

**Re-Up Part Four: Listen Up
Love Jesus, Part Two: Study Scripture Regularly
Psalm 1, II Timothy 3.16-17 and others**

September 11, 2022

David Henderson

Let me start with a question.

Whose voices do you listen to the most?

Whose voice do you hear ringing in your ears?

What are the voices that you allow most to shape your thinking, your perspective, your outlook?

Image of People on Phones



Researchers tell us that one of the dominant voices in our ears – whether through what we watch, or listen to, or stream, or text – is our phones.

On an average day, how many times do you . . . [look at phone while picking it up, get distracted by it]

Sorry, how many times do you look at this thing or listen to it?

According to an article that came out on the Techjury website last month – which I accessed from my phone – the average American spends 5 hours and 24 minutes on their phone . . . every day.

One out of eight (13%) between their mid-twenties and their early forties spend more than *twelve* hours on their phone every day.

The average person checks their phone 63 times a day.

They . . . hang on.

[pick up ringing phone: “Hello? Yes it is. . . . No, that’s double cheese, not double anchovies. . . . Yep, 12:45 would be great. Thanks.”]

I’m sorry, what were you saying?

The average person spends 2 hours and 24 minutes every day on social media: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok. Facebook Messenger, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn.

Hold that thought . . .

As a church we believe we are called to live a life of love.
And we believe that life of love has three dimensions that become God’s call on our lives..

How Our Life of Love Will Express Itself

Love Jesus

- worshiping daily and weekly
- studying Scripture regularly

Love His People

- participating in Christ centered relationships
- using our gifts to serve the church family

Pour Out His Love on the World

- loving our (literal) neighbors
- making a difference in the world

Today we’re zeroing in on the second expression of our love for Jesus
Love for God will show up in our worship life, as we said last Sunday
It will also show up in the way we spend time reading and studying the Bible

How would you describe the sort of relationship you have with scripture?

How important is it to you? How much time do you spend doing it?
What gets in the way of it or makes it hard?

Six years ago, even before the great disruption called covid, only one out of three protestant churchgoers said that they read the bible daily.

Two years ago, 2 out of 3 evangelicals read their bible at least once a week.

People in the church refer to the process of being trained how to think and how to live as being “disciplined.” We could think of the voices we listen to most as our primary disciplers.

So who are your primary disciplers? Which voices fill your head the most? Which voices are you being shaped by most?

Man, given how much time most people spend on their phones, or watching the news, or streaming video, or connecting on social media, compared to how little time they are spending reading the bible, no wonder some people in the American church acted the way they did during the challenges of the last two years! They were just reflecting their discipleship.

And you? What voices shape you the most?

Think back on our earlier conversation about our phones.

If you were to draw a bar graph showing the amount of time each day you spend on your phone, or in front of a screen, and the amount of time you spend each day in God’s word, what would it look like?

Why does it matter? What makes it so important to read the Bible?

The Bible is clear and consistent in its claim that the Bible is a gift from God for his people, and it comes from him.

Have you ever thought about why God gave us the Bible? IN what way does he intend it to be a gift to us?

I think most of us would answer something like, the Bible is the place God gives us the information we need to know, the standard we need to meet, and the rules we need to follow.

