

**2011 Week Nine**  
*Midlands Churches of Christ, Birmingham, UK*  
*Women's Ministry*  
**Offerings for Quiet Time Study**

**1. GOD, WHO TELLS THE FUTURE, I**  
**Isaiah 43:8-10; Isaiah 45:20-22**

*How do you usually share your faith? How do you approach people, what do you usually say? Personally, I prefer not to invite people to church events. That often leads me to religious types who will happily go to church events, but may not necessarily be the ones I've prayed to find, the ones who are sincerely seeking God with all their heart (Jer 29:11-13). Reading through Isaiah recently I've found a new inspiration for talking about spiritual things with brand new acquaintances: I found a new appreciation for the fulfillment of prophecy in the Bible, and for the way that God offers the foretelling of events in His Word as proof that He is the true God.*

- Meditate on Isaiah 43:8-10 before the Lord.
- When God says, "You are my witness(es)," what does he expect me to say? Write down some specific things that I know I have personally seen God do.
- How can I obey verse 8 today? Who do I know who might "have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf?" \*
- Looking at Isaiah 45:20-22, are there any "idols of wood" in my life? Am I "praying" to any gods that cannot save? Have an honest moment of self-evaluation: how am I spending my time, money; what gives me security, sense of identity, sense of accomplishment? I may need to ask someone spiritual who knows me well, to help me see clearly. Acknowledge the idols and recommit to having God in his proper place.

**2. GOD, WHO TELLS THE FUTURE, II**  
**Matthew Chapter 2**

- Identify the four Old Testament passages that are quoted in Matthew Chapter 2.
- Write out what OT book and chapter the prophecy came from, and what the prophet predicted. *For example; Micah 5 says that the king of the Jews would come out of Bethlehem.*

**John 3:36**

- Make a short list of people I will interact with today whom I know are "rejecting the son, and will not see life" at the present time. Pray for the words to say to them today: maybe an invitation to talk over coffee; maybe just taking time to ask more questions about their lives and invest a bit more in friendship with them; maybe they would respond to a direct invitation to sit down and look into the Bible together. *Help me God, to care, and to be focused on the biggest needs of the people around me!*

**3. SIX THINGS THE LORD HATES**  
**Proverbs Chapter 6**

- In verses 16-19, there are 6 things the Lord hates. How many of them do I actually do? *Haughty eyes: I roll my eyes in disgust sometimes. I've seen kids in our congregation do it, too. Guess where they've learned it! A lying tongue: I think of 1 John 1:8-10; if I am not confessing sin regularly (daily!?) I am a liar and – much worse!-- I make God out to be a liar; a hands that shed innocent blood: thankfully I can't think of an example of that one today; a heart that devises wicked schemes: I'm working on taking captive the stream of negative (wicked) thoughts that assail me from time to time, nipping them in the bud and casting them out, but my heart easily produces them;*

*feet that are quick to rush into evil: last week I pulled out of my driveway and caused a minor car accident due to haste. Most embarrassingly, I didn't even think I was being hasty, I thought I had taken adequate care and looked! I was wrong.*

- “A false witness who pours out lies” – is there ever a situation when I feel justified in giving what God would consider “false witness?” How about when people ask me how I am at work or at church and it’s honestly not a good day? How about when someone has upset me and I continue to relate to them as if everything is ok between us, or I avoid them, and they have no clue that I am bothered about something? Is it possible that the Bible is teaching us that once we allow ourselves one such sin, we become in fact, in character, a false witness, who “pours out lies?” Is it possible that this happens a lot more than I think it does?
- What can I learn from the Proverbs passage about the quality of my words, and the effect my words have on others? on my own heart?

#### **Matthew 5:9**

- What can I do today to be a true daughter of God, a peacemaker? Pray to see the opportunities God gives me to be a peacemaker, to take hold of them, and show myself to have the heart of a disciple.

