

faithful & fruitful

365 daily devotions written
by lawyers for lawyers

faithful & fruitful: 365 daily devotions written by lawyers for lawyers
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In grateful memory of Jon Hyde (solicitor, Word for the Week editor and LCF Chair of Trustees), whose friendship and faith in Jesus have encouraged and inspired so many in the LCF.

Paul writes in Romans 11 -

³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!*

³⁴ *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?”*

³⁵ *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”*

³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.*

Romans 11:33-36 (ESV)

Christian lawyers operate in a sphere of secular judgments and worldly ways. The challenge is to see the work we do as emanating from the Lord, to carry it out in His power, and to offer it for His glory. And to do so every day.

Word for the Week has for many years been helping Christian lawyers to look up on Monday morning, and to set their course for the week with a passage from Scripture and a pointer to prayer. It is brief and to the point. Now this aid to Christian living for busy lawyers has been published in a form that is accessible every day of the year.

The encouragement in these pages is from lawyers to lawyers. Every reflection is there to focus the wisdom and knowledge of God, in Jesus, on living for Him in the work we do. These are riches indeed. They place us in the counsel of the Lord.

To Him be the glory for ever.

Jany Scott KC, LCF Trustee

About the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

The LCF is a fellowship because we are centred in a person and a purpose far greater than ourselves. For almost two centuries the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship has been connecting, uniting, and equipping Christian lawyers who have a love for God's Word, and who are concerned to live it out in their personal and professional lives.

To find out more about LCF membership, and LCF resources, please visit our website. www.lawcf.org

About this publication

We want Christian lawyers to be faithful and fruitful every day in every way. Connecting our Sundays with our Mondays, the LCF Word for the Week is intended to encourage whole-life witness and worship to Jesus Christ. Written by lawyers especially for lawyers, it is one of our most valued resources.

We love the unique voice of our various Word for the Week contributors, reflecting all ages and stages of the legal profession, and a breadth of Christian traditions. Every contribution was carefully considered by the editorial team prior to its original publication, to check that the thought is driven by the Bible passage, and is practical, encouraging a balanced approach to the Christian life.

A selection of such Word for the Week contributions has been compiled for this daily devotional to help the reader as they journey through the year.

If you're not a lawyer, please don't stop reading at this point – our Word for the Week has broad appeal. Christian lawyers with their involvement as counsellors and advocates in a wide range of human experiences, can offer some well-grounded insights from God's word about the realities of life and living for Jesus.

Reader – we hope that you will be encouraged by using this resource every day, but also prepare to be challenged; God's Word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart! Above all, may this publication lead you to love Jesus more, and to live faithfully and fruitfully for him.

About our international work 'CLEAR'

'CLEAR' stands for Christian Legal Education Action and Research, and refers to a network of international partners with whom the LCF is engaged in gospel-shaped justice mission. Some of the devotionals refer to our CLEAR work, and there is more information on our website.





⁵ In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used
to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest
place
and gave him the name that is above
every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee
should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the
earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus
Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)



1 JAN

The servant lawyer serving the Servant King

*... he made himself nothing by taking the very nature
of a servant Philippians 2:7 (NIV)*

Pressures within. Pressures without. Paul, the servant of Christ Jesus (1:1), writes to these dear Christians in Philippi serving God's grace and peace with practical advice, to address the problems which they are facing in life. How like a good lawyer!

If you get the chance today, read Philippians and read it aloud. Notice what happens when you get to chapter 2:6-11. Suddenly Paul's letter sings! It's poetic (the NIV captures this well). Why so?

Paul turns poetic as he directs our attention to the Jesus story. It's a stunning story, and it's the gravitational centre of Paul's letter. Be pulled into this story then, as you read about the humiliation of Christ, how he made himself nothing, taking the essential characteristics of a servant (lit. "slave" a person with no legal rights), and then stooped further still for our salvation, by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross.

Worthy is our servant king, now exalted by God to the highest place (2:9-11), for revealing the divine vocation of service!





Dear lawyer, servant of the servant king. Facing pressures within and without. Seeking to serve God's grace and peace with practical advice, to address the problems your clients face in life. Paul wants you to experience this poem, that you may resonate with and retell the Jesus story in every syllable and sentence of your life!