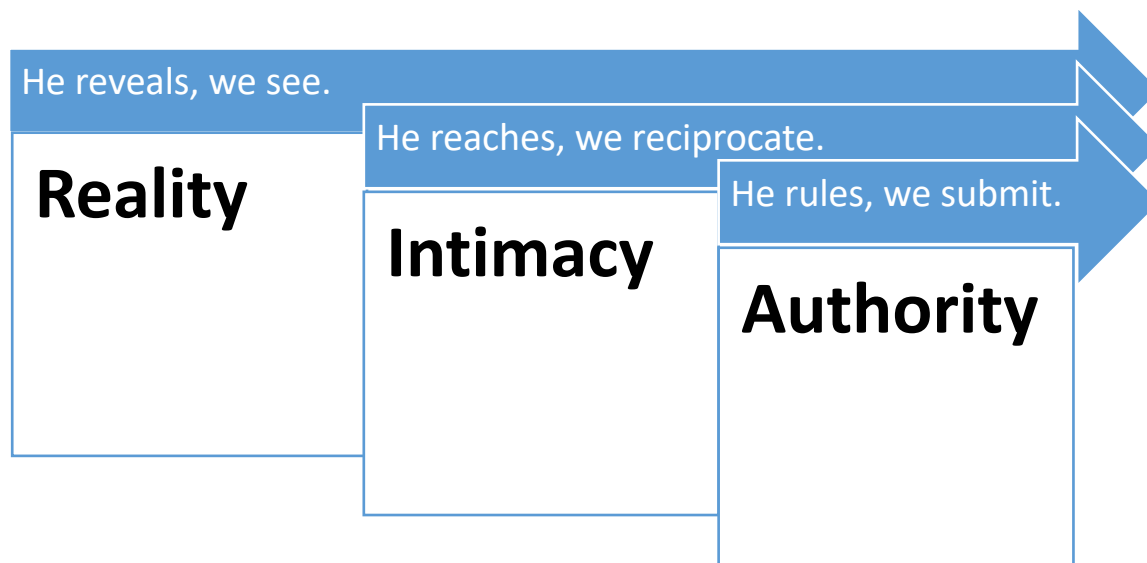
We know what to do with information. We have a huge university in our backyard. You master it. Instead of being mastered by it.

Or, well ... the bible is huge, and there’s so much in it, and it has to do with a place and time that is so far from ours, and can be so hard to understand. So it becomes easy to start reading what other people say about the bible instead of doing our own reading.

We know what to do with rules and standards We obey them. Or we try. But if we try and fail, or we really don't try, either way we feel guilt, and then we want to avoid the Bible.

But the bible was meant to be a *gift* to us.

I think there are three ways God means the Bible to be a gift to us.



Reality

He reveals, we are given eyes to see

This dimension of Scripture comes through in the prayer that Jesus prays for his disciples on the last night he spends with them before his death.

John 17.6-17

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Your word is truth.

Truth is whatever corresponds to reality: it reveals the way things actually are.

We live in a world in which there are many different versions of reality, but really just two primary alternatives.

There is a God, or there is not. Either what my senses tell me is accurate, and this material world is all there is, or there is something, someone, more to my life.

Either there is a God.

He is the Creator.

I exist by his choice and for his sake.

So my identity as a human being is tied to him.

He gives meaning and purpose to my life, which is to live my life for him.

The Creator took on human flesh, bringing dignity and purpose to all humanity, and hope and redemption to me, reconciling me to God and opening the way for me to enjoy his presence for eternity.

Time moves with purpose to fulfill God's eternal purposes.

Death does not have the last word.

Or there is no God.

I am an accident, adrift in a world that is also an accident. There is no intention or design behind my few days on earth.

Whatever identity I have is a construct of my own making, and can be as fluid or as muddy as the Wabash River..

There is no inherent meaning and purpose in my life, or in my death. You do stuff and then you die. That's it.

Followers of Christ understand the Bible as God's revelation of reality. The Bible opens a window onto another realm in which God occupies the center and my life finds its meaning and purpose only when I am in right relationship to him.

Psalm 119 is a wonderful celebration of the gift of God's word to us.

At one point he captures this idea that the Bible opens our eyes to the greater reality of God's presence and purposes. So we pray with the psalmist

Psalm 119.12

Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your instructions.

In addition to giving us the scriptures in order to open our eyes to ultimate reality, God gives us the scriptures in order to bring us into relationship with God through Christ.

Intimacy

He reaches out, we reciprocate – we reach back to his outstretched hand

Intimacy is a way of capturing the kind of relationship God desires to have with us, a relationship of knowing and being known at ever deeper levels.

This dimension of God's gift to us comes through in

II Peter 1.2-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Peter speaks of God giving us his very great and precious promises. Those promises relate to the way we will be privileged to be in such close relationship with God that we share in his nature.

How did those promises make their way to us across the years and the miles? Through the scriptures.

The Scriptures reveal God for us, reveal his loving heart for us, reveal his redemptive gift to us of his son, reveal how to know him, reveal how to draw near to him.