#### **4. GOD, WHO LIVES IN ME**

##### **Colossians Chapter 1**

1:27 “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” During the Second World War, a young minister and Greek scholar set out to paraphrase the New Testament in modern English. In the extremity of the bombing of our English cities, J. B. Phillips wanted the Bible to speak directly to the people to whom he ministered. As he worked - and also afterwards - he wrote about the experience:

##### **“SOME REDISCOVERIES**

As this New Testament world became more and more real to me, I found several facts of the faith, which were bright and shining then but which have become dulled and obscured in our modern discipleship. The first is what Paul calls the “mystery which was hidden through the ages until that time.” (Col. 1:26), It is simply that Christ lives *in* the personality of the man who believes in him, and brings with him the hope of “glory” to come. No other religion dares to say such a thing about the person men worship as God. God had always been *external*, the power to be obeyed. Now at last the wonder, which we should never have had the impertinence to claim, is seen to have come true in Christ. Not only has God become man and lived on human terms; not only has God reconciled man to himself by a personal act; not only has God proved that death is conquered by an unforgettable demonstration of power, but God lives *in* the man whose personality is open to him. Life is a matter not of conforming to external rules but of being transformed from within.

##### **“THE GOD WITHIN US**

This truth, which is mentioned again and again in the New Testament, seems to us to be too good to be true. We labour and strive and pray as though Christianity were a difficult *performance*. Theoretically we would agree with the notion of the “indwelling Christ”, but most of us for most of the time act as though we did not. We have lost sight of the fact that Christ is *in us*, both willing and doing. Consequently we lack that joy, confidence and spontaneity which rightly belongs to the sons of God. This does not, naturally, make our path smooth and free from trouble – neither Jesus nor Paul lived that kind of life. But it makes the whole world of difference when we believe that God, the whole unimaginable power, love and wisdom behind everything, is not merely on our side but actually at work in our hearts and minds.

... The God who lives in us if we will allow him, is not necessarily always gentle: he can be wind and fire and a whole lot of other things. He can give us strength, but he can also show us our weakness! He will “increase our faith”, but frequently not in the way we want or expect. He will show us, as we can bear it, more and more truth, but he will shatter our illusions about scruple,

perhaps especially illusions about ourselves. He will give us moments of wonderful perception, but will also allow us to endure terrifying darkness. His dealings with us are not some optional religious game; he is in deadly earnest and he is intent on “bringing many sons to glory”. He is indeed all goodness and light but he will show no more compunction towards the evil things that we have allowed to grow in our hearts than a human surgeon would a malignant growth. The men of old were hardly exaggerating when they said, “Our God is a consuming fire”.

J. B. Phillips: *Ring of Truth*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1967

- To what extent do I live with the conviction that the whole purpose of God is to live within me? (write out my thoughts)

## **5. PAIN, PRAYER, DELIVERANCE, PRAISE**

### **Psalm 107**

- Give thanks to the Lord ! (try making a list of as many things as you are sincerely grateful to God for in 10 minutes, and then pray your thanksgiving aloud, before God)

A repeating pattern in this psalm is the sequence of these themes: the psalmist describes the pain of some people, followed by prayer, followed by God’s deliverance, followed by praise.

- Which verses describe pain? In what way can I identify with any of these?
- Which verses describe prayer? What idea(s) are repeated in these verses? In what way do these verses sound like they could describe my prayers? Why or why not?
- What verses describe God’s intervention and deliverance? In what ways do these verses relate to me?
- At what point in this psalm is joy mentioned? Interestingly, what comes before joy? What accompanies joy? \*\*
- What kinds of “praise responses” can I find in this psalm? Is God getting this kind of praise from me? Make some concrete plans to do something special to honour God, inspired by this psalm.
- At what point in this psalm is joy mentioned? Interestingly, what comes before joy? What accompanies joy? \*\*

*\* I’m working on my faithfulness to God in trying to make the most of every opportunity to share my faith. For me, to lead out those who are blind and deaf and to be a faithful witness, it means that today I need to pray earnestly and sincerely for God to put true seekers in my path; and for the boldness to open my mouth and not give in to selfishness or fear; it means that I have a goal to try to connect somehow with everyone God puts in my path – to strike up a conversation with one of two goals in mind: 1) turn the conversation to spiritual things straight away, in case this is one of those rare people who would agree to meet up to study the Bible with a perfect stranger 2) find some reason to get the person to want to continue the conversation in the future, exchange contact details, prayerfully become a friend who will meet up for coffee and there we can begin to have the spiritual conversation*

*\*\*Sacrifice comes before joy; and telling of God’s word accompanies joy*

*Thanks to Marilyn Dean of Midlands Churches of Christ, Leicester, for Day 4 of Week Nine, “God, Who Lives In Me.”*