

# The Passion of the Spirit – To Make Us Whole

Cornerstone Community Open Week – Dubbo 2008 – Peter Volkofsky

## 1. In Our Being

**Reading I – Confidence** - Much of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christianity assumes a pessimistic attitude to the possibility of the Holy Spirit's work via small group body-life and individuals actually walking in the Spirit and experiencing a vibrant relationship with God in the mundane business of life. This pessimism shows itself in the proliferation of conferences and professional priestcraft events that promise to boost the spirituality of those who come – in actual fact they merely perpetuate the Christian population's dependence on quick-fixes. This obsession with *expert helpers* whether they are theologians, musicians or charismatic personalities, betrays a deep-seated belief that 'the mystery of Christ in you' (Colossians 1:27), was wishful thinking by the Apostle Paul and not the real reason why Christianity won the Roman world. We would much rather have someone else control and manage our adventures with God.

## **Reading II - Faith**

**Jesus said, 'Oh faithless generation. How long am I to bear with you!'**

**Jesus' frustration at the lack of faith in those around him gives us a clue to a spiritual secret and it is this: faith is an act of the will that unlocks the very power of God, not because it knows what is going to happen the way the faith-spin-doctors would have you believe it, but because it knows three facts 1. That God is good 2. That God is in charge 3. That right now I have the ability to unlock his power by a simple act of obedience.**

**Reading III- being skilled for having real bodies in eternity-** 'Christians ... of all men must not think of spiritual joy and worth as things that need to be rescued or tenderly protected from time and place and matter and senses. Their god is the god of corn and wine and oil. He is the glad creator. He has become himself incarnate. The sacraments have been instituted. Certain spiritual gifts are offered us on the condition that we perform certain bodily acts. To shrink back from all that can be called nature into negative spirituality is to run away from horses instead of learning to ride. There is in our present pilgrim condition plenty of room for renunciation, but behind all asceticism the thought should be, 'who will trust me with a spiritual body if I cannot even control an earthly body? These small and perishable earthly bodies were given to us as ponies are given to schoolboys. We must learn to manage these not that we may someday be free of horses altogether, but that someday

we may ride bareback, those greater mounts, those winged, shining and world-shaking horses which perhaps even now expect us with impatience, pawing and snorting in the kings stables.’ (April 30<sup>th</sup> Business of Heaven)<sup>1</sup>

**Reading IV** – I Corinthians 13

## **Reading V - Knowing Black Dog / White Dog**

there was once a pub owner who had two dogs. One white and the other black. Every night he would have a dog fight and take bets on which one would win. He always won the bet and his trick was simple, the dog that won was the dog he had fed.

Our spiritual life is the same. When you give your life to Jesus his spirit comes to live inside you and you have a new nature. The real you is the one that lives to Christ but your old nature stays around until the day of judgement when it is thrown away forever. So: until then, you are left with the responsibility of winning the fight. The smartest way is to feed your new nature and starve your old nature.