I'm sure you've seen the T-shirts that have phrases on them that look like Scripture verses, but the reference is to Me 24:"7.

Contrast that to Jeremiah 24.7, which says,

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

Romans 1 says that we can get a glimpse of God's reality and of his power and artistry in creation, but that's about it. We need Scripture to reveal God's loving heart toward us.

To learn that God made us for relationship with himself, to discover that Jesus came to make that relationship possible, living among us to make God known, dying in our place to make us right with God, to find out that for those who know him, there is nothing that can separate us from God's love.

Followers of Christ understand the Bible as the revelation of God's heart for us.

So we pray with the psalmist of psalm 119

Psalm 119.10

I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.

Then, and only then, can we rightly receive the gift of scripture as the place where God reveals that he is king, and rightly rules over us, and that we are his subjects, and rightly submit to him.

If we understand the reality that God exists, and that we exist because of, and for him, and if we understand the intimate relationship that God desires to have with us because of his love for us, then we will understand why God rightly has authority in our lives. He rightly rules as king, we rightly submit as subjects.

Authority

He rules, we submit

This dimension of Scripture as the way God expresses his authority over us is captured well in

II Timothy 3.16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible is God's word to us. It corrects my wrong beliefs and replaces them with right ones, and it exposes the places my life doesn't line up with my faith and shows me the way to live in a way that best honors him, all so that I'm properly outfitted for the life of faith for which God made me.

In the hands of the Spirit who inspired them, transformation, not information, is what the words in the Bible offer.

In scripture we learn not just of God's heart of love for us, but also his heart to form us into sons and daughter who resemble his son Jesus.

If God made me, then he knows the best way for me to live, and he has the right to call me into it.

That is his "authority," his right, as the one who created us, to be the author of our story.

The more we submit to his authority, the more we will resemble his son. That is how we come to have a family resemblance.

Which leads us to pray with the psalmist.

Psalm 119.73

You made me; you created me.
Now give me the sense to follow your commands.

So reading the Bible is about something way more than just accruing information or reading a list of rules.

The Bible brings us into the reality that God and his purposes stand at the center of existence. It reminds us of God's desire that we would enjoy a love relationship with God for eternity. And it is the primary means by which our lives are shaped into the likeness of his son.

That motivates me to want to be in the word, and to want to get the word into me.

Is your bible reading where you want it to be?

What is a next step you can take so that your love for God can express itself in more faithful bible reading and study?

Some practical questions and suggestions

If you've never tried reading the bible in an intentional way before, here are some thoughts.

First, **find a translation that you love** and that you understand. There is no point reading a translation you don't connect with.

I highly recommend the New Living Translation. So clear, and such a faithful translation at the same time. NIV and ESV are good, and so is the Contemporary English Version. .

Second, if you've never really read the Bible before, don't start at the beginning. Go **straight to the New Testament**.

I still have my third grade Bible. I never read it. Most of the pages are still stuck together. I tried. I opened up to the first page and started reading the chapter called Genesis and after about a page and a half of places I'd never heard of and names I couldn't pronounce and stories I couldn't understand I closed the cover and didn't open a Bible again – and then only very reluctantly – until my last year in college.

Don't start with the Old Testament. That's like starting with *Silmarillion* instead of *Lord of the Rings*. It's important background but it's not the heart of the story. Start with the New Testament.

Even more specifically, I'd encourage you to **start with the gospels** – those are the four biographies of Jesus at the beginning of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. If you want, maybe you can alternate between them and the letters. That's what I call the letters that Paul wrote to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians,

they are short encouraging letters about how to live the Christian life. Start with the gospels and don't ever stop. In my reading, I read a psalm every day – that's like the prayer book of the bible – and I read a part of one of the gospels every day – so I can hear the voice of Jesus every day.

Did you know that if you read the New Testament for just six minutes a day, you can read the whole thing in six months? You'd be wrapping up in March. If you add two more minutes, you can read a psalm a day as well, and that will still give you 30 days to get through psalm 119 – which takes all of fifteen minutes to read.

