

July 2018

# The Challenge

East Claremont Congregational Church Newsletter

*A gospel community on mission*

[www.eccc.org.za](http://www.eccc.org.za)

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## From the editor

Dear Friends

Consider a common failure in many of our lives, but one that we seldom recognize. It's the problem of a negative outlook. How often do you find your whole attitude is set in a wrong direction by your imagining what could or would or might happen in a situation, so that when you actually come to it you are so frustrated and confused by what you have been thinking that you are unable to handle the problem. There is a place for positive thinking, but only after you have first discovered a positive life, the life of Christ.

I remember a story about a man who had a flat tyre on the way home, and found he had no jack in his car. On his way to borrow one from a friend, in the small hours of the night, he began to worry about the reaction he might get when he requested his neighbour for a jack and had to waken him and get him out of bed. He began to think about how that neighbour would feel, how angry and resentful he would be, and how he wouldn't want to get up and give him the jack, that he probably couldn't find it in the garage anyway and he'd have to dig around and maybe get a flashlight and go to an awful lot of trouble. The longer he thought about it the angrier he got. Finally he arrived at the neighbour's house, went up and bellowed at the door and when the man showed up he said, *Well, you can keep your lousy jack if that's the way you feel.*

That unfortunately illustrates a problem that too frequently occurs in our lives. It's because we give no heed to the apostle Paul's encouragement, whatever is true. That's the first reality. Things as they are, not as they might be or could be. Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise. Think about these things. This is a deliberate choice of the will to refuse to think about the negative, but to think about the positive in any situation, or about any person. Then the God of peace will be with you. If you set your mind to that, the God who dwells within will express himself in terms of peace rather than strife and confusion.

Christianity was meant for life. Remember that when our Lord Jesus came he didn't talk to people about religion - He talked to them about life. He showed them that the secret is a person who dwells within, whose life may be revealed in terms of our personalities, and that everything is designed to drive us back to that. (Read Phlippians 4 :8-9)

Love Linda

## From the study: Politics in the church?

Every now and then I hear someone contend, “We really should keep politics out of the church”. And whenever I hear it I am inquisitive as to exactly what it means. What exactly is it that is disturbing them?

~~Politics~~

### The necessary separation of government and church

If the statement is referring to party politics (EFF, DA, ANC, etc.) then I agree wholeheartedly. The church should not align itself with a particular political party. Church leaders should not seek to influence a congregation to support a certain political party. Historically, when the church and state have become intertwined there has been an abuse of power. It is true of the Roman Catholic Church at many different times between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is also true of the Dutch Reformed Church and their so called ‘biblical foundation’ they put forward to justify apartheid and separate development.

There are three important things about the way the Christian (and churches) should relate to the government:

1. God is not a supporter of the ANC, DA, EFF or any other party in South Africa! But he institutes government and ordains their rule (John 19:11, Romans 13:1b). Therefore, we are to recognise and respect the authority of government. God has given us government to act on behalf of the good of all people, to create social space for the display of good conduct, and to provides earthly justice and protection<sup>1</sup> (Romans 13:1-4, 1Peter 2:13-17).
2. We are to pray for the government as we are taught in 1Timothy 2:1-2 *“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”*
3. We are to hold the government accountable by shining the light of the gospel and speaking the truth of God’s Word without fear or favour (like the Old Testament prophets spoke God’s revelation to the kings of Israel and Judah).

### God’s heart for social justice

My concern is that the statement, “We really should keep politics out of the church” is not said in reference to party politics but to the church entering into the realm of addressing social issues (that are also raised or engaged by political parties). These include issues like the plight of the poor, the needs of the disenfranchised, righting the wrongs of the past, race and racism, transformation, or discrimination against people who are vulnerable (e.g. immigrants). Are these matters that we should be talking about and grappling with as a church? Or are they political? Take the time to carefully read these passages:

***He (God) executes justice for the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind, he lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves those who live justly. The LORD watches over the immigrant and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked (Psalm 146:7-9)***

***He (the LORD) loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the Lord’s unfailing love (Psalm 33:5)***

***The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow,***

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/the-purpose-and-role-of-government/>