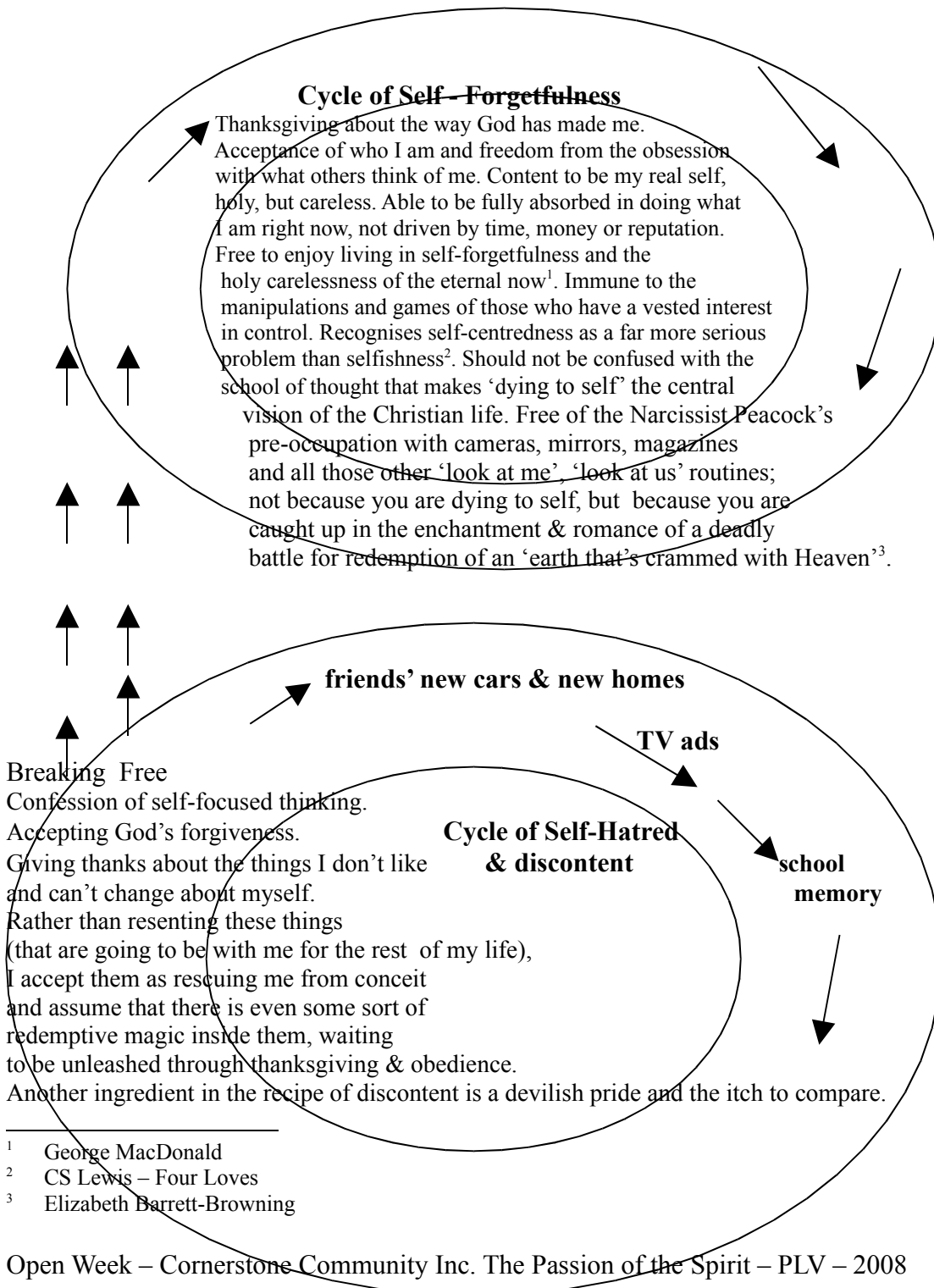
**Reading VI – Ambition** - ‘What you notice about yourself ... you are a nice person, if virtue comes easily to be beware, much is expected of those to whom much is given. If you mistake for your own merits what are really God’s gifts to you by nature, if you are content with simply being nice, then you are still a rebel and all those gifts will only make your fall more terrible, your corruption more complicated and your bad example more disastrous. The devil was once an archangel.’

**Reading VII – Growing** - Every time you obey God, you turn another page of the *Book That Is You*. You bring into real existence what your Author hoped and dreamed would happen. That’s why someone has said “A Life lived in Fear is a Life Half-Lived.” The first step is to accept that our model of reality is flawed and to let the flaws be exposed. Suffering and failure now become a cause for joy as our illusions about God and life are shattered.

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<sup>1</sup> CS Lewis Miracles Ch.16

