



MCG
Study Guide
The Atonement wk 3
March 7th – 13th

MISSIONAL
COMMUNITY 

MCG PRAYER LIST FOR THIS COMING WEEK:**Wednesday March 7th – Laying down our Lives****Reading: 1 John 3:16 – 18**

“...we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

Anyone can die once. That’s easy - but dying daily? For others? That is when it gets tough, but this is exactly what we are called to do. Pastor Bill White from Paramount California tells this story of daily dying:

Recently, while inching along in traffic, I saw two men in conversation on the sidewalk. One man was seated on a box at the end of the freeway off-ramp. He was gray-haired and tired looking, and he held a cardboard sign with a message written by an unsteady hand: "Please Help." The other individual was a Latino man. They shared a brief exchange, and the Latino man walked away.

As I slowly drove by the spot where the man in need sat on his box, I caught a glimpse of the younger Latino man walking down the street. I immediately recognized his gait—it was Juan, an immigrant who attends the church where I pastor. I pulled over, rolled down the window, and asked Juan if he needed a ride.

"No, my car is right there," he said, as he pointed in its direction. Confused, I asked what he was doing walking down the street by the freeway.

"I just stopped to pray with that man and get him some food," Juan said.

"Oh! Uh, wow," I said. Then I drove off, moved by Juan's generosity.

I found out later that day that Juan has stopped before for the old man. A member of the church choir once witnessed Juan literally take the shirt off his back—a shirt his wife had just given him for Christmas—and give it to the man.

Needless to say, it didn't take long to realize that Jesus was showing me what it looks like to be a neighbour.

Every time we put the preferences of others before our own, every time we refuse to defend our reputation, every time we resist

getting even by word or deed, every time we do those small acts of self-denial we practise dying. The reason this is so good for us, is because when we are dead, God can resurrect us to new life. It is as if we let go of the old life and in exchange get one that is brand new.

'When God calls a man, he bids him come and die.'

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Meditation/Application

Is there an area in your life that you are struggling to let go of? Is there a part of your will that refuses to die for the good of others? Imagine that you hold it in your hand. Now open your hand and offer it to God.

Reflecting on the reading:

John talks about laying down our lives and then immediately goes on to talk about giving away material possessions. Besides giving our material goods and bodily lives, what other ways can we lay down our lives?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- The church trailer was stolen and since found damaged; thank God for the things He blesses us with to bless others – like the time we had the trailer; pray for continued opportunities to bless our communities

Thursday March 8th – Straying**Reading: Isaiah 53:4 – 6**

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray...”

When we think about straying we get the idea of simply getting lost. An innocent miscalculation of direction. We didn't realize that we had veered right when we should have gone straight because we were distracted by the beauty of the plant life.

Far too often our straying is more like a deliberate excursion to discover why something is out of bounds. We see an old home that looks intriguing to explore and purposely ignore the “no trespassing” signs, even while squeezing through the locked gates. In other words, we tend to stray deliberately.

Why do sheep have shepherds? Because it is the nature of sheep to stray and get in harm's way, whether it be from hungry wolves or steep canyons. For centuries, shepherds have used various methods—from staff to dog—to keep sheep from straying from the safety of their care.

In recent times, shepherds have turned to other, more sophisticated, methods. One method is a metal, hoof-proof grid that is built into the ground around the sheep's territory. The animals cannot walk over the grid, which is eight feet wide. This works well in keeping sheep in the protection of the pen.

Early in 2006, shepherds in Yorkshire, England, found that they had a group of sheep to care for that were not only stubbornly prone to stray, but also crafty. One of the sheep figured out a way to transgress the boundaries: it laid down and rolled over the grid. The other sheep in the herd followed the example of the stray leader, and soon the sheep had spread over the countryside and found their way to neighbourhood gardens, where they ate the food and flowers of local residents.

The shepherds eventually gathered up the troublesome sheep and returned them to their pen, but again they escaped and got into

trouble.....and again. While the special knowledge of escape of this entire herd of "black" sheep may have seemed like an exciting adventure, it actually placed the animals into harm's way, as several sheep wandered onto nearby roads, or were accosted by local residents' dogs.[1]

While the punishment of our straying has been forgiven by Jesus, often the consequences of our straying can linger. This is why we need to keep connected with the shepherd. When we are travelling with Him we know we are safe.

Meditation/Application

Is it possible that there is an area in your life where you are straying from the Good Shepherd? It may not be evident to others, it may be a foray of the mind that you indulge and nobody can see. Ask God to reveal the place of your tendency to stray, and submit yourself once more to His guidance.

Meditation/Application

Is it possible that there is an area in your life where you affray of the mind that you indulge and nobody can see. Ask God to reveal where your tendency to stray is and submit yourself once more to His guidance.