***and loves the immigrant, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)***

***Cursed is anyone who withholds justice due to the immigrant, the fatherless, and the widow. Then all the people shall say, "Amen". (Deuteronomy 27:19)***

***Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. (Proverbs 31:8)***

***This is what the LORD Almighty says: Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Don't oppress the widow or the fatherless, the immigrant or the poor. (Zechariah 7:10-11)***

***I (Job) rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widows heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the immigrant. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth. (Job 29:12-17)***

***For he (Jesus) himself is our peace, who has made the two groups (Jew and Gentile) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14a)***

These are some of the passages that teach us about God's heart for matters of social justice, and his call to the people who bear his name.

Because these passages are in the Scriptures, East Claremont has ministered in many different ways to the poor, those who are bowed down, the fatherless, the immigrant, and the widow. We need to continue to exercise Christian love, wisdom and ministry involvement in this regard. We have and should continue to take our faith into the public square.

The gospel is at the core of this call: we were once lost in the poverty of our sin. We were bowed down under the weight seeking wholeness everywhere but finding it nowhere. The great King Jesus, who has all the power and might chose to lay that down to come and die for us. He opened our blind eyes and set us free from the prison of our sin. He gave us what we did not deserve – and didn't do it begrudgingly but bountifully and generously. And now we have a Father in Heaven who cares intimately for us, and although we are sojourners on this earth, we have an everlasting home in glory. In light of these Scripture passages, and the gospel of Christ, what does it mean 'to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God'? (Micah 6:8)

God bless,  
Grant, Joanne and the boys



**Please remember our on-going ministries :  
bottle top collection,  
bread tags, Bless a Baby, Margaret's House, Shalom**



## Minister's memo

Please would you remember the following people in your prayers:

- Those facing cancer: Paddy Case, Fred Ross, each of their families
- Those whom we visit with communion: Sue Herringer
- Ron Wilson who has now moved in to Huis Luckhoff. He has been diagnosed with dementia
- Rory Attwood who needs a back operation
- Steve Palframan who needs a neck operation
- Eddie Sterrenberg who (probably) needs a knee operation
- Roy Boltman whose lungs are still not right
- Margie Winter and Hilary Scholtz as their both make the transition to their new homes at Huis Luckhoff
- For God's continued grace to us for mutual understanding, unity and listening as we continue our conversation about transformation as a church.



## SEPARATING THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS

***'He will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.'*** (Matt. 25:32)

Jesus describes the judgment day in these words: 'All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me"' (vv. 32-36 NLT).

How will Jesus separate the sheep from the goats? And how will you know which one you are? Jesus says those on the right – the sheep – will be those who fed Him when He was hungry, brought Him water when He was thirsty, gave Him lodging when He was lonely, clothing when He was naked, and comfort when He was sick or imprisoned. The sign of the saved is their concern for those in need. Compassion doesn't save them – or us.

Salvation is the work of Christ. But compassion is the consequence of salvation. The sheep will react with a sincere question: when? When did we feed, visit, clothe, or comfort you? Then Jesus will answer, 'Every time you showed compassion – you did it to me!' Try to keep that in mind as you go through this day.

K. Begg

**THE HANDY CORNER**

GENT'S HAIRSTYLIST - Rosemary Hacha - 021 761 0934/084 846 2824  
 LADIES' & GENTS' HAIR STYLIST - Yvonne Legg - 021 671 5908 / 0724141669  
 ELECTRICIAN/HANDYMAN - Clyde Oliphant - 021 697 5626/072 643 4949  
 ELDERLY/HOUSE/PETS-SITTING - Janine Alger - 021 683 0598/082 789 1720  
 ALTERATIONS / KNITTING - Connie Meyer - 021 6715908  
 UPDATE YOUR WILL, ETC - Gail Bergmann - Tel: 021674506/Fax: 0216711225  
 E-mail : [gbergmann@telkomsa.net](mailto:gbergmann@telkomsa.net)



