

### Call to Worship

Praise the Lord all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord. Psalm 117

### Prayer

Lord, I come aside now to worship and praise you. And as I do, there are many from other nations, other cultures, other circumstances, whom you love just as you love me, who are praising you too. Hear our praises, Lord.

Forgive me Lord for the times I get off-track – restore my soul and renew a right spirit within me. I want to be in your presence, draw me close Lord.

Through Jesus I pray. Amen

Song: “O For a Closer Walk with God” (William Cowper)

1. O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame,  
A light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb.
2. Where is the blessedness I knew when I first knew the Lord?  
Where is that soul-refreshing view of Jesus and his word?
3. O Fire of God, come burn in me, renew a holy passion  
Till Christ my deepest longing be my never-failing fountain, my never-failing fountain.
4. What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet the memory still!  
But they have left an aching void the world can never fill!
5. The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be,  
Help me tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.
6. So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.

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### Prayer of Intercession

Lord, I pray for Christians in other nations and cultures. Christians who may worship in vaulted cathedrals, or in tin sheds, or in the ruins of burnt-out churches, or in hiding. I pray for them as they do things differently to me – praying in whispers, singing with exuberant dancing, enjoying liturgy and gowned choirs, using languages I will never understand. Lord, they are my brothers and sisters. They are, with me, the Body of Christ. Some are in great need and others are able to support them. Lord, give me a generous and loving heart to give what I can, and to pray always.

Thank you Lord for Barnabas Aid, Open Doors and other groups which enable me to support and connect with others. Bless their work and I pray for their safety as they provide the channels to those in great need. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen

### Bible Reading:

- 2 Timothy 3:10-17

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kind of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But, as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking and correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Song: “The Lord is my Salvation” (Keith and Kristen Getty)

1. The grace of God has reached for me and pulled me from the raging sea,  
And I am safe on the solid ground. The Lord is my salvation.
2. I will not fear when darkness falls, his strength will help me scale these walls.  
I'll see the dawn of the rising sun. The Lord is my salvation.  
*Who is like the Lord our God? Strong to save, faithful in love,  
My debt is paid, and the victory won. The Lord is my salvation.*
3. My hope is hidden in the Lord, he fulfills each promise of his word.  
When winter fades, I know spring will come. The Lord is my salvation.
4. Glory be to God, the Father, Glory be to God, the Son,  
Glory be to God, the Father, Glory be to God, the Son.

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Message: “Drifting”

Imagine if you will, lying in a boat on a river, letting the current take you where it wills. It is warm, comfortable, the sun shines from a clear, blue sky, idyllic scenery slides by on both sides. Not a care in the world! Then, almost imperceptibly, the current quickens and there is a faint roar, increasing in volume as each minute passes. Yes, it's a waterfall, and immediate action is called for. Panic sets in. Hard work on the oars brings you to the shore in the nick of time. Where did you go wrong? Everything was going so well until this near disaster befell you.

Maybe this has happened to you in your Christian life. Everything is going swimmingly. Life is good. But then some unexpected circumstance arises that changes everything. A medical diagnosis. A financial collapse. The loss of a job. A family crisis. Drought or flood. And the question arises, “Where is God?” Our cry might be that of the psalmist, and that of Jesus himself, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Psalm 22:1)

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Such circumstances or crises, occur for all of us, but our ability to cope can be affected if we have allowed ourselves to drift in our lives. We drift when we get too comfortable and the current carries us along – we go with the flow. And the world offers us plenty of incentive to drift. There is constant encouragement to expect comfort, to buy security, to satisfy self. It is so easy to listen to the enticing promises of the world. And so easy to believe it and drift. And the current quickens. We are told what to think, and what to accept as normal, about marriage, about sexuality, about parenting, about life and death (abortion and euthanasia). And there are penalties if you don't go with flow – some have suffered social penalties (from ridicule to banning from social media), legal penalties (British parents who protested the killing of their disabled daughter), and loss of jobs (Queensland academic who wouldn't use alternative pronouns for transgender students). It's easy to drift, isn't it? Good reasons not to “rock the boat”. Someone once said, “Only dead things drift with the current, it takes a live person to swim against it”!

Each one of us claiming to be a Christian has experienced a call from God. In some way Rev 3:20 has been our experience. **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”** We have encountered Jesus, we have heard him knocking, and we have a relationship with him who died for us and redeemed us. To return to the “boat” analogy, we had to get started on our journey – we had to get the boat off the trailer, to the water's edge, and launch it. All purposeful and intentional! But then what? Are we drifting?

