

BLUEPRINT

3 SEASONAL
GUIDE

ORDINARY TIME

AUGUST - OCTOBER 2018

THE CHURCH'S LITURGICAL CYCLE

“The church year has seasons of darkness, of light, of sorrow, of rejoicing, of just getting through. Our lives have such seasons too. By incorporating these experiences, the church year hallows them, reminding us that all time is sacred because God is present in it.”

- Kimberlee Conway Ireton, The Circle of
Seasons: Meeting God in the Church Year

Kimberlee Conway Ireton speaks of the cyclical, circular nature of the church year which provides us with repeated opportunities to live out various aspects of our faith and to see life through the lens of the Christ-story.

She says; “We can grow in, with and through the seasons of the church year. Some years those seasons will align with

what is happening in our lives. Other years, they will not. But the invitation to wait, prepare, repent, celebrate, receive and rejoice is always extended.”

The invitation for us is to opt into this new way of marking time. So this year, Blueprint is preparing seasonal guides to provoke and accompany us as we journey together.

ORDINARY TIME

SEEKING OUT WISDOM

The third Seasonal Guide of 2018 falls in ordinary time. So far this year we have journeyed with Jesus as he approached the cross and have remembered the power of the spirit which was sent at Pentecost.

Now in ordinary time we fall into the moments in-between. During ordinary time we notice the ordinary walking around, eating, sleeping, talking, and listening moments of life, where God meets us. We pay attention, believing that God is calling us to follow him in the ordinary love and hope and fear we experience in daily life.

In Seasonal Guide three we have themed our season of ordinary time around wisdom. Eugene Peterson says “Wisdom is not primarily knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; it is skill in living. For what good is a truth if we don’t know how to live it? What good is an intention if we can’t sustain it? Prayer is foundational to wisdom.”

In this season we will ask God to meet us in our attitudes and actions as we grow in knowing and living the truth.

The liturgical colour of this season is green, which is why it is sometimes called “the green season.” Green often symbolises growth and so during Seasonal Guide three we want to live daily in faith, and experience a time of growth as we explore everyday sacredness.

In this season of everyday sacredness, we seek to learn more how God is at work in us, and through us. To get better at pausing to hear what the spirit is saying, and thereby to grow in our listening. To follow up our listening by our actions and so to grow in wisdom. May this season be a green one for you, a time of growth in living wisdom, abounding in truth and love.

26 AUGUST

WEEK ONE

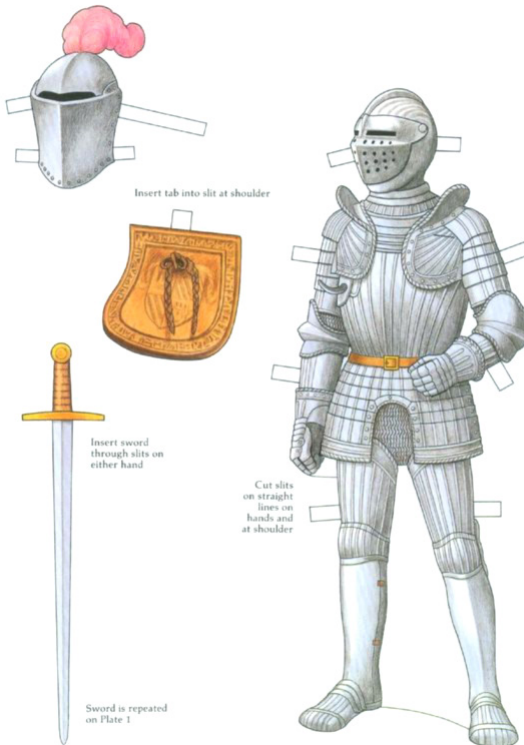
WEARING THE FULL ARMOUR

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.



Paul encourages the Ephesians to remember that to live boldly for Christ they need the protection and strength of God. The trials they face aren't just at the physical surface level of life, but they are in a spiritual battle.

Just like the Ephesians we can focus on what we can do in our own strength in the physical, and be asleep to what is occurring spiritually. Paul reminds us to be awake and dressed for battle—to wear the spiritual protective armour and weaponry from God. He says prayer through the spirit is the way we fight. Jesus calls us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and witness of his love in word and in deed.

We are called to live as citizens of God's kingdom; acting with justice and mercy and love. But as we live for God's kingdom there is a clash of kingdoms spiritually. There will be opposition that comes when we live out the radical invitation of Jesus.

If we aren't awake, we can be fooled into thinking that God's kingdom is merely about our own strength and abilities. Daily we must remember to wake up physically and wake up spiritually. To be clothed in the protection and weaponry of God and live boldly as a follower of Christ.

RESPONSE

- 01** How does the idea of a spiritual battle fought in prayer sit with you? What is confronting about this scripture?

- 02** Has there been a time this week where you've noticed something sad, cruel or unloving in your life or the wider world? Pray for this situation, asking God to equip you with protection and wisdom as you pray and act.

- 03** What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

2 SEPTEMBER

WEEK TWO

LOOKING IN A MIRROR

JAMES 1:17-27

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror

and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.



James calls us God's 'first-fruits'. He is talking about the very earliest crops that begin to produce food; crops that show the evidence of growth and the coming harvest.

Followers of Christ are evidence of God's coming Kingdom, signs of hope in a still barren field. This is what James calls us to be in a secular world. In light of this, he implores us not to tarnish our role as evidence of God's coming reign through loose morals, hate, and a lack of compassion.

Most of us can probably remember a time where God's truth became radically clear

to us - perhaps while praying or at a church service - and yet the next day we returned and fell into the same traps we did before. James talks of this being like someone who looks in the mirror and then immediately forgets what they look like.

Sometimes we too easily fall into the trap of thinking knowledge about God is enough, but James reminds us that the liberating truth of God must also transform us; leading us to care for the distressed and to keep our first-fruit faith unmarred by the lies of the world.

RESPONSE

01 When is a time you feel you've been the evidence of God's character and kingdom to others?

02 Can you relate to James' picture of looking in a mirror and forgetting what you look like? What practices or habits could you add to your life to ensure that God's truth is transformative?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

9 SEPTEMBER

WEEK THREE

FAVOURITISM FORBIDDEN

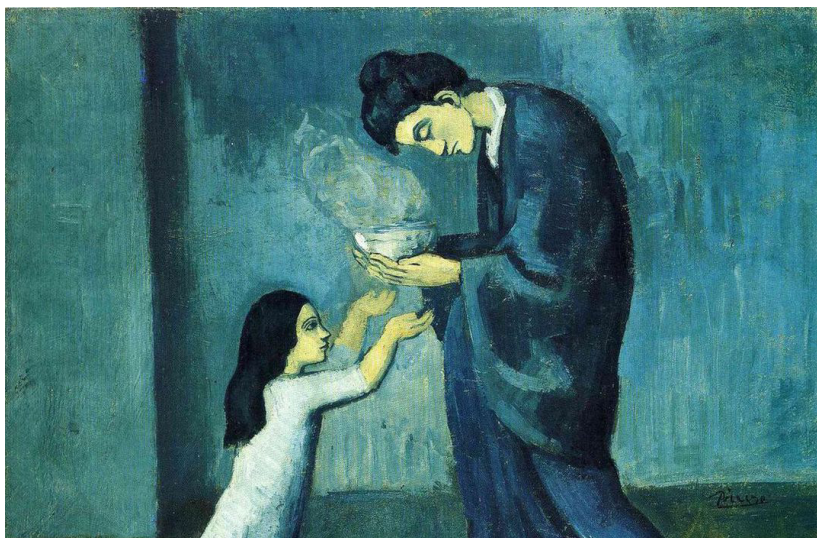
JAMES 2:1-17

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.



James tackles something that we'd rather believe is not going on. Even if we aren't telling people to literally sit at our feet, there are thousands of subtle ways we continue to oppress and belittle those who are different from us. This could be through action, or inaction on our part.

James requires us to see ourselves in those showing favouritism. He doesn't allow apathy in the reader, calling us to notice how we treat people.

The point of these verses isn't simply that poverty leads to righteousness, and riches to wickedness. Instead, the verses challenge us that everyone we meet has something to offer, and

we have something to offer them. Too quickly people are written off as being unable to participate fully in the kingdom of God, because of shallow perceptions. But Jesus calls us to love and value everyone: stranger and friend, old and young, Christian or not, rich or poor.

Jesus' greatest commandment was to love to one another, just as He loved us. Love is an action, as well as a feeling, and this passage ends with a call to action. We believe in a way of living that is so different from the status quo. We can't stand by simply with nice thoughts or words. We must also live out what we believe.

RESPONSE

01 What actions am I taking, or not taking, that may tacitly show favouritism or support the current world order?

02 Where might God be asking me to show His love in a tangible way to others?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

16 SEPTEMBER

WEEK FOUR

TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being

can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.



Words have power to build up or to tear down. This passage reminds us what our words can do, showing that words carry great power which God calls us to be responsible for.

Jesus himself had times when he was silent, times when he used words to challenge and confront, times when he used compassionate words to build up. Always, he used words to call people out of darkness and into light.

This is always the move of God, drawing his people from darkness to light.

In John 1 Jesus is described as the Word of God and as the light of world. Knowing Jesus as Word and as light is part of the revelation and mystery and beauty of our faith. When we take eucharist together we say the words 'set us free to hear your Word in us'. Here we acknowledge our need for God to free us so that we can hear the words of Jesus the Word in us.

If wisdom is the skill in living, then when it comes to our words we need God's wisdom to know when to speak, what to say and when to be silent. But we also need God's work in our hearts to continually free us to hear Jesus, and so to let the words of our mouths honour him.

RESPONSE

01 How have you used your words this week? Have the words you've spoken to others and yourself been used to cut down or build up? Share these words with God.

02 Jesus is always calling us from darkness to light. What are the words you use to talk about yourself or others that Jesus would seek to transform?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

23 SEPTEMBER

WEEK FIVE

BECOMING WISE

————— JAMES 3:13-4:3 —————

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want,

so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

JAMES 4:7-8

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.