**" My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

**Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."**

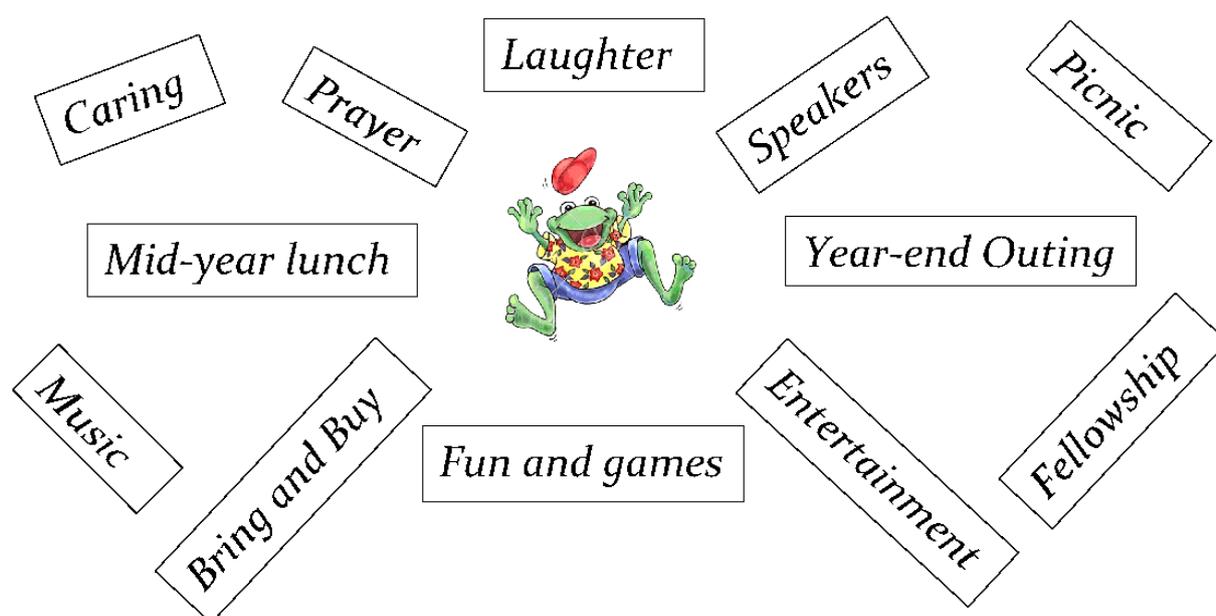
**John 15:12-13**

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**HIRING OF CHURCH TRAILER**

R50 per day (Donation)  
 Contact Peter Anderson  
 Tel: 021671 4688 Cell: 083 422 3490

# SOCIAL MORNING



Join us at our monthly get-togethers from January to November (refer to the Church Calendar for dates and times or contact Anne Snyders on (021) 671-8732)

## What Is Your Greatest Ability? By Rick Warren

***“Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do”***(Ephesians 5:15 Phillips).

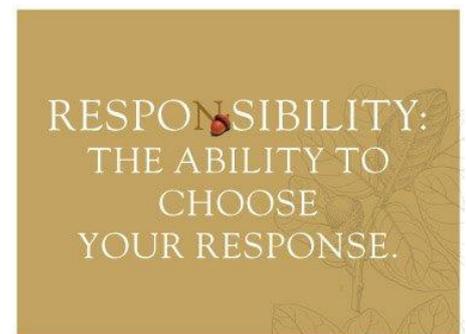
You and I have a variety of great abilities. For some of us it's the ability to do math, fix computers, or to sew. We all have abilities — even if at times we need others to point them out to us. But do you know what your greatest ability is? Responsibility. Responsibility is your ability to respond to life. It's what makes you human — and it's a gift from God.

Much of your life hasn't been in your control. You didn't choose where you would be born. You didn't choose who your parents would be. You didn't choose how your parents would raise you. You didn't choose the unique gifts and talents you would bring into the world.

Responsibility is how you handle everything else. God has given you the freedom to respond to what comes your way. How you respond to what life throws at you impacts your life more than any other factor. In fact, in many ways, life is a test of how we handle responsibility. We spend only a fraction of our lives on this side of eternity. God doesn't care about our achievements while we're here on this earth. He cares about our character. Our lives today are mere warm-up acts for what's to come.

