

No 15
8th December 2012

TRAINING FORGIVMS



What's Advent to you?

Is it just about getting a small bit of chocolate every day?

Do you know it's a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus? *The world seems to have changed it to a time of expectancy for the coming of Father Christmas.*

As we prepare to celebrate His Birth we also prepare to meet Him when He comes again. Now is a good time to be reflecting on the prophecies of His return, so that you are ready when it happens.

More Intimate than Last Week...

If some were confused last week I am sorry. The photo of a nude statue of David perhaps wasn't helpful. I was writing about letting Christian brothers get to know us really well - to know all there is about us - and yet to still love us. It wasn't meant to have any sexual overtones.

At Church on Sunday I was struck by how the opening prayer in the *Common Worship* Communion Service challenges us to let God in close too.

*Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

As we pray this prayer we are acknowledging that God knows us thoroughly. Not just what we do or say but also our desires and secrets. The things we think when we are on our own, the things we wish for. He knows us...but do we trust Him with that knowledge?

Confession is not about telling God stuff He does not know, but about telling Him things that

enable us to open the door to Him being close to us.

If you look at Genesis 3 you will see God asked Adam and Eve questions that invited confession. *WHAT have you done?* The desired answer was for them to each say "I have eaten from the tree you told me not to. I have disobeyed you". That is confession... it opens the way for restoration. As God is a God of forgiveness, confession makes possible our receiving forgiveness.

However, instead of answering God's question, they chose to answer a different one. The question they both answered was *WHY have you done this?* They understood that God already knew what they had done, and so made excuses for themselves.

The question WHY is an invitation to build up the barriers we've already made, to make them higher and more impenetrable. The question WHAT, on the other hand, invites us to join with the asker in knocking the barrier down. I can't think of a single occasion when God asks the question *Why?* (or even when He answers it!)

So try to come to God in prayer hearing Him ask the question *What have you done?* and then spend time telling Him. It can include good things as well as bad "Lord, today I helped an old lady across the road. I carried her shopping home for her too. And then I mugged her friend". Being honest with God a starting point to receive His forgiveness.

And if we could then share with our friends in the same way too.....

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illustrations this week sourced from the internet

Our Father, I dunno what this is all about, but....

Deliver Us From Evil

The New Testament is clear...we have an enemy, and that enemy is Evil Personified.

If you read the book of Job in the Old Testament you will see that God's most righteous man on earth at the time was not spared from attack by Satan. Infact, Satan wanted to get him especially simply *because* he was so righteous.

God does not want His children harmed, and (to use a different analogy) as General of the Army He is going to make sure that His troops are as safe as they can be. So it is very much in His will to save us from evil...and therefore good for us to pray it.

As ever, there is a flip side. We need to make sure we are under God's protection. In 1 Peter 5:8,9 we read *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* As well as praying to God to protect us, we have things to do to keep safe too.

1/ We need to be watchful and alert, recognising that the Devil is looking for our weak spots (not just as individuals, but the army's weak spots too) and then

2/ We need to stand firm believing in Christ and His protection

It's a corporate thing, the Devil loves to bring disunity to God's family and to distract us with problems within the church that he causes rather than to be 'on the attack' winning souls for Christ.

And the churches and fellowships that are doing frontline stuff need to be especially watchful to snuff out backbiting and so forth. So praying *deliver us from evil* really is about US not just ME. Watch out for each other and stand together in prayer. Imagine that army - it's vital each soldier is doing their job properly or the rest of us are made more vulnerable.

By the way, Job wasn't handed over to Satan by God. God said to Satan in 2:6 *he is in your hands, but you must spare his life.* Somehow, Job was already in Satan's hands. God wasn't handing him over to Satan but issuing a protective order...you can't kill him. How had Job gotten himself into Satan's hands? in 3:25 we read *what I feared has come upon me.*

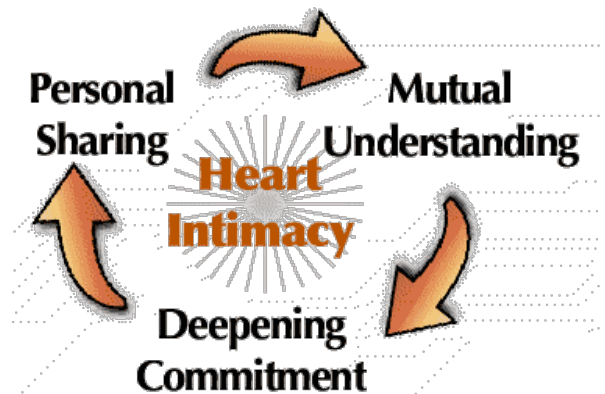
Fear is a result of absence of faith in God's protection. We need to pray *Deliver us from evil* without fear of evil happening, so we remain in God's protective care.



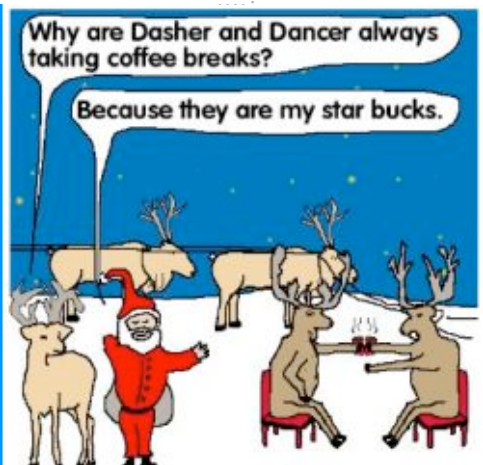
Feet shod with the Gospel

This week's Bible Study, the third of 6 sideways looks at the elements of the Armour of God in Ephesians 6

www.tfg.org.uk/podcasts



A teacher told their class that they were going to investigate Even and Odd. One boy blurted out, 'I know that Bible story!' When the teacher stopped laughing she said, 'I think you mean Adam and Eve.'



**I asked God for a bike,
but I know God doesn't work that way.
So I stole a bike and
asked for forgiveness.**

Funny-Wall.Com

JOKE CHALLENGE

Send me your favourite joke of all those you've heard this year.

My job will be to make it relevant to a spiritual truth....if I can't but then someone else can there will be prizes!

Deadline for jokes to me is next Saturday...
15th December.