Okay, here are three challenges for you.

First, don't read the Bible randomly, flipping it open somewhere and reading a verse or two, like it's a horoscope. Read it with sequentially, with purpose. Look for the way one idea or one event leads to another. Try not to read anything less than a paragraph at a time.

Related to that, if you use a devotional, consider setting aside. Just for the rest of the year. Just read the Bible. We can be tempted to think that we need someone else to explain to us what it means. But we don't. Instead of listening to what Andy Stanley or Matt Lucado or Rick Warren says about your bible, just read it yourself.

If you feel like you want to have a companion to help you with your Bible reading, grab a copy of Craig Keener's *Bible Background Commentary*. What an incredible resources to have when your bible is open!

A second challenge. What do you need to eliminate in order to make room for more time reading the bible?

Try this as an experiment and see what God shows you. Pick one day between now and the end of the month to do matching reading. Don't change your phone use or TV watching or novel reading. Just resolve that for every minute you spend on with those voices, you'll spend another minute reading the bible.

And a third challenge: introduce a new way to let God speak to you through his word.

Turns out there are lots of different ways you can use scripture to draw you see reality more clearly, to grow closer to God, and to open more of your life to his loving rule.

Using Scripture to Express our Love for God

Read it
Listen to it
Write it out
Study it

Meditate it
Memorize it
Pray it
Obey it

Speak it
Share it

Live it
Love it

I'm going to end my message by giving us a chance to use the Scriptures in a way that might be new to you, but is ancient to the church. It's a way of using the bible that reminds us that, in the end, these are God's words, and he is the speaking to us.

It's a practice called *lectio divina*, an approach to reading the bible that goes back all the way to the 1100s, but has roots that go way back before that.

It's an approach affirmed by Reformers like John Calvin and Puritans like Richard Baxter

There are different ways of doing it, but they all are pretty similar.

Pick a passage and read it through slowly four times. We'll be using the first three verses of Psalm 1.

First time, engage your mind – what is it about? What are the two or three basic ideas?

Psalm 1.1-2

Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
And on His Law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1.3

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

What did you notice about the content of the psalm? What is the point God inspired the psalmist to make?

Second time, engage your emotion and imagination – what word or phrase leaps out at you, connecting with you personally.

Psalm 1.1-2

Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
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Psalm 1.3

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Was there a word or phrase that stood out, or grabbed your imagination?

Third time, engage your will – what is God saying to you? What is he asking of you?
Respond with prayer

Psalm 1.1-2

Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
And on His Law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1.3

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Take a moment to respond to God's voice by bringing your will before him in prayer.

And now a final time to read it through. This time, rest in the God who speaks these words over you. Be still in his loving presence.

Psalm 1.1-2

Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
And on His Law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1.3

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Closing Song

Goodness of God

I love You, Lord
For Your mercy never fails me
All my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God
And all my life You have been faithful
And all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

Notes

And related to your phone and your bible . . .

Is the balance between your phone, or your tv, or your computer and your bible, the way you want it to be?

The average American spends more than six hours and fifteen minutes on the Internet every day. News, sports, blogs, and so on.

Appeal of social media

Have connection with others

Feel liked and valued and agreed with

Comparison, likes,

The appeal of being able to present ourselves in the best possible light

Others liking us, agreeing with us

Lectio?

Guigo II in the late 1100s

The Monk's Ladder

Read, meditate (think about the significance of the passage), pray about what God is saying to you through what you've read, contemplate (quiet stillness in God's loving presence)

Affirmed and practiced by the Protestant reformers such as John Calvin and Puritans such as Richard Baxter

Understand

Engage

Open to

Rest in

his heart toward us

How to see

Read to familiarize

Study to understand

Interpret and apply

Read large amounts

Focus on small amounts

Reflect

Study

Background research

Memorize

Topical memory system
 Or wherever God is currently speaking
 Write it out (Deuteronomy 17.18)

Find parallels/follow threads
 Lectio divina
 Pray scripture
 Let the Spirit move his word from general for specific
 Love it/obey it

One time I figured out that if you read two chapters of the Old Testament, one of psalms or a chapter of the proverbs, and two chapters of the new testament every day, you will read the old once, the psalms and proverbs twice, and the New testament three times in a year – almost to the day? .