God is testing your responsibility for what's going to happen later on. God put you on this earth primarily for two reasons: to know him personally and to develop character. In the past three to four decades, we've seen a steep decrease in responsibility throughout our culture. Many in our world live by the motto, “I'm not responsible for anything. It's not my fault.” That view is in stark contrast with what the Bible says: “Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do” (Ephesians 5:15 Phillips). If you're a follower of Jesus, you know that he is the one who gives meaning in this life. You can live responsibly because you know you're a steward of the life you've been given. Responsible people make the most of the life they've been given. How will you use the life you've been given?

- What are some of the ways you've seen irresponsibility affect the lives of people you care about? What are some ways you've seen it affect your life?
- What is one area of your life, such as finances, parenting, relationships, etc., where you feel you could be more responsible?
- How can you make the change to be more responsible in that area?



***“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”***

**Psalm 34:8**

# Not Trusting God Leads to Stress

by Rick Warren

Submitted by K. Begg

**“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God”**  
(Psalm 20:7 NIV).

Everyone trusts something. The question is, what — or whom — do you trust?

Our society tends to spurn trust — or at least we say we do. We're skeptical of everyone and everything. We don't trust the government. Employees don't trust employers. Customers don't trust businesses. When you get down to the bottom of the decline of trust today, you'll find that our society's 'truth decay' is a big part of it.

Truth and trust go together. You trust people who tell you the truth. You don't trust people if you don't think they're telling you the truth. And if you don't believe in absolute truth, then you can't trust anyone to tell you the truth.

Our lack of trust causes us tremendous stress in life. We were born to trust. God wired us with the capacity and desire to trust in something greater than ourselves because he wanted us to have a relationship with him.

If you don't trust God, you will create something else to trust. It may be a diploma on the wall, money in the bank, your spouse, your career, or a hobby. This desire to trust in something larger than ourselves is nothing new either. The biblical writers were keenly aware of it in their cultures as well. The Bible says in Psalm 20:7, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" (NIV).

The Bible has a word for whatever we place our trust in rather than God. The Bible calls it an 'idol'. God's Word says that, for our own good, we need to stay away from idols: "For your own good ... do not sin by making for yourselves an idol in any form" (Deuteronomy 4:15b-16a GNT).this day.



**Thank You, LORD!**

## KNIT A PRAYER SHAWL AS A GIFT



Many people have come to recognize the soothing power of knitting and the many health benefits it can bring. The repetitive nature of the stitches has been compared to meditating, and most knitters report a calming feeling associated with the craft. Prayer Shawls are often made to comfort someone who is ill, suffering loss or even celebrating a happy life event such as a marriage, birth, or friendship. You can turn the meditative power of knitting towards prayer, with the help of prayer shawl patterns. The main difference between a regular knit shawl pattern and a prayer shawl pattern is intent; prayer shawls are intended to be worked with a particular prayer or passage in mind. Once the prayer shawl is completed, it's a wearable knit that will bless its wearer with the prayers said during the creation of the shawl.

### PRAYER SHAWL KNIT PATTERN

The pattern is called the Comfort Shawl and has also been called the Prayer Shawl; it's from Lion Brand®

The yarn is Lion Brand's **Homespun** yarn = **Bulky / Chunky with 170g or 169m per skein**.

**Pattern Difficulty:** Beginner; **Finished Size:** One Size – 20 x 60 in. [51 x 152.5 cm] excluding fringe

#### Supplies Needed

- 4 balls of Homespun Yarn: Meadow (790-395)
- Knitting Needles – Size 10.5 [6.5 mm]
- Large-Eye Blunt Needles
- crochet hook for attaching fringe

### Pattern

#### • GAUGE

12 stitches across and 20 rows down should measure 4 in. [10 cm] in garter stitch. BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR GAUGE. If it takes you fewer stitches and rows to make a 4 in. [10 cm] square, try using a smaller size hook or needles; if more stitches and rows, try a larger size hook or needles.