- Give thanks to God for His beloved Son who for our sakes and our salvation humbled himself, even to death on the cross!
- Take a moment to commit the year ahead to Jesus, and ask that he will give you the grace, wisdom, and strength to retell His story faithfully and fruitfully in the legal world.

– Mark Bainbridge (2022)



Thus far the Lord has helped us

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12 (NIV)

Samuel's ministry came at an anxious and turbulent time in Israel's history. The people of God were in the Promised Land, but they had not found a land flowing with milk and honey – instead it was full of plague and Philistines. Had the Lord given up on his people?

In Samuel chapter 7 the Lord miraculously delivered his covenant people from Philistine attack. They prevailed

not due to their strength, but in their weakness: by fasting, confession of sin, a sacrificial lamb and a cry for help to the Lord. In the aftermath Samuel erected a geological aide memoire of the Lord's faithfulness: a stone called Ebenezer ('stone of help') to remind his covenant people that the Lord is in control and rescues his people when they humble themselves before Him.

As Christian lawyers standing at the crossroads of a new year, are we tempted to look back at last year and ask where God has been? In a year of remote hearings, has our Judge seemed remote? In a year of frustration and force majeure clauses, have we lost our faith in 'acts of God'?

Instead let us come before the Lord in gratitude and humility, fixing our gaze not upon a stone but upon the cross where the Lamb of God was sacrificed for our eternal rescue. Only in the Lord's strength can we stand up for justice in a broken world.

- *"Here I raise my Ebenezer, Here by Thy great help I've come, And I hope by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home." Robert Robinson 1758*
- *Let us echo these words of the hymn 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing' as we give thanks for the Lord's unfailing goodness and for sustaining us throughout last year, and commit to His care our personal and professional plans for the year ahead.*

– Phil Roberts (2021)



3 JAN

Looking forward to the year ahead

...Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life. Jeremiah 45:5 (NIV)

How easy to find ourselves seeking greatness in our own sphere! We want to thrive in ways that people will applaud. It is what drives most of the legal profession.

God's message to Baruch brought a different perspective. As Jeremiah's scribe his job was to deliver news of imminent judgment within the elite circles of Jerusalem's civil authorities. His message was that the glory of this age would soon count for nothing – both in Jerusalem itself and then in all the surrounding nations. This is not the textbook way to win friends and influence people. Consequently, Baruch's status update was: "I am worn out...and find no rest." (45:3)

God's reply diagnoses the root of Baruch's tiredness – he is trying to obey God at the same time as angling for personal greatness within a world which is passing away. If Jerusalem and every other nation will be destroyed, what makes Baruch think his own life can remain a bed of roses? When we understand that even God's children will experience suffering in this age, it relieves us of the stress and burdens of false expectations, freeing us up to glorify God and persevere in hardship. This week let's

continue to respond to our challenges by trusting in God and persevering in doing good (1 Peter 4:16ff).

- Give glory and thanks to God that, whatever your situation, He is always trustworthy.

– Andrew M (2017)

4 JAN

When words fail me

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:1-3 (NIV)

As we enter a New Year, let's declutter and go back to the beginning.

In the beginning was the Word. Words are a passion for most lawyers. We have a rich, evocative language, although not so complete that we can avoid raiding other languages when looking for *le mot juste*. Maybe that passion has brought you where you are now, and far from where it all began.

Through him all things were made. As well as your vocabulary, you have your skilful use of it through written precision, persuasive oratory, deft use of silence, smooth soothing of the agitated, protective wit and deflecting humour. Skills that are admired by others, maybe even by ourselves, and which we hope will be credited as showing our "rightness" in all matters.

Such abilities were all made through him, not that I may boast or feel the admiration of others, but for the purpose of glorifying him.

So, Lord, may I find the courage to confront within me the 'eloquent in the room'. May my desire be not to impress but to bring glory to you. May my fears of appearing simple or speechless subside. May I be prepared to let my own words falter and fail in prayer, in praise and as I try to tell of what you have done for me. Free me from those words I have constructed around me and bring me back to *le mot juste* (the true 'right word') where it all begins (and ends); the Word John proclaims gives life, light and overcomes darkness (John 1:4-5). It is one simple, beautiful, word: Jesus.