A challenge for you. Pick a day this week and try to spend as much time reading or listening to the Bible as you do doing other things on your phone.

Whose voice makes its way to your ear drums? Whose voice is impacting your heart, and shaping your soul?

How much total time a day do you spend hearing God's word. Not someone else's thoughts about God's word. Just his word.

Think about the relative influence.

I was thinking about

So why is it so important to read the Bible and to study it regularly?

His word last word. Older couple.

The Bible

Psalm 1.1-2

Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
 Nor stand in the path of sinners,
 Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
 But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
 And on His Law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1.3

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
 Which yields its fruit in its season,
 And its leaf does not wither;
 And in whatever he does, he prospers.

What do you think gets in the way of reading the Bible more consistently?
 Can be hard to understand.
 Can be in a hurry.
 Can be uncomfortable to read because it convicts us.

Bible background commentary

How would you finish this sentence?
 God gave us the Bible to communicate ...what?

Information?

Rules?

Third grade Bible day is coming up in a month.
 We love that time and see it as so important.

Why did God give us the Bible?
 It's another way of asking the question

Why should we spend time reading it and studying the bible?

three important reasons.

Depending on where we are spiritually, the bible can be approached in many ways.

Here are some of the ways God's people allow God to speak to them through the Bible.

- Read large portions to familiarize ourselves with it
- Write out portions to slow down and hear it
- Study small portions to understand, interpret and apply it
- Follow thematic threads through it
- Meditate on it to hear God's voice in it
- Memorize portions of it
- Make breath prayers from it
- Practice *Lectio Divina* with it
- Pray through it
- Obeys it
- Share it
- Listen to it
- Live it
- Love it

What obstacles stand in the way?

Busyness?

Habits of how we spend our time in the mornings and evenings?

Social media?

2 hours and 24 minutes a day compared to twelve.

If you took one tenth of that time you'd be able to read the whole bible in a year, or the new testament four times.

If you've never picked up the Bible before, or if you did, and like me, got discouraged and confused and stalled out, here's what I would suggest.

First, find a good translation.

Information versus formation

1 Corinthians 8.1 While knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church

We have this massive institution of learning two and a half miles away, where the model for reading is to study to acquire information so you can master a subject so you can do well on the test

The model of reading with scripture is to read to hear God's voice so he can master you as his subject so your life can reflect his purposes

Simple questions to ask

What say about God, about me, about the life God intends for me to live?

The rule book versus the love letter, his gift to bring us into and then to deepen us in our relationship with him

Two dimensions

Authority

Intimacy - his gift to bring us into and then to deepen us in our relationship with him

a prayer by a medieval English bishop, St. Richard of Chichester (1197-1253):

May I know you more clearly,
Love you more dearly,
Follow you more nearly,
Day by day. Amen.

The gift of God's self-revelation

Not our rule book but his voice

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

More about formation than information

Mulholland

X: in the elevator at P&G, I John 3.16

His call to all to live a sacrificial life

His call to me to go into fulltime ministry

There is always a collision whenever we open God's word

There is a way of seeing that we are blind to, and a way of being that we are closed to

My life and my will don't yet line up with his

Want to encourage you this fall to read only scripture

Don't depend on someone else for their insights

Just pick a book and read it paragraph by paragraph and ask God by his spirit to speak to you through it

What do you think gets in the way of reading the Bible more consistently?

Can be hard to understand.

Can be in a hurry.

Can be uncomfortable to read because it convicts us.

Song**Brief prayer of invocation (Beechams come up)****Welcome****Announcements**

Beechams come up and join me while I explain that we realize that a number of folks are new to the church and we want to orient them/you to some of the most important things to know about the church

1. I'm New Here – Tell Me About Thrive!

- What is Thrive!?

Thrive! is the starting point for those who are either new to Covenant or new to Christ. It's designed to establish a compelling vision for the Christian life that is centered on this church's call to live a life of love. For ten weeks you meet together with leaders from the church and with others who are new, and dive into a picture of life centered on Christ and focused on living a life of love. It's experiential and practical and really encouraging.