#### • SHAWL

Cast on 60 stitches. Work in garter stitch (knit every stitch on every row) until the first skein of yarn is almost finished. At the beginning of the next row, attach a new skein of yarn, leaving a tail of both skeins. Continue working in garter stitch, attaching the third and fourth skeins in the same way. Continue until Shawl measures 60 in. [152.5 cm]. Bind off all stitches. Cut yarn, leaving a long tail. Thread the tail into a large-eyed blunt needle, and use the needle to weave the tail through the Shawl. Trim end of tail. In the same way, weave in the tail from the beginning of your work and the tails from where the second, third, and fourth skeins were joined.

#### • FRINGE

Cut 248 strands of yarn, each 13 in. [33 cm] long. For each fringe, hold 4 strands of yarn together and fold in half. Use crochet hook to draw fold through edge of piece, forming a loop. Pull ends of fringe through this loop. Pull to tighten. Make 62 fringes along both short sides with 8 strands of yarn in each fringe. Trim fringe evenly.

**J. Sterrenberg**

## Sculpted from nothing into something by Max Lucado

You are more than statistical chance, a marriage of heredity and society. Thanks to God, you have been **“sculpted from nothing into something.”** (Psalm 139:15). He made you *you-nique*. Secular thinking, as a whole, doesn't buy this. Society simply says, “You can be anything you want to be.” But can you?

God never prefabs or mass-produces people. **“I make all things new,”** he declares! (Revelation 21:5). So, you can do something no one else can do in a fashion no one else can do it.

**“Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that”** (Galatians 6:4).

When you do the most what you do the best, you put a smile on God's face. What could be better than that?

K. Begg

### TO ECCC WITH THANKS

Thank you for prayers, concern, encouragement and love during my brother, John's illness. He is coping well with the help of a carer. Praise be to God.

Love Debbie (Shaw)

**“.....people need more than food to live—they need every word that the Lord has spoken.”**

**DEUTERONOMY 8:3**

**Donations needed for the Maranatha Chatsworth Food Kitchen Project** – Rice, lentils, dried beans, soya mince, sunflower oil, pocket potatoes, onions, pepper, stock cubes.

Contact **Jaqui Sterrenberg**

**Bread tags for wheelchairs** – Please don't forget to collect these and put in the glass jar in the foyer of the church. The tags are sold to a recycling company and every 270 kg collected pays for a wheelchair. Sasko and Kwikloc, the tag manufacturers, have also pledged to donate two wheelchairs for every one wheelchair that is “bought” with the tags.

Contact **Jaqui Sterrenberg**

**Old style rectangular canvas camp cots** (with the fixed plywood base on a fold up metal tube frame). Any donations of these are welcome. Any available mattresses would also be a bonus. Please phone 021 785 4049 between 9:00 and 13:00 weekdays and ask for **JP**.

### WEST COAST APPEAL

Lamberts Bay, Elands Bay, Graafwater, Vredendal

Food, clothing, blankets, household items

Many thanks, Jaqui

## You're Responsible for What You Allow in Your Mind by Rick Warren

***“A wise person is hungry for knowledge, while the fool feeds on trash”*** (Proverbs 15:14 NLT).

Our minds control everything else about us. Our thoughts influence our feelings. Our feelings impact our actions. What you think matters, because everything starts in the mind. To be a responsible person, you have to control your thoughts.

But let me relieve you of a little false guilt: You're not responsible for every stray thought that passes through your mind. Stray thoughts enter our minds for a variety of reasons — conversations you hear by accident, things you see, stuff the devil puts in your way, etc.

You're responsible for how you deal with those stray thoughts. Martin Luther said it like this: “You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.” God will hold you accountable for what you allow to enter your mind.

I'm amazed by what some people watch — not to mention what they let their children watch. Many true followers of Jesus spend their time watching trashy TV and listening to trashy radio. They pay good money to see deviant behaviour as entertainment. People watching such shows have told me, “When I go see those kinds of things, it just doesn't faze me. It doesn't bother me. It doesn't affect me.”

But that's just not true!

Scientists have done study after study that says you never really forget any scene you see. Even if you don't consciously recall the scene, that idea will come right back to your mind — in living colour — when something else stimulates the thought.

In other words, “Garbage in, garbage out.” What you put into your mind will inevitably bear fruit in your behaviour and beliefs. In fact, when trashy entertainment doesn't bother you anymore, it's a warning light that you've already passed the threshold.