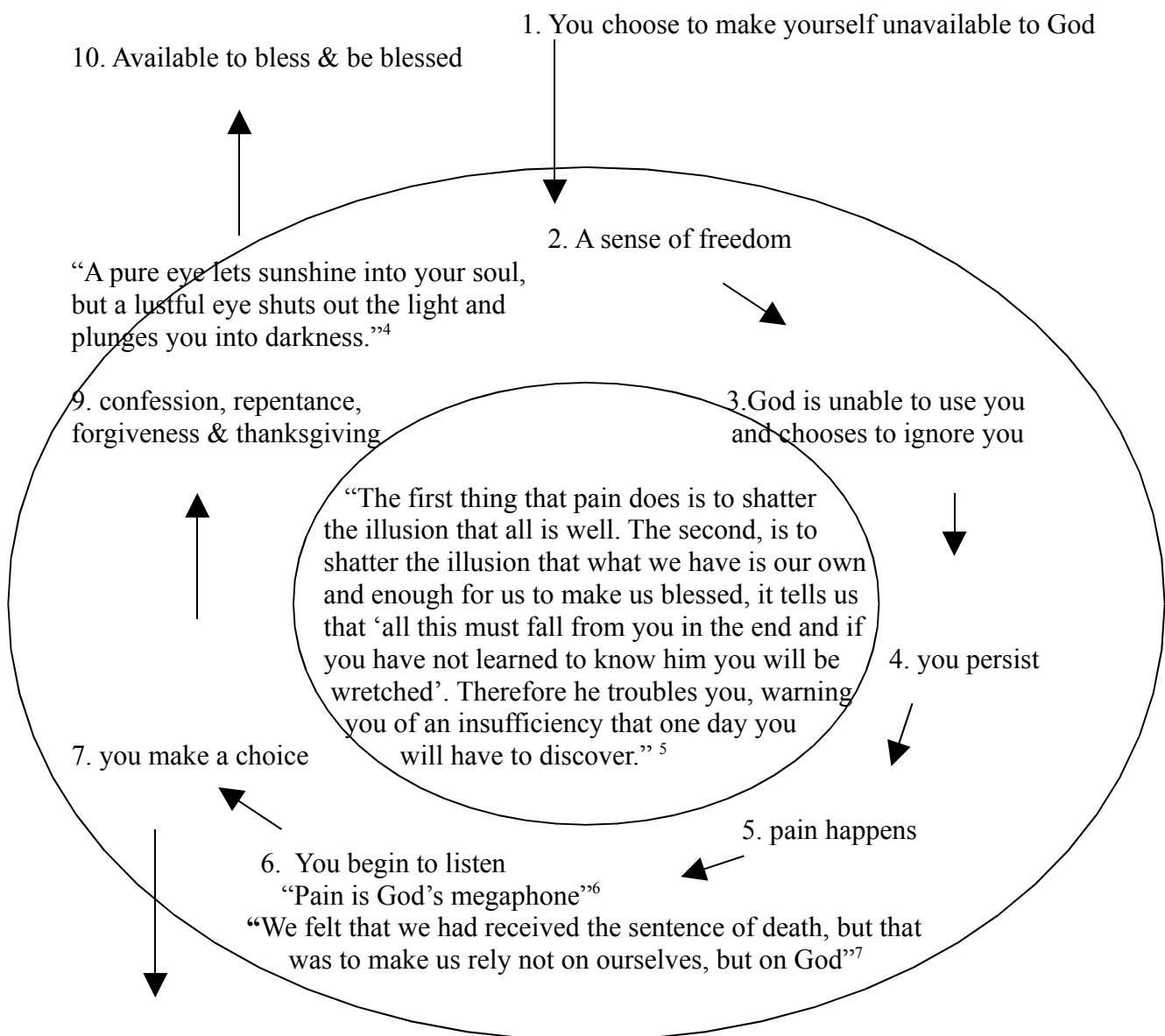
**Reading VIII – Understanding Self-Hatred & Self-Forgetfulness**



Healthy pride rejoices in achievements whether they are yours or another's.  
 "I'm proud of that..." is a normal and healthy response to a job well done,  
 but in a millisecond it's all poisoned by Lucifer's thought, "and it's better than *their's*..."

'family tapes' in my head ← the 'morning mirror'

**IX - The Cycle of Unnecessary Pain**



<sup>4</sup> Luke 11:34

<sup>5</sup> CS Lewis. *The Problem of Pain*

8. The lights go out  
“The devil was once an Archangel”<sup>8</sup>

## **2. In The Body**

**Fantasy:** Commitment to Christ intellectually but not to the lifestyle or to an organised community leads to the *problem of fantasy*.