- *Give thanks for the way the Lord has gifted and equipped you with language skills. Ask for courage to use his name in the opportunities he will give you.*

– Mark Jones (2016)

Enlightening the load

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:4-5 (NIV)

A career in law has certainly meant spending some time being illuminated. It has also involved quite a bit of time

exploring the “grey areas” (if not trying to create them!). Being candid, it has also involved times of darkness:

- Being demoralised by the actions of those I looked up to;
- A failure to obtain a just outcome;
- Choosing to spend time in the office rather than go home and engage with the challenges there;
- Abusing freedoms and facilities entrusted to me by those I work for.

We each have our own experiences. Jesus does not promise prosperity and success in all we do. We sin. We fall. We fail. He does not, and that is what we cling to – the darkness has not and will not overcome his light, but nor is it hidden from it.

Jesus is not a courtesy light, welcoming those areas we are happy about or are prepared to share or admit to. He is not a light only for those parts that are “sorted”. It is the darkness that needs his light: for example, those times of hurt when we felt enveloped by night or maybe those areas that we have convinced ourselves are just different shades of light or are best left in the shadows.

- *May the Lord take our ongoing struggles and past hurts and, in the light that is His life, deal with them.*
- *Be encouraged and thankful, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

– Mark Jones (2016)



6 JAN

Witness evidence

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John 1:6-8 (NIV)

John had a purpose. He was specially conceived for the purpose (Luke 1:17). The last Old Testament prophet, his purpose was to point people to the Messiah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Attracting attention, but not wanting to be a distraction from the Christ, John gave a clear message: he was not the light but a witness to the light, directing us not to his own greatness through feigned humility but to Jesus.

By the time of his execution (a consequence of speaking God's truth to royalty) the work he had been set was done. If his life had been a witness to his own greatness, it was a waste, a tragedy. As a life in witness to Christ it was glorious. His purpose was fulfilled.

Has God blessed you with particular legal/pastoral knowledge, wisdom and insight? Are you approached for advice by clients, colleagues, church family casually sidling up after the service? It feels good to be able to shed light on the problems of others, to feel wise, to receive gratitude, to feel useful, to feel purpose, to feel fulfilled.

But does this truly meet the purpose for which we were specially conceived into Christ's family? Do we yearn to be more fulfilled in purpose as witnesses to the light? Are we ready to be?

- *Thank you, Lord, for the example of John the baptiser.*
- *As you create opportunities for me to talk with others, help me to be a courageous witness to you.*

– Mark Jones (2017)

7 JAN

Recognition

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.

John 1:9-10 (NIV)

Last week a couple of colleagues finished a project I gave them. They did a great job. I gave it a bit of a polish and sent it out. Those who saw it were duly impressed and my colleagues were of course thrilled when I received all the credit.

I doubt that this is a unique tale within the legal profession. Colleagues and clients may not know or care how hard you worked. Maybe they want the recognition that belongs to you.

John tells how Jesus, the true light, the one through whom the entire world was made, came into the



The true light that gives
light to everyone was
coming into the world.

John 1:9 (NIV)

world. The world that owed its existence to him did not recognise him. It still happens, even for those to whom He has revealed himself. Our Lord humbles himself to death on a cross. We, in our sinful nature, cling to crowns rather than give Him the recognition, so any glory might come our way.

In the parable of the bags of gold, the master says ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ (Matthew 25:21)

As a servant, we and others may simply be doing our duty, but we have a God who takes delight and gives us recognition for just fulfilling our job description.

So this week, do we need to learn from His example? Will there be opportunity to show others His example, so they might come to recognise Him?

- Give thanks that you know Jesus, that He has been revealed to you and you recognise who He is.
- Receive His encouragement – “Well, done good and faithful servant... come and share your master’s happiness”.
- Pray for the opportunity to glorify Him through giving due recognition to others.