One of Satan's greatest tricks for attracting you to sinful lifestyles is comedy. That's why on television or in movies, deviant behaviour always starts in a comedic situation. If Satan can get you laughing at something that is sinful, you've already lost the battle.

Sin isn't funny. Sin put Jesus on the cross.

What are you filling your brain with?

Talk It Over

- Which form of media tempts you the most?
- Who can hold you accountable for what you watch and listen to?
- What are some practical ways you can help teach your children these principles?

**J. Sterrenberg**

## Thoughts for the month

Psalm 103 : 11 – 12

***“For His unfailling love toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.”***

We're halfway through the year – halfway through a journey of self-seeking and courage-mustering and learning to live brave and beautiful. And maybe it's good – halfway - to remind ourselves of how wholly we're forgiven and restored.

Halfway, it's also good to remember that how you see the half makes all the difference.

For you, is the year running out or filling up?

In a wholly broken world full of half-hearted truths and people half-desperate half-disbelieving with broken-in-half hearts because half their hopes have been taken and tossed - how you see the half is the difference between fullness and futility. And the fullness floods in when we remember that we have been wholly forgiven because there are no half-measures with God and although all our lives we're only halfway to somewhere and the best is yet to be, knowing how to see the other half is what fleshes us out whole again.

O God. Thank You that we're not done. That the best is yet to be. And that, though this side of heaven I'll only ever be halfway along to where I'm headed, You have wholly restored me. Keep me resting grateful in You. Amen

D. Reyburn

***Do we have a record of your Birthday or wedding anniversary? Even if you are not a member of the church but you attend regularly, drop us an email at [lmattwood2@gmail.com](mailto:lmattwood2@gmail.com) and we'll ensure you get your birthday wish.***



Congratulations for Birthdays go to the following folk in July :

10 Barbara Anderson  
19 Shirreen Attfield  
22 Beryl Fouche  
26 Eddie Sterrenberg  
31 Rochelle Beukes



Anniversary wishes :

04 John & Merle Kotze  
27 Eddie & Jaqui Sterrenberg  
30 Peter & Barbara Anderson

Blessings to all on their special days



***Dear "flower arrangers"***

*Thank you very much for serving the Lord in this way with your beautiful arrangements provided every week - they are much enjoyed and appreciated by all!*

*The flowers are usually taken by Grant to someone in need, so if they could be left as a gift, they will provide a further blessing in the week.*



At the moment, we the congregation are all going through a time of confusion, hurt, sorrow, bewilderment, uneasiness – and as my mother would have said – we are feeling “discombobulated”!

God has really caught our attention and focus. We must thank God for this – which seemed to originate from a discussion of pews and chairs. He has forced us to see and address the underlying misunderstanding and hurt in our church, which needed to be brought to the surface. One of my favourite readings is John 10 1:18. Jesus knows every one of us – and what is in our hearts. He is our Shepherd – and as such, we must follow. (I love being one of His sheep!).

In our ‘messy’ situation at the church – we need to keep our eyes on HIM. He has His hand on each one of us. I praise Him that people have got together to pray earnestly, and to meet and discuss issues. To be open with one another – and yes – to talk. Remembering of course, if we discuss and talk, we must also DO and ACT – and not just sit back.

I, myself, have no wonderful ideas and solutions – but I can pray. We need to pray – pray – pray.

May the love of our Lord unite us at this time.

Wendy Mallett



## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DO YOU JUST BELONG ?**

Are you an active member,  
The kind that would be missed –  
Or are you just contented  
That your name is on the list?

Do you attend meetings,  
And mingle with the flock  
Or do you stay at home,  
And criticise and knock?

Do you take an active part to help the work along  
Or are you satisfied to merely just belong?  
Do you ever visit a member that is sick  
Or do you leave the work to a few and talk about the ‘Clique’?

Think this over, member,  
You know the right from wrong;  
Are you an active member  
Or do you just belong?

**Submitted by Heather Heiberg**

## **When You Make Idols, You End Up Like Them**

by Rick Warren

Submitted by J. Sterrenberg

***“Those who make idols end up like them. So does everyone who trusts them (Psalm 115:8 GW).***

I mentioned in yesterday’s devotional that everyone trusts in something. We can even make good things — like our marriages, our families, or even our ministries in the church — into idols.