Reflecting on the reading:

Verse 4 of our reading tells us that "He took up our pain and bore our suffering." What types of pain do you think this would include? What kind of suffering did He bear?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- A few families and individuals from time to time have strayed from the NBBC family for various reasons. Pray that they would understand God's purpose for them in a faith community. Maybe you can encourage someone you know in this way.
- Think and pray about a neighbour on your street or apartment floor

Friday March 9th – Restraint**Reading: Isaiah 53:7 – 9**

“...he did not open his mouth.”

Restrain in any area of life is hard. We hate to deny ourselves, yet failing to restrain our speech seems to be a particularly easy trap to fall into. The Bible is full of warnings regarding how our speech leads to sin. [2] Often the best course of action is simply to restrain what we say.

It was his first day on the job. He was a new clerk in the green goods department of a supermarket. A lady came up to him and said she wanted to buy half a head of lettuce. He tried to dissuade her from that goal, but she persisted.

Finally, he said, "I'll have to go back and talk to the manager."

He went to the rear of the store to talk to the manager, not noticing that the woman was walking right behind him. When he got into the back of the store, he said to the manager, "There's some stupid old bag out there who wants to buy half a head of lettuce. What should I tell her?"

Seeing the horrified look on the face of the manager, he turned about and, seeing the woman, added, "and this nice lady wants to buy the other half. Will it be all right?"

Considerably relieved, the manager said, "That would be fine."

Later in the day, he congratulated the boy on his quick thinking. He then asked, "Where are you from, son?"

The boy said, "I'm from Toronto, Canada, the home of beautiful hockey players and ugly women."

The manager looked at him and said, "My wife is from Toronto."

The boy said, "Oh, what team did she play for?"

An unrestrained tongue can get us into all kinds of problems, all of which could be avoided if we simply restrained from speaking. In proverbs we are told that "Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues." [3]

Meditation/Application

Take a minute to list all the sins that you can think of that the Bible warns against that have to do with the tongue.

Reflecting on the reading:

Isaiah 53 has long been considered a prophecy regarding Jesus. Why do you think Jesus refused to speak when He was on trial and condemned to death?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- As we choose to live as a reflection of Jesus in our neighbourhood; pray that you and your MCG would be aware of and resist sin's temptations; discipleship and evangelism are the same.
- Pray for your MCG prayer list from last week

Saturday March 10th – God Consciousness

Reading: 1 Peter 2:18 – 21

“...it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.”

One of the great, on-going disciplines of the Christian life is to grow more and more conscious of God. The goal is to get to a place where we live and behave in recognition that God is right with us at every moment, and if growing in God consciousness is the goal, you can be sure that Satan will do all he can to make us forget about God.

Google has digitized 30 million unique books. According to author Christian Rudder, "This body of data has created a new field of quantitative cultural studies called culturomics; its primary method is to track changes in word use through time. The long reach of the data (it goes back to 1800) allows an unusual look at people and what's important to them."

For example, "'Ice cream' took off in the 1910s—right when GE introduced the powered home icebox," while the word 'pasta' nosedived in the late 1990s when the Adkins diet became popular.

Culturomics also reveals what's deeply important to us. "The data shows that with each passing year, we're getting more wrapped up in the present." And what does it show for the word "God"? That word "has been in steady decline for decades and is now used only about a third as much in American writing as it was in the early 1800s."

When Israel was about to enter the promised land and finally complete their exodus from Egypt, the continual warning of God was “do not forget...”[4] It seems that there is a tendency for people to forget about God when life is good. It is only when we are in dire straits that we then tend to turn back to Him. This, I would imagine, is very sad to God because He longs to bless us, but when He does, we forget about Him.

When we practise the presence of God – being conscious of Him – in all the details of our day we may just find ourselves more available for blessing, and as long as the blessing of God's presence is our primary focus we should never fear being disappointed.

Meditation/Application

Take a minute to be still and acknowledge God's presence with you right now. Use the prayer of St. Patrick to guide your thoughts in acknowledging Him.

Reflecting on the reading:

Consider the example that Christ set in His suffering. What are some of the principles that He set out in His example regarding how we should respond when suffering?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- *Sunday was CBOQ SUNDAY – pray for our denomination headquarters*

Sunday March 11th – A Heavenly Example

Reading: Isaiah 53

Sermon Notes:

On the cross, the example of Jesus was restoring our _____:

- About _____ nature.
- About _____ nature.
- About _____ nature.

On the cross, the example of Jesus was teaching us how to under _____:

- By overcoming _____ with _____.
- By refusing to _____ evil.

Meditation/Application

As you think about today's sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Was there a story shared today in our gathering that stuck out to you? Give God thanks for what this story meant to you and to others.

Monday March 12th – Retaliation

Reading: 1 Peter 2:22 – 25

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate...”