- We have asked Thomas and Eryn Beechem if they would tell us about their experience in Thrive.

What was helpful about Thrive?

What was the impact/result of your participation?

- How do you take part in it?

Thrive! takes place during first service on most Sunday mornings. You can jump in at any point in the process. If you're new to Covenant and ready to take a next step, this is it. It's a great way to meet other people and to get to know the heart of the church. To learn more, go to the church's website or give the church a call.

2. Picnic tonight cancelled

Wanted to make sure you all heard that the picnic and music evening tonight was cancelled due to the rain that is forecast. We hope to find another time to do that. Since you all have the evening open, what about some spontaneous meals?

2. Hyde Open House

One of many things I love about this church is the heart God has given it for at-risk children, leading a number of people in the church to get involved in everything from Matrix LifeCare to CASA volunteering to Isaiah 117 House to foster care and adoption.

It is a joy for me to announce the completion of Angel Hyde's adoption process! We celebrate with Joshua and Susan that what God already accomplished several years ago by making Angel part of the Hyde family has now become a legal reality as well. We praise God for his faithful work and for this sweet gift to their family.

Separately, as you may know, the Hydies have been working for quite a while to create a space in their home that will facilitate their desire to expand their foster care for children in the community. That renovation is now finished, and is already being broken in by two little buddies who are part of their family's life right now.

The Hydies are calling their renovated home Zach's House as a way of honoring the life and legacy of their son Zachary, who really embraced the vision for foster care as a young man. Half of his life involved welcoming foster children into their home and lives, and when, at one point, Susan asked the kids whether they thought they should put a pause on their fostering for a while, Zach said, "But this is what we do!"

On Sunday afternoon, September 18, from 2 to 8, the Hydies are having an open house as a double celebration of these two important events: a celebration of Angel's adoption, and a celebration of Zach's House completion, and they are inviting the Covenant family to join them.

Join the Hydies for their Open House and Celebration on Sunday, September 18, a week from today, from 2 to 8pm, at Zach's House, 1936 Indian Trail Drive in West Lafayette. No need to RSVP.

Dismiss Kids

Christ is Mine

Prayer

Events in the world and in our own nation remind us of the uncertainties of this world, and fleetingness of life.

We come into our prayer against the backdrop of the death of a monarch, the Queen of England, we somehow thought would live forever, a woman of profound grace and humility.

Against the backdrop of an attack on this day twenty one years ago that reminded us of that nothing is sure and certain in this life.

Against the backdrop of continued war in Ukraine, and in Yemen, and in the Middle East, and rising threats related to North Korea and South Korea, and China and Taiwan

Much closer to home

We also acknowledge the grief of some of our brothers and sisters in the church family who have lost loved ones

Death of

Chris Turpin's brother Eric

Bruce Pershing's mother Evelyn

Darrell Mitton's father Jim

And Julie Williams' father Fred

Death shakes us, reminds us of the brevity of life,

Mine are days that God has numbered.

Mine are days here as a stranger.

Mine is hope

I am his forevermore.

Christ is mine. I am his and he is mine.

Firm foundation

Christ is my firm foundation

The rock on which I stand

When everything around me is shaken

I've never been more glad

That I put my faith in Jesus

'Cause He's never let me down

He's faithful through generations

So why would He fail now?

He won't

Closing song

Goodness of God

I love You, Lord

For Your mercy never fails me

All my days, I've been held in Your hands

From the moment that I wake up

Until I lay my head

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

And all my life You have been faithful

And all my life You have been so, so good

With every breath that I am able

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

After services**1. Farewell**

Chris and Lydia White and their kids Harrison and Charity are moving to Columbus, where Chris will take a position at Ohio State. Whites, you guys have played a key part of our world welcome ministry. We bless you guys as you go as salt and light to a new setting.

2. Picnic

Don't forget the picnic tonight was cancelled due to the rain that is forecast. We hope to find another time to do that. Since you all have the evening open, what about some spontaneous meals with one another?

Linger and interact