But trusting in things other than God can have devastating effects upon our lives. If we think who we’re with or what we do will make us totally fulfilled, we’re setting ourselves up for deep disappointment. The Bible reminds us of this in Jeremiah when he says, *“Those who make idols are disillusioned”* (Jeremiah 10:14 GNT).

But we do it all the time with our careers, relationships, and bank accounts. We act as if those created things give us meaning in life.

And when we do that, we’re just setting ourselves up for failure. The Bible says, *“The poor, deluded fool ... trusts something that can’t help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask: ‘Is this idol that I’m holding in my hand a lie?’”* (Isaiah 44:20 NLT)

Oh, yes, those idols are lies. Sadly, idols don’t just stop after they’ve disappointed us, though. Eventually, they enslave us, too.

The Bible says, *“Those who make idols end up like them. So does everyone who trusts them”* (Psalm 115:8 GW). Whatever you value the most in life, you’re going to become like. If you value money, you’ll eventually become a materialist. If you value pleasure, you’ll become a hedonist. If you value works, you’ll become a pragmatist. If you value above all else Jesus Christ, you’ll become a Christian.

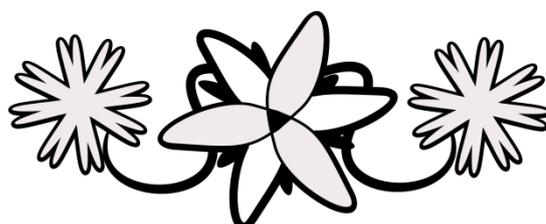
So if putting something else first in our lives warps us, why do we do it?

We want a god we can control. We want to be able to manage him. If we make money our god, we feel as if we can control it. If we make other people our gods, we set out to control them. It makes us feel better.

But we can’t control God. He says, “Don’t reduce me. Don’t try to fit me into your lifestyle. Don’t try to control me.

### **Talk About It**

- How have you seen other people set up idols in their lives that eventually dominated them?
- How can even healthy things become idols in our lives?
- What do you need to let go of your control of so that it is not an idol in your life?



# THE MOST DAMAGING ATTITUDES IN OUR CHURCHES

**Why subtle cynicism doesn't look like Jesus.**

**BY CM JOYNER , JUNE 21, 2018**

It was an attitude I learned in Church, and I used to believe it was a strength.

I thought I was simply a critical thinker, full of constructive insights. My husband and I shared a “gift for reflection” and spun many conversations around what we considered to be compelling observations about what the Church and other people were doing wrong and what they could do better. Never mind the fact that our tips were not actually being presented to those we believed would benefit from them. At least we saw the problems, right?

But with time, the satisfaction of hearing ourselves talk began to fade and a nauseating feeling settled in its place. No matter how positive a light we tried to cast it in, we were filling up on bitterness and tasting the result. Subtly, without even realizing it, we had become cynics. And the toxic effect could be felt in our marriage, our relationships and our ability to communicate Christ’s love for the world. We tend to think of cynicism as something that’s overt. We love watching the overt cynics—Bob Kelso, Gregory House, Don Draper. We laugh at their bitter rants and quote their best one-liners. Perhaps their extreme negativity makes it easier to justify our quiet tendency to be overly critical, especially in the name of something good.

But cynicism doesn’t always present itself in the sweeping, broad negativity we see on TV. In the day-to-day, it looks more like quick, unwarranted, “constructive” criticism. I’m not talking about the critical thinking required for success as an adult. I’m referring to the way we constantly evaluate and critique people and what they do:

*“Worship was great this morning! I can’t believe all those people were just standing there and not raising their hands. Some people just don’t take worship as seriously as I do.”*

*“Worship was great this morning! I was trying to be still and reflect, but the guy next me was moving so much and flinging his arms around. Some people just don’t take worship as seriously as I do.”*

*“The sermon was good. If he had just said this, it could have been better.”*

*“I was so annoyed by this guy at the mall. He had no common sense and was so rude. Nobody teaches people how to be polite anymore.”*

*“The problem with the Church today is \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Sound familiar?