**“But you must keep on shoving all the virtues outward till they are finally located in the circle of *fantasy* and all the desirable qualities inward, into the will. It is only as they reach the will and are there established as habits that the virtues are really fatal to us.” (Screwtape 6- CS Lewis)**

**Reading I - Loss of Identity** – right now young people are staying away from church, often for good reasons, but that’s no excuse for dispensing with real body-life. There’s no question that your spiritual life and power will cave in without some sort of regular mentoring and body-life experience. The tendency is to look for this in social life and get together with those we like, but that’s an abuse of the body, *using* it instead of *serving* it. *Without regular times of real body life, you will begin to forget who you are and that is the very thing the devil tried to do to Jesus in the wilderness. Soon you will find yourself busily working hard to make a crust (remember the bit about bread?), worshipping the idols of your culture (fall down and worship me) and tempting God (cast yourself down).*

**Reading II - Service** is the best antidote in the end. It’s a truism that the ‘devil finds work for idle hands’. With the loss of power and interest in church, the temptation is to throw ourselves onto the treadmill of money and work. But the Holy Spirit is hungry for real Christian body-life and ministry. Without it there will be droves of young couples who will run round in circles on the treadmill of work, socialising and the occasional prayer meeting, with a God who is really just a *Spare-Tyre*. ‘Alone, alone, around the restless wood of conscious evil runs a lost mankind, dreading to find its father.’<sup>1</sup>

### **Discussion Question**

If body-life is ‘the intentional arranging of interaction between followers of Jesus Christ and allowing them to meet each others’ needs, build each others’ faith and listen to the voice of the Spirit’ – what can we do to facilitate that more in our home group/church?

**Reading III - That great gift of 'What to Notice', that the Holy Spirit gives to us ... hence our failure to notice is the greatest giveaway.**

What you notice about the others... ‘Friendship, then, like the other natural loves, is unable to save itself. In reality, because it is spiritual and here faces a subtler enemy, it must even more wholeheartedly than they, invoke the divine protection if it is to remain sweet. For consider how narrow its true path is, it must not become what people call a mutual admiration society; yet if it is

<sup>6</sup> CS Lewis.

<sup>7</sup> St. Paul 2Cor1:8,9

<sup>8</sup> CS Lewis. *Mere Christianity* 4.1

<sup>1</sup> WH Auden

not full of mutual admiration, of appreciative love, it is not friendship at all. For unless our lives are to be miserably impoverished, it must be for us as it was for Christina and her party in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "They seemed to be a terror one to the other, for that they could not see the glory each one on herself which they could see in each other. Now therefore they began to esteem each other better than themselves."<sup>8</sup>

#### **Reading IV – Ability to Be Yourself**

Our politically-correct-inebriated world expects friends to instinctively lean towards praise and affirmation. It was once called flattery and poses an insurmountable barrier to friendship, inviting contempt from the recipients. If we are to somehow co-operate with a genuine experience of God, in this relationship, we must not pander to pride in the name of friendship. 'True friendship is opposition' remember – 'the human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self will as long as all seems to be well with it.' (Lewis) The director is to be both a dentist and an artist and this is true for both parties – those being guided and encouraged, need to be very frank with their director. If there's something on which they very pointedly and unmistakably disagree, sooner or later it must be brought to light, or they will never be able to have a mature and satisfying relationship with those they are trying to help. 'I cannot agree with you at all!' is sometimes the statement that sparks the best friendships of all.

**Questions** - If meekness is taken from the image of a warhorse in submission to its master in battle – what would you think that means for you in your day to day life?

#### **Reading VI – Polite Ways**

**A moment in the life of an interesting, multitasking, tribal, forest.**

(forest = a post-modern word for a lounge room)

'Well I gets myself there and what do I find? *She*, the great 'social host' is glued to her mobile phone, the guests have had to introduce themselves to each other, the television is blaring, old mate over here, who wouldn't know a real conversation if he fell over one, is carrying on a monologue at the dinner table, with an audience who are all checking their e-mails. That's *multitasking*. And then there's the floor - you can feel the grime through your shoes. I try not to look too hard in case I find what I did last time – maggots! That's right maggots from the flies which *she* seems to think are a sign of a bloody healthy ecosystem. Flies everywhere. That's *forest*. The brats are sitting in the most comfortable chairs while the older guests have to stand, not that there's much to sit on anyway. The floor is covered with a scattering of pizza crumbs, toast and cereal, like one of those old movies where they spread a film of crap on the floor to catch the invisible man. That's *tribal*. Well, since no one has even so much as offered me a drink, I'll get one myself - oh no I won't, the sink is loaded with dirty dishes, I'm sure that's mould I can see. That's *interesting* – and for me that's it!'