– Mark Jones (2017)

8 JAN

Received rather than rejected

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 1:11-13 (NIV)

Professionally, the law can be a privileged, exclusive environment, and a fickle lover. Perhaps I feel comfortable and accepted, or I feel/fear being outcast or demeaned. Either way, I have no right that compels her ongoing affection and my welcome within the club.

I similarly cannot compel another person's love. The greater my love, the more agonising its rejection, the deeper those wounds and my reluctance to allow others in. Coldness, arrogance and cynicism aren't just what the public perceive some lawyers to excel in, but are character traits for many who experience or fear rejection – hardened surfaces protecting tender areas.

If anyone had the right not to be rejected, it was Jesus. Our Lord came as bridegroom to his betrothed; and, in the greatest act of love, he submitted himself to death on a cross for an undeserving and adulterous lover.

John conveys that the right to become children of God is not an entitlement of the self-assured, but a privilege for

those who believe in Jesus with hearts open to receive the one who was himself rejected. It is not demanded, earned, deserved or negotiated. It is given. An unmerited act of love that embraces the rejected and our scars, “Welcome to the family, welcome to the inheritance, welcome to the business of God & Sons. Now, let me tend those wounds”.

- *For wounds of rejection to be replaced with assurance of our acceptance in Christ.*
- *Eschewing self-assurance for humility, give thanks for the privilege of the right to become a child of God.*

– Mark Jones (2018)

9 JAN

Dwell with me

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (NIV)

Ask someone what they think lawyers are full of and you probably won't get the response “grace and truth”. More like “full of greed and aloof”. It may be an unfair generalisation, but it is a common perception/representation of lawyers that we are distant and uncaring. That irks, doesn't it?

Many perceive God as distant and uncaring. That is the God they then choose to reject. It is a perception that is false beyond all reasonable doubt, and it has grave consequences, now and eternally.

The God of the Bible is not aloof. John says we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son. He came from the Father as the high king of heaven, not ethereal and distant but in flesh as a servant. Our fine words don't successfully fool him that we have no mess – he chooses to make his dwelling among us, in the midst of our mess. Your path this week may cross with someone believing lies about God. If we have seen his glory, do we care enough to introduce them to the one full of grace and truth who made his dwelling among us and gave his life?

- *In the mess of the week to come, ask for deeper acceptance of and gratitude for Christ's dwelling among us.*
- *Pray for others to come to see the glory of the one and only Son.*

– Mark Jones (2019)

The test of testimony

***(John testified concerning him. He cried out saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.")'
John 1:15 (NIV)***

Lawyers like a good precedent (and love picking apart a bad one).

I am repeatedly told we are living in unprecedented times – that nothing like this has ever happened before. On one level this is true: legal practitioners are advising on the hoof and creating new documents; law students and lecturers are adapting courses and learning methods. However, the one who was there before and after John the Baptist, who was there in the beginning and who is with us now, has not been taken by surprise. God's Word has not needed the addenda of a Covid-19 statement.

The precedent to follow (for us, our colleagues, clients and neighbours) is to turn to Jesus.

On Thursdays, people are taking the opportunity to stand on doorsteps and lean out of windows testifying their gratitude to those working to provide essential services [this was written in May 2020]. For Jesus, John was unabashed – he testified, he cried out. Although not personally inclined to stand in my doorway banging a saucepan, maybe it's a precedent about testimony from which I could and should learn.

- *Thank God that He remains in command.*
- *Pray that we will grasp opportunities for public testimony about Jesus.*

– Mark Jones (2020)

11 JAN

Amazing grace

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:16-17 (NIV)

The law sets out boundaries to stay within. It governs our behaviour. Having certainty about its boundaries and borders helps us to help others operate within the law and gives us personal reassurance. This far but no further.

Jesus is full of grace and truth (v14). Full, not just up to the line, but overflowing so that it pours out on all. And out of his fullness we have all received grace. Not a reward available to a 'deserving' few, but already received by all; saturating the undeserving.

Where are my boundaries when it comes to colleagues, clients and third parties I find challenging or graceless? When it comes to generosity, forgiveness, patience, repentance, compassion, love, is my witness one of law – this far but no further? Is it one of grace already received?