Subtle cynicism, or the overly critical nature of our culture, is a toxin Satan uses against the Church. And it’s all the more damaging because we often don’t even realize it’s happening.

It’s time to change our posture. I’m not suggesting an extreme alternative of falsely positive, overly peppy Church culture that says nothing is wrong. Jesus, Paul, David and every writer of scripture has shown us that this is not Biblical.

But when we recognize the dangers of subtle cynicism, we are able to engage in honest conversations that are productive, loving and full of grace.

When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, he addressed a steady stream of negativity. He pleaded with the church to rally around their shared love for Christ, sacrifice for each other and “do everything without grumbling or arguing.” With this as our example, let’s remember the following when we are tempted to snap sarcastic quips or offer unsolicited insight:

### **THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST AND DESERVES OUR RESPECT**

It is made up of broken people. We may not agree with everything, in fact, we may be spot on in calling out behaviour that opposes the Gospel, but let’s speak truth with the love and humility of Jesus. He died for this Bride that He adores, so I’d imagine how we talk about her matters to Him.

### **REJECT ANYTHING THAT RESEMBLES AN “US” VERSUS “THEM” MENTALITY**

Jesus was honest about truth and spoke confidently to those who challenged it with their hypocrisy and legalism, yet He did so without mocking or belittling anyone. He didn’t post open letters on the town gates and He didn’t publicly ridicule those who questioned him. He met them with Scripture and self-control. Any foolishness they felt came from getting caught with their foot in their mouth, not from Jesus laughing at them with crowds behind Him.

### **FOCUS ON WHAT IS GOOD**

In the four short chapters of Philippians, Paul instructs the Church to rejoice 15 times. It’s interesting to note that he appears far less concerned with why they are negative and much more concerned with their choosing to change.

Identifying problems is easy. Following Paul’s call to focus on what is good, lovely and admirable takes intentional work, and it breathes new life into our relationships. If God can choose to no longer look on our sin, we can choose to stop focusing on the things we would change in others and get busy loving them instead.

### **WHEN WE BECOME SUBTLE CYNICS, OUR ABILITY TO GROW BECOMES STUNTED**

Unveiling flaws outside of ourselves requires little to no personal sacrifice. Examining the depths of our own brokenness requires vulnerability and risk, both of which are essential for growth.

Life in Jesus involves the death of self (Mark 8:34-35). This is difficult to do while clinging to the belief that we know more than someone else. But as we move into a space of grace, our eyes are opened to lessons we were blinded to before, and we begin to find the places in our hearts God longs to address.

If we are too busy discussing the ways everyone else needs to change, we lose the ability to see our own need for restoration and we get stuck rather than grow.

### **PRAY FIRST, TALK LATER.**

Paul begins his letter to the Philippians by writing that he thanked God every time he thought of them. If we model Paul’s heart in this way, the thoughts and words that follow will reflect Jesus.

There are times when a thoughtful, loving, critical response is the most appropriate one.

But before we jump in to offer it, we should examine our hearts and consider what is most beneficial, being willing to say nothing if it tears others down and hinders the Gospel of Christ. What we say matters. Choose carefully.

Submitted by K. Begg





## JULY 2018

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
30	31					01 Guest Preacher : Tim Tucker Communion
02	03	04	05 Craft Class @ 1.30 p.m. Prayer Meeting @ 7.00 p.m.	06	07	08 Guest Preacher - Martin Mostert
09	10	11	12 Prayer Meeting @ 7 pm	13	14	15 The Minister
16	17	18	19 Prayer Meeting @ 7 pm	20	21	22 The Minister
23 CC Teachers Meeting	24 Elders and Deacons Meeting	25	26 Social morning @ 10 a.m. Prayer Meeting @ 7 pm	27	28	29 The Minister Church Meeting after AM service

### What's Happening each week :

**Sunday - 9:15 Morning**  
Family Service with Children's Church

**Community groups**  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday  
Morning and evening  
(Community groups and Youth groups take a break during the school holidays)

**Prayer meeting in Church Lounge**  
Thursday - 19:00

**Friday – Senior Youth**  
19:30-22:00