#### **Reading VII - Love**

You might laugh, but what is really missing here is love. Love for your neighbour will cause you to see things from their point of view, to go out of your way to make them comfortable and happy. At first it will seem like a chore, but with time it becomes a way of life and then a climate which seems to spread into everything, even the household pets. Once you begin to feel God's love, there's one more barrier, the fear of being different. It takes courage to make a fuss over someone, but once it happens in one place, it's infectious. In a tired world of post-modern narcissism, it takes real spiritual energy to do the smallest of things – even the 60 seconds to sweep the kitchen floor seems too hard when you are entranced by a text-window. In some homes, the spell has been well and truly broken - you are made to feel as if they feel very lucky to have you visit and you know that this a place where they like people.

<sup>8</sup> CS Lewis p.82 The Four Loves

**DVD** – Band of Brothers – Session I – *Currahee*

**Reading IV** – Colossians 1:24 – 2:5

Why are the efforts of grace and courtesy so significant at Currahee?

### **3. The Holy Spirit In Sex and Romance**

**Reading I** - Young-adult singles often get discouraged around groups that are fiercely missionary minded. Everything, even romance, can get frozen into a lock-step process of discipleship and mentoring. The older couples and the hard-core youngsters *'sort of forget'* about the single young adults and their deeply passionate longings for things like breasts and bodies and crazy dreams of romantic nights alone with a lover. It's easy to be hard but very hard to be wise and gracious without giving in to the sexuality freaks *or* the frozen-body (docetic) people. Maybe that's why Song of Solomon, which mentions a woman's breasts sensuously at least 8 times, was put alongside Isaiah, which nails up the problems of immorality very bluntly.

## 4. The Holy Spirit and Evil :

**Reading I - the 'old friend'** It's like this ... We've lost our way in a beautiful forest, invaded by evil. Our dinner tables, our nerve endings, sex and families are all affected. On the one hand there's a stimulation of nerve endings, a transmission of chemicals to chemical receptors which takes place when we eat a nice meal, enjoy a drink, run a race or have sex – but this can also be imitated when we take a drug trip, commit adultery, get forcefully injected with heroin, molested or raped. At first glance we seem to be just a sensate bundle of nerve endings, like the rest of the animals, but a brief reading of human history shows that it's starkly different to nature and littered with examples of unspeakable evil. This evil displays a disturbing capacity for stealth, burying it's seeds deep in the soul of every human being and conspiring to alienate us from God. We are kept under it's power, although it no longer has any authority to do so. It insinuates itself into our affections like an old friend at the dinner table, at school, at church and in our love life, but one day whatever is left of it in us will be torn out at death and dumped into an infinite abyss.

**Reading II - Grumbling**“ The whole difficulty of understanding hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly nothing. But you'll have had experiences. It begins with a grumbling mood and yourself still distinct from it; perhaps criticising it. You can repent and come out of it again, but there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine.”<sup>1</sup>

**III- Temptation:** you do have to ask the question 'are you there just for yourself or are you seriously there with Jesus as your King?' If that's the case, then decide you are going to have a, 'take no prisoners' approach to temptation. Never go on your own and if you do go with a group, do it with a very deep sense of your own weakness and awareness that you may be doing just what the girl was doing in *The Thrumming*: 'a feast of her favourite stuff, straight off the shelf, in all its thrumming, murmuring, sweet-screaming, hypnotic glory. She'd already felt it in her i-pod, tasted it, enjoyed it, and wanted to be owned by it, had allowed herself to belong to it, whilst saying she did not believe in it ... right there, being entertained at the church door by a desecration, just never stopped to think what it was she was enjoying. All the fibres of will power had been soaked away, bathed in a marinade of pure lolling-naked pleasure. ... a lesson in the basics, 'they watch with their ears'. Keep the ears happy and all is excused.' It was Lewis who said, in response to those who scoffed that he must have been too good for them to go to their party, 'On the contrary, the reason I can't go to your party is that I am not good enough!'