Close your eyes for a moment and imagine the face of someone you consider to be wise. Perhaps it's a beloved fictional character: Gandalf or Dumbledore. Or a real-life hero: Mandela, Luther King, Gandhi. Or someone you know personally: a parent-figure or teacher.

James ignites our imagination by painting a picture of two contrasting wise persons. The first follows the World's wisdom: that of following selfish interests, guided by their desires and ambitions. Such wisdom may get us success in worldly terms, but invariably brings us into conflict with others because of how we are marking our success.

This wisdom pollutes our interior life and inhibits us from

following God's command to love as Christ did.

The second wise person is humble and lays down their own ideas before God. 1 Corinthians 27 says "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

Worldly wisdom makes us think our success depends on us, and that we need to have it all together. But the wisdom of God is that we don't have it all together but can receive God's transforming work in us. God's wisdom makes us more like Jesus; more loving, humble, merciful and peaceful. God's wisdom is a gift, which can be received if we are humble enough to ask God for it.

RESPONSE

01 What preconceptions of wisdom might you need to lay aside to make room for God's wisdom?

02 Is there a conflict somewhere in your life that God might call you to resolve, acting in peace, humility and love?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

30 SEPTEMBER

WEEK SIX

RHYTHMS
OF PRAYER

JAMES 5:13-20

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.



James encourages us with guidelines around how to pray faithfully, both as a singular follower of Christ and as a community after God's heart.

In all situations James tells us to set up rhythms of sharing everything with God. When we confess our sins to each other, we move into a place of trust and accountability together. When we seek after the people in our communities that have wandered from God, we express love and draw them back towards a God and a family who desire reconciliation.

When we pray with the elders and intercede for one another, we are promised that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James told us that “when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6).

Sometimes it's hard to pray in faith for others, and we often feel like that windswept wave in the face of the desperately raw needs within the family of God. But God Himself is faithful, and recognises that our apprehension and doubt are not signs of disbelief, but of our limitations to bring healing, which we can only do in His strength.

RESPONSE

01 What rhythms of prayer do you have to sustain you in the ups and downs of life?

02 Is there an area of doubt or fear in your relationship with God which you'd rather pretend wasn't there? Could you invite God to see this in you and speak to this?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

7 OCTOBER

WEEK SEVEN

JESUS DEFEATS THE SYSTEM

HEBREWS 1:1-4

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

HEBREWS 2:5-12

*It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?
You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honor
and put everything under their feet."*

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."



Paul begins this passage from Hebrews telling his audience that God once spoke through prophets, but now he has had the final word through Jesus. Christ was holding the universe together long before he became flesh, but in Jesus we saw this revealed to us in human form - "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." In other words: "If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus!"

Jesus is the final word on everything we ever knew about God beforehand, so when we read the scriptures we must look at everything prior to

Christ through the lens of who he is. The story of the Bible is the progressive revelation of God's nature, culminating and perfected in Jesus.

Paul continues by telling the Hebrews that this perfect revelation of God was not complete until Jesus died - "(he) made the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered." In other words: our picture of God is not complete unless we know him as the one who died on a cross. God is not one who defeats darkness by violence, but allows himself to be consumed by that violence so it will have no power over him or his children anymore.

RESPONSE

01 How would it change your perspective of God and the scriptures knowing that Jesus is the lens through which we view everything else?

02 God is most perfectly represented in our world when we defeat darkness through suffering. How would this change your life day to day if you lived out of this truth?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

14 OCTOBER

WEEK EIGHT

THE WORD IS ALIVE
AND BRINGS TRUTH

HEBREWS 4:12-16

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



Paul begins by telling the Hebrews that the word God is a dividing force that enters our conscience and forces us to reckon with reality.

It exposes our hidden motives, and lays us bare before God. Jesus talked of two realities: the Empire of this age (which has established its reign through lies and propaganda), and the Kingdom of God (which takes its lead from what is true).

One of the roles of scripture is to confront our falsehoods and to call us to live as people who really believe that Christ's death and resurrection is a present and continuing reality. This should come to shape our every decision.

From this place, Paul challenges his listeners to "hold firmly to the faith we profess." "Don't be swayed by the false promises and dogmas of the Empire, but live faithful to the confronting reality Jesus has revealed to us!"

It was Jesus commitment to truth as shown by the Father which ultimately led to his crucifixion, so Paul reminds the people that they can expect conflict with the world as they live into this reality too.

He tells them to take heart, knowing that wherever this commitment to truth takes us, it will be a road that Jesus has already walked before us already.

RESPONSE

01 We live in a culture where truth is often viewed as fluid. How does it feel to hear Paul speaking to Christians of a clear distinction between truth and falsehood?

02 Where has your commitment to Christ's truth lead you into conflict with the world around you? If it hasn't, where might you be called to speak out or stand up where you haven't previously?

03 What has God been speaking to you about? What will you do to respond to this in the coming week?