We only have to look as far as recent news to feel the desire for retaliation. “When a gunman **killed 20 first graders and six adults** with an assault rifle at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, it rattled **Newtown, Conn.**, and reverberated across the world. Since then, there have been at least 239 school shootings nationwide. In those episodes, 438 people were shot, 138 of whom were killed including the 17 students and teachers in the Florida school shooting on February 15, 2018” [5]

Bruce McArthur is charged with 6 counts of first degree murder of missing men from the Church/Wellesley area of Toronto.

Larry Nassar, the long-time doctor of the US Olympic Gymnastics Team and Michigan University is sentenced to 40-175 years imprisonment because of the decades long serial sexual abuse of young, female gymnasts.

These are only a few examples of current headlines. If it was your daughter, son, brother, father or friend who was a victim of these horrific crimes – what would be your gut reaction?

Who could not sympathize when the father of three Olympic gymnasts, who have been abused by Nassar for years, asking the judge to give him 5 minutes alone with him. When the judge denied his request, he reduced it to only one minute. The judge naturally refused again and explained that it is the job of our judicial system to provide justice. Suddenly, the father leapt at Nassar and had to be forcibly held down and removed from the courtroom.

Who among us parents did not identify with the pain and guilt that father felt? Who didn't feel his desire to at least take revenge on this

man who horribly damaged his three daughters for life. Who among us can blame him for this reaction?

The desire to pay back evil for evil comes naturally to us because it seems fair. In practice, however, we find that it does not give us the peace and closure we are seeking; it does not undo the pain and loss we feel and does nothing to help us in our grieving process. If anything, the act of retaliation only adds an additional weight to the burden that we are simply unable to bear. For the sake of our own health - mental, physical and spiritual - and for the sake of all who are near and dear to us, we must find another way. We must follow the example of Jesus!

Meditation/Application

Is it possible that you harbour bitterness and thoughts of retaliation in your heart for another? Ask Jesus to shine His love and grace into that dark place. Ask Him to help you see that person as He sees them and ask Him to change your heart.

Reflecting on the reading:

What do you think it means when Peter says that God is the “Shepherd and Overseer” of our souls? What implications does this have for how we live?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Global Missions: Kenny Family (Missionaries in Kenya)

Tuesday March 13th – Setting an example

Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

This is not an isolated teaching from Paul, but is one that he repeats in several of his letters. For example, Paul exhorts the believers in Philippi to “join together in following my example” [6]. In I Thessalonians 1:6-7 Paul praises the Thessalonian believers because they “became imitators of us”, and in so doing they “became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia”. In I Tim. 4:12, he challenges Timothy to “set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” Finally, to Titus, a church leader in Cyprus, he says “In everything set them (the believers there) an example by doing what is good.” [7]

Mark Twain once wrote, “Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.”

In that vein, I would say, instead, “Fewer things are harder to find than someone who consistently follows the example of Christ and whose life is therefore worth imitating.”

The fact of the matter is that most of us, at one time or another in our lives, have been an example that others have imitated. Sometimes they have imitated good things that we have demonstrated, but unfortunately at other times it is negative aspects of our character or behaviour that get imitated. As a parent, it is both surprising and gratifying when I see my children imitating me in positive ways, but I also cringe when I see them displaying negative behaviours, and then realize that they are simply imitating what they have seen in me.

One of the hard realities in setting an example is that people are far more likely to imitate what we do than to follow what we say, much as we may want them to “do as I say, not as I do”. We all know that “actions speak louder than words”.

When Paul exhorts believers to follow his example, he is not just talking about external behaviour or outward appearance. He is also talking about imitating the heart attitudes and the compelling values that motivated his behaviour. I am sure you have noticed that many people, especially young people, have a highly developed ability to detect hypocrisy, especially in their parents and in leaders in the church. Nothing turns people off Christianity more than seeing people act one way in church and completely differently at home and at work.

When Don Cherry interviews major junior hockey players who have played in the young prospects game, he often asks them who they have modelled their game after. Invariably, it is some of the most accomplished NHL players at that position who get named. If I were to ask each of you, who have you modelled your Christian life after, who would you name?

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- **POTLUCK:** Be mindful about a story you might share regarding the importance of MCG's regular group meeting together. (ie. What it means to you, or how the group has seen God work through them or in them)
- **STUDY:** Share from your time of Meditation/Application from each day study. What from this week's study has made an impression on you or what confused you?
- **PRAYER WALK/MISSION ACTIVITY:** be creative and intentional as you pray/mission together.

Prayer Request:

Record the prayer requests that are shared at your MCG to inform your prayers this coming week.

*Please record these requests on next week's Study Guide's 1st page as a reminder to pray through next week.

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant, we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do in and through us.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in its missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.