King David is a case in point. He was called to be king, and he followed that calling with great faith. He met opposition, he faced death, and it took years before he eventually became what he was anointed for. But then, somewhere along the way, he drifted. It must have been comfortable staying home and sleeping in when he should have been out leading his soldiers in battle. Then Bathsheba had her bath on the rooftop next door, without a shower curtain. One thing drifted to another, and a pregnancy occurred. The most comfortable thing for David was to get rid of Bathsheba's husband. Quite a few of God's laws were violated because David drifted.

How can we put a stop to drifting? No boat of course should leave the shore without an anchor, so what are the “anchor points” we should have to prevent and stop us from drifting. Here are some.

- Our foundation document.

The Bible is God's word to us. It is a key way in which God communicates with us, giving us hope and direction, reproach when we need it, instruction in how to live and how to be a disciple. The Timothy passage above is unequivocal that scripture is the voice of God (God-breathed) and is needed for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

The Scriptures are food for our souls as much as our meals are food for our bodies. Not one of us would say we would put off our meals until the weekend. We build into our lives regular times for our meals every day – similarly we should feed our souls regularly, even though it's easy to put it off. Every day the “Advertiser” is thrown over our front gate and being keen to keep up with the sport, news, and politics (probably in that order!), I spend a good amount of

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time reading it – every day. It challenges me, even as I write this, about what would happen if I spent an equal amount of time reading my Bible!

You eat every day. Make sure you read your Bible every day. It's an anchor that will stop you drifting.

- A solid family to belong to.

The church was born at Pentecost and was designed to be a family that cared for, developed, chastened, disciplined, and taught those that belonged. In the Scriptures it is called the body of Christ to describe the sense of belonging; and the head of the church is Jesus himself. The letters in the New Testament were almost all written to churches, to encourage, teach and admonish. It was presumed that Christians would belong to a church, and without it we are in danger of drifting. The writer to the Hebrews was warning them with these words – **“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”** (Hebrews 10:24-25)

You need the support of your church family. It is an anchor that will stop you drifting.

- Recall your call.

King David's drifting led to all sorts of trouble (murder, the death of his child) and he didn't seem to realise the situation he was in. It took Nathan, a prophet, to confront him with a fictional story in which the un-named villain was David himself. David was outraged by the story, and was then challenged by Nathan who said, “You are that man!” David immediately recognised that he had been drifting, he repented and “recalled his calling” as the king, a righteous king, and a man after God's own heart. You probably know the story (2 Samuel 11, 12 if you want to read it again), but don't neglect to read Psalm 51 which David wrote after Nathan confronted him. It is a wonderful picture of the grace of God who forgives and restores. **“Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me”** (Psalm 51:10-12).

If you are drifting, repentance may be in order. Certainly, the joy of the Lord's calling needs restoring, and the strength and capacity to follow him.

- A vision for fathers, mothers, and families.

The church family has been mentioned, but the nuclear family plays a huge role in establishing the growth of children into discipleship. A friend in my church in the country a few years ago prepared a chart of his family tree. A few generations back one of his ancestors had become a Christian. He traced all the descendants and marked those that had maintained a faith in God. It was remarkable to see how many in that family had passed on their faith to their children. It demonstrated the impact of families on the Kingdom of God.

The old adage of course is true – “God has no grandchildren”. Everyone makes their own decision to follow Jesus, but the family has a powerful influence on the growing faith of children.

The Scriptures are pack-full of exhortations to parents and families. Ephesians 5 and

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6 give instructions to Christian households and a strong vision for families.

If you are drifting, maybe it is having an impact on your family. Restore a right relationship with the Lord and the effect will spread beyond yourself to those close to you. The family is a strong anchor.

Note that I am talking about drifting, not about rest and relaxation which is essential for our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. God the Father intentionally makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters where he restores my soul (Psalm 23). Drifting is letting go of the anchors, it's losing sight of God's calling and Fatherhood, and can lead to disaster.

Are you drifting? Look to your anchors.

**Song:** "It is Well with my Soul" (Horatio Gates Spafford)

1. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, through hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.  
*It is well (it is well), with my soul (with my soul)*  
*It is well, it is well with my soul.*
2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control,  
That God has regarded my helpless estate, and has shed his own blood for my soul.
3. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul.

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### Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA