amen.*

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REALLY INCLUSIVE

Read Ephesians 2:11-13 *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

'Inclusive' is supposed to be a socially good word with a sort of moral 'ought to' about it. Yet, somehow, many are not welcome because people simply choose their own kind in preference to others. In the early church, Gentiles (a classification word for everybody who was not a Jew), were sometimes at a disadvantage in Jewish eyes. Even now they had become Christians, old habits died hard.

Certainly, the Old Testament said that God had a special and exclusive relationship with His people, Israel, and this was expressed in rituals like circumcision. But even in those days, outsiders who really wanted to belong to God, could. Ruth was an ancestor of Jesus, yet she was a Moabitess; Rahab was a Caananite prostitute but she also had faith in the living God and was welcomed as one of God's people. There were many cultural Jews, but the true Israelites were those who had faith in the promises of God. In the same way, New Testament Gentiles who trusted in the Jesus of the Gospel were welcome on equal terms to the Jews who believed.

Being excluded is horrible, especially when you were excluded from God's presence by sin and rebellion. But all those who trust in the promise of God, in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, are brought close to Him. They are no longer far away from him, but fully included. Once they had no hope, now they have God as their friend. That applies to all: from the most religious to the most seasoned crook, and people in the workplace too. The message is that whoever wants to come to God can do so through Christ - irrespective of background culture. It is a good message for friends in the workplace; to dispel the false myth that only good Christians are welcomed by Jesus - He died for everybody, and He will include all who want to come!

Prayer: *Father God, thank you for accepting all who trust in Jesus. Help me to be more inclusive as I discuss with my colleagues, so that they may know that Jesus is not just for me but for them also. In His Name. Amen.*

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