## IV- Internet Addictions

<sup>1</sup> Great Divorce 9.2 CS Lewis

Addictive behaviours related to the internet are destroying the lives of young people everywhere, especially men. Time and energy, two things quickly absorbed by an indulgent and complacent attitude towards the net. This complacency often has its roots in a popular misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian that goes something like this: 'I prayed a prayer once and that means it's all sorted'. Have an intentional discussion and agree on some basic 'house rules' as far as the use of computers and phones. Consider the following: -

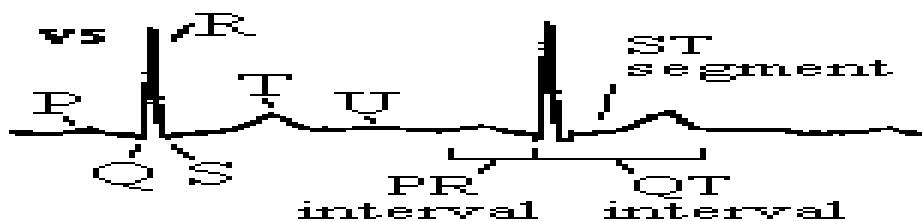
- Times when the phones are to be turned off
- A day free of computer and TV
- Do all your DVD's and CD's stand the 'conscience test' of being put on the shelf next your bible?
- Placement of computers in semi-public areas to guard against temptation and encourage transparency
- Without allowing it to become pious religious showmanship, a symbol could be used in the house, eg: a towel, a dish or a wrist-band that reminds you of your responsibility to serve one another. Team members could take turns to be the custodian or carrier of the symbol

### **Resources:**

- Dealing with pornography at [www.family.org](http://www.family.org)
- Popular Culture and Porn: *Dancing With The Devil* (Audrey Harper. Kingsway. Biography of an ex-witch)
- Masculine complacency: *The Intentionality Pledge* (unpublished manuscript available from Peter Volkofsky)

## **V. The Spiritual ECG: Flat-lining or Beating?**

There are six important spikes on the spiritual heartbeat that can diminish and even lead to *flat-lining*, aka spiritual death; no matter what sort of prayer you once prayed. Below is a short list of six of these 'spikes'.



P = Personal evangelism Q = Quiet times R = Real body life  
S = Study of the scriptures T = Tutored by a mentor U = Union with Christ

## **VI - Escape Routes to Holiness**

A mysterious weapon in the fight with darkness, is your immediate body of Christian believers. Because we are a teaching organisation, we easily use terminology and functions that leave people feeling we are just an organisation that has meetings & discussions rather than a church that is a body that has the magic of the Spirit happening and is an organism. But genuine body-life has its own kind of magic. We know that Jesus is already present in a special way and then we all invite the Spirit to speak and to work amongst us, to teach, to heal, discern and bring about the righting of wrongs, to purify us. This is a threat to evil and the enemy has his deactivation strategies ready to interrupt it. Here's how it works: -

- (a) The Holy Spirit is the invisible guardian of the temple, so his grieving is instantaneous and the brothers and sisters should respond quickly whenever they sense this is happening.  
*Deactivated by:* busyness, quarrels, prayerlessness
- (b) Temptation is always accompanied by warnings which come from everywhere, especially the body of Christ: you go for a walk and even the trees and the animals seem to be telling to you to wake up, an accident, a prophetic voice, a dream, a concerned glance, a spray of gossip. Listen carefully to these, even the most bizarre and if you find yourself treating them with contempt: know that pride has already taken root. Jesus had a disturbing confidence in our power to choose. He didn't offer her a hospital or a home, he just told her what she had to do and then left her. *Deactivated by:* 'Creeping Jesus' theology (obsessed with unconditional positive regard, grace over-applied)
- (c) When sins are confessed openly to the body, the power of secrecy is broken. For some, this kind of transparency is too much and the body may be accused of being vindictive and lacking grace, but if you have ever struggled with sin, you will know the healing and strengthening power of public confession. In some places, a domino effect starts and the whole body is cleansed. *Deactivated by:* 'Me and Jesus' theology (only private confession) and pacts between the guilty
- (d) Symbolism- tempters use symbolism to their advantage and you can use them to your advantage. For example, if you are having a serious struggle, you might wear a piece of jewellery that reminds you of your commitment to pray and resist, but be careful this does not romanticise temptation as such.