On one occasion, anguished by another's transgression of boundaries, God in his mercy showed me a glimpse of his love for that person. It displaced everything else. It overwhelmed. I may find comfort in boundaries, but I've not understood the fullness of his grace if at any time I think it has a constraint. Blessing upon blessing. Gift upon gift. Mercy upon mercy. Grace upon grace.

- *Pause to consider the unconstrained fullness of Jesus' grace. Are there resentments I have that I need to stop clinging to?*
- *Lord Jesus, out of the fullness of your grace and truth, help me radiate to others the grace that you have already given.*

– Mark Jones (2022)

12 JAN

Distance learning

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. John 1:18 (NIV)

Post-pandemic, I rarely meet clients (at least three-dimensionally). Remote client meetings tick the more convenient life I crave but interacting in person adds intimacy to the relationship. Barriers can come down on both sides. When a client is at arm's length, I can speak about the law, but can't as easily relate to them or speak to their circumstances and needs.

Jesus "is in the closest relationship with the Father". The trinity is deeply intimate. Relationships require risk and intimacy requires vulnerability, not an aloof, impersonal professional. From His closest relationship, "Jesus has made [the Father] known". In making Him known, we can step out of 'work mode' and be in the closest relationship. Cold objectivity may help within legal

practice, but does it make me more prone to keeping Jesus at a distance, like a client? Unless I am intimate with Jesus, how can I know God intimately and properly make Him known?

Will I allow Jesus to go behind the self-penned client care letters and codes of conduct I have in place to govern our relationship? Unreservedly trust Him with the mess; unbind the self-imposed restraints of worship; and, unveiled, laugh, weep and rest intimately in Him?

- *Praise you Father, Son and Holy Spirit that you are a God of intimate relationships.*
- *Thank you Jesus, Son of the Father, for making the Father known to us. I long for a closer relationship with you. Help me to place in your hands my fear of intimacy with you.*

– Mark Jones (2022)

13 JAN I really wanna know “Who are you?”

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.'

They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?'

He said, 'I am not.'

'Are you the Prophet?'

He answered, 'No.'

Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."'

John 1:19-23 (NIV)

One principle of cross-examination is 'don't ask a question you don't know the answer to'.

The Jewish leaders sent an elite delegation of priests and Levites to seek an audience with John. They wanted to establish whether this possibly significant person and influencer was someone they needed to know. “Who are you?”

We can be interested in who someone is or what they do (and wondering whether who they are can benefit us!). But it's often the wrong question. Knowing John's answers would not satisfy their line managers, and losing control over the witness, they then ask the much more important and interesting question, “What do you say about yourself?”

Resisting temptation to self-aggrandise or display annoyance at this intrusion into his private life, John's answer to their last gasp question revealed what they truly needed to know. Like a good lawyer for their client,

he answers that he is a voice for another – the Lord. It is not John they need to know, but the Lord he serves.

At work, or in your studies, rather than asking, “Who are you?” or “What do you do?” what question would you like to ask and to be asked (to help you be a voice of the Lord in the legal wilderness)? Whom could you ask that question of this week?

- *Lord, help me to ask and answer personal questions well.*
- *Grant me opportunities to ask good questions and to give good answers.*
- *Help me to have the humility of John – seeking honour for you, not myself.*
- *Help my words, thoughts and actions to proclaim: “Make straight the way for the Lord”.*

– Mark Jones (2022)

14 JAN Got everything...?

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. 2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

At the start of a new year it is easy to feel daunted by what lies ahead. We see the coming year with its challenges and opportunities stretching out before us, and we may wonder how we will find the strength to meet them.

Here God’s word reassures us that he has given us everything we need in order to live as he wants us to, and to do the things that he has called us to do. Our relationship with him is completely sufficient to equip us for a life of discipleship.

How can we be sure of this? Because in his goodness and power he has already called us to himself and enabled us to start on the journey of faith. As we walk with him, we can be confident that he will continue to sustain us.

- *Give thanks to God that he is powerful and good, and is all-sufficient for our needs.*
- *Pray that you would walk into the coming year in dependence on God, and would desire to know him better and trust him more, rather than relying on our own strength.*

– Caroline Eade (2018)

15 JAN Rejoice, really?

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character,