

WEEK FIVE

Spiritual Wellbeing

LEADERS' RESOURCES

Extracts adapted from 'God's Plan For Your Wellbeing' by Dave Smith (Waverley Abbey Resources)

In the fifth century, Saint Augustine famously said: 'You [Lord] have made us for yourself, and *our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you*' (my italics). Many authors have sought to describe this human condition. In 'Christ Empowered Living' CWR founder Selwyn Hughes wrote: 'God has built into us a desire for relationship with him, which if not satisfied leaves us open and vulnerable to other sources of satisfaction. If God is not satisfying our souls, we will seek something else to satisfy us. This is where our problems begin... This desire for relationship with God is described in the Bible by many words – desire, hunger, longings, but perhaps the most descriptive of these words is thirst.'

In 'Invitation to Silence and Solitude' Ruth Haley Barton takes it a stage further: 'There is an even greater truth: before you were even aware of your desire for God, God desired you. He created you with a desire for him that groans and yearns in the very fibre of your being.'

Spiritual birth

If you have accepted the new life Jesus offers, thank him for the wonderful privilege of being a child of God and of having his Spirit within you. Then, ask him to fill and re-fill you with his presence. Pray for a season of fresh encounters with the presence of the living God.

If you have never experienced Jesus coming into your life, then why not invite him to do so today? You could use this prayer:

A Prayer of Invitation

Lord Jesus, I admit my need of you and invite you to come and forgive me. I believe that you died and rose again so that I could receive new joy, purpose, hope and wellbeing. Please come into my life and fill me with your Holy Spirit. I commit to follow you and your ways all the days of my life. Amen!

God's Story

Want to know more about becoming a Christian? Watch the extra video 'God's Story' which group leaders can download with this session.

What difference does Jesus make?

Here are reminders from the Bible of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

I am eternally loved by God. (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 1:5)

I am personally chosen by God. (Ephesians 1:4; John 15:16)

I am saved by God's amazing grace. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I am adopted into God's family. (Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 1:5)

I am completely forgiven. (Colossians 1:13-14; Ephesians 1:7-8)

I am the righteousness of God. (Romans 5:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

I am a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am God's masterpiece. (Ephesians 2:10)

I am being sanctified. (Romans 6:1-14)

I belong to God. (Romans 14:7-8; 1 Peter 2:9)

I am the dwelling place of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16; Galatians 2:20)

I am God's heir and a co-heir with Christ. (Romans 8:16-17)

I am deeply and unconditionally loved by God. (Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 3:18-19)

Learning to Pray

You can find help if you want to try praying on www.trypraying.co.uk or on www.hopespaces.com

Reading the Bible

You can order a copy of one part of the Bible, the part that is a biography of Jesus called Mark's Gospel, from the HOPE shop www.hopetogether.org.uk/shop

Living a spiritual life

In his book 'Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith' theologian Henri Nouwen wrote: 'Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life... We don't take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to him.'

Pathways to develop a relationship with God

1. Read and reflect on Scripture – expect God to speak to you.
2. Journal – write down your reflections from your daily experiences and your

time in the Bible, recording what you sense the Lord saying to you.

3. Pray the Lord's Prayer – taking a phrase at a time as a guide.
4. Pray other prayers that are recorded in the Bible – such as the Old Testament Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10) and the New Testament prayers of the apostle Paul (Ephesians 1:17–19; 3:16–19).
5. Pray in the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26–27; 1 Corinthians 14:14–15; Ephesians 6:18).
6. Sing worship songs to God – there are many great resources to aid you in this.
7. Pray the Prayer of Awareness, or 'Examen' (see session 4).
8. Pray set prayers or 'offices', such as the daily prayers of the Church of England.
9. Spend time in solitude and silence – learning to be still, pausing to either meditate on Scripture or just bask in God's loving presence.

DESIRE, DISCIPLINE, DELIGHT

The progression that we normally go through in our relationship with the Lord is a journey of desire, into discipline and into delight.

1. Desire: a strong longing, a deep need, a great thirst for God. But desire alone won't lead to spiritual satisfaction and wellbeing. Rather, we need to embrace...
2. Discipline. This is where the rubber hits the road! If the key to our spiritual wellbeing is our relationship with God, which in turn is of core importance to wellbeing in every other area of our lives, then we need to be disciplined as well as spontaneous in our development of this relationship. Just like discipline helps us grow in other areas of our lives, so spiritual disciplines help us grow spiritually. These include living a life of thanksgiving, slowing down, being present, celebrating the Sabbath, praying, reading the Bible, practising solitude and silence and learning to listen to the voice of the Spirit.
3. Delight. 'Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart' (Psalm 37:4, ESV). Our seeking will lead to finding, as God increasingly reveals himself to us satisfying our deep spiritual thirst in a way that only he can.