## **5. The Process**

If we are to allow the *becoming* of God's Kingdom to take root in our lives, we must understand that Jesus used many different metaphors to talk about this. He talked of *coming home* in an act of repentance and faith, like the prodigal son; he talked of *eating* his flesh and *drinking* his blood; *abiding* in the vine; being *baptised* with the Holy Spirit; *making him lord*; falling into the ground and *dying* like a seed; *whoever believes* and so on. All of these assume an abandonment of our will to his and of entering into union with him.

Depending on our Church background, we tend to have preferred useage of some of these metaphors. Some prefer to talk of abiding in the vine, others like to talk of the fullness of the Spirit, and others about eating the body and the blood. The following readings refer to four of the steps (an attitude, a confession, an understanding and a prayer) involved in this process of being in union with Jesus. They are summarised by the acronym *HELP*.

### **Readings I**

Matthew 5:6 - **Hunger and thirst (an attitude)**

1John 1:9 - **Empty of Sin ( a confession)**

Luke 9:23 – **Lordship of Christ (an understanding)**

Eph5:18; John 15:5; Rom 6: 1-11; John 12:24 -26

Pray to be filled with the Spirit/ abide in the vine/ eat the body and blood/ fall into the ground and die **(a prayer)**

### **II- The Battery Lead**

Breaking the power of sin will never happen until we go all the way back to the starting point and call it what God calls it: 'sin!' Only then can we enjoy the freedom and power that comes with forgiveness. Until that happens we will always be like a car disconnected from it's battery and trying to turn the starter motor. You must follow the lead all the way back to the disconnection point if you are to get power again. It's what's going on when you hear that complaint, 'Every time I walk down that street I just can't stop myself once I get near that shop, I get there, feel tempted and then I sin.' The sin started when the victim headed in the direction of the street, the rest was just the consequences.

**Reading III** - there is an essentially sacrificial process of redemption (*lytron* – see Mark 10:45) in

releasing a slave from evil and unhinging the power of darkness in making death work backwards. “Son he said – you cannot in your present state understand eternity, but you can get some likeness of it if you say that both good and evil, when they are fully grown become retrospective – that is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, ‘no future bliss will ever make up for it, not knowing that heaven once attained will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.’

Great Divorce 9.1- Lewis

### **Reading IV - The Holy Spirit's Gym**

We have been trained to approach the day as if it was a God-forsaken event, draining away our vision and our passion. But the drain is not in the work itself, the drain on our energy is the belief that whatever mundane task we are doing, it is not a time and place where we are in the presence of God. After months and years of refusing to believe that God is right there with us in even in the most ordinary of things, our spiritual muscles grow slack and atrophied when they could have been exercising every hour in the ‘spiritual gym’ we live and work in every day. No wonder our poor flabby spiritual muscles groan at the thought of even five minutes of private prayer when we escape home.

### **Prayer, to be read slowly, with pauses at the indicated places: -**

‘Father in heaven I want to be filled with your Spirit. I want to be buried with Jesus in baptism and raised with him in newness of life. I confess I’m hungry for your goodness...

I confess all my sins ...

I abandon myself to Jesus Christ as my Lord and King ...

Thank you that I am now falling into the ground and dying like a seed, abiding in your vine, in union with you, eating and drinking you and filled with your Spirit Lord Jesus. Amen.’

### Prayers

**Thought For The Morning:** “When God’s will is our law, we are but noble slaves. When God’s will is our will, we are free sons & daughters.” (George MacDonald)

**Prayer For The Morning:** “We are a little company of soldiers in a lost world Lord Jesus, looking forward to the great day of your return. Thank you for the taste of hope we already have.

Sometimes that lost world is us. The powers of hell have their outposts in this place too. We need your help to love one another. Show us the way: if we’re stomping around the garden of our family, eating and drinking the life of home, without a thought for one another, wake us up and change us. Make us sense the grieving of your Spirit. Remind us of the little things we can do to change.

Save us from the selfishness and conceit that comes from being glued to a phone, a mission program or a computer screen; that we would think more of one another, than of ourselves. When meals are served, we hope to serve each other; when things need cleaning, let us do the cleaning without having to be told; when visitors come, give us the presence of mind to shut out the demands of our own concerns and to love them. Make this a place where willpower bends to love, where noble slaves become free sons and daughters. Amen.”

**Thought For The Night:** “There’s something morally repulsive about modern activist theories that deny contemplation and recognize nothing but struggle. For them not a single moment has value in itself, except as a means for what follows.” Nicolas Berdyaev

**Prayer For The Night:** “We don’t want to define ourselves by living in reaction Lord Jesus. Yet here we are, in a world full of watched and worried over people, questioned, doubted and suspected. Sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. Then there’s the ‘accuser of the brothers’, the ‘diabolos’, the thrower of lies and hate. We’ll never satisfy all these and we don’t want to even try, but we do want to please you, even if it displeases them. Save us from reacting to all this by being reckless, obsessed with freedom or making ourselves deaf to the pain of others. Complacency is such a temptation in this squabbling crowd of salesmen, preachers, cameras and monitors telling us what to do, what to buy and what to worry about. Give us wisdom & patience Lord, your kind of wisdom & patience. Amen”

**Thought For the Morning:** “Wisdom shouts in the streets for a hearing, she calls out to the crowds along main-street and to the judges in their courts and to everyone in the land. ‘You simpletons she cries, how long will you go on being fools, how long will you scoff at wisdom and fight the facts? Come here and listen to me. I’ll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you and make you wise. I have called you so often but still you won’t come. I have pleaded, but all in vain, for you have spurned my counsel and reproof. Some day you’ll be in trouble and I’ll laugh. Mock me will you? I’ll mock you. When a storm of terror surrounds you and when you are engulfed by anguish and distress, then I will not answer your cry for help. Though you search for me ever so diligently, you will not find me. You must eat the bitter fruit of having your own way and experience the full measure of the pathway you have chosen. Your own complacency will kill you.’” (Proverbs 1:20 -32)

**Prayer for the Morning:**

“Thank you for this new day! Thank you for the healing you are doing inside of me and for the healers you have led me to. You know I get scared Lord, but I sanctify this place and the rest of this day as you work through them and all that they do.

I can do all things through Christ who makes me strong. So help me to be totally honest with myself and with others and to face my fears head on.

Jesus Christ, thank you for making me your child and making me clean through your blood on the cross. For coming into this world and into my life.

I’m sorry for the times when I did the wrong thing by you, by our family or anyone else when I went the wrong way. Thank you that I am forgiven, clean and free. Amen!

You’re the boss now and I trust you and I invite you into every part of this new day: Amen!”

**Prayer for the Night:**

The night is yours God of heaven and earth. You made it and I give it to you. In your name I rebuke any unclean spirits present here. I renounce any hold the devil has in my life, my home and my world through ancestors or my past, and any spells or curses.

Help me Lord. Chase your enemies the hell out of here.

I bind any demon spirits of drink, fear, suicide, hate, or gambling and command you spirits to get out of my life now! I bind you on earth and I bind you in heaven in the name of Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, thank you for hearing my prayer and for your promise, 'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.' I thank you for the gift of our family and our community. Help me to be the person I need to be, to love and serve them that they will be able to respect and trust me.

I give all these prayers into your strong and loving arms and pray that you the God of peace will crush Satan under my feet and give me your peace as I sleep tonight.

Thank you for the stars, the moon, the rain, the quietness in the earth, for this bed I can sleep on and all the people who love and care for me, especially for you the one they call the Good Shepherd. I trust you because you are good and you are in charge. Amen! ”