

Part II: Article Reflection

Over the years I have written a number of articles encouraging believers to have Christ at the centre and focus on him in all they do. Some of these articles follow themes discussed in *Just Jesus*, others include different truth. The purpose throughout is to encourage you the believer, and follower of Christ, to know Him in a more complete way.

Please use the reflection sheet to summarise each of the readings. This will help you to put the truth that you are exploring into your own words. This does not need to be submitted with your case studies as it is for your own benefit and growth.

Contents

Reading One:	The Battle Belongs to the Lord
Reading Two:	A Grater Truth
Reading Three:	If My People
Reading Four:	Complaining
Reading Five:	No Need to Resist
Reading Six:	Pleasing God
Reading Seven:	Are You Offended?
Reading Eight:	He Knows
Reading Nine:	You Have Amazing Potential
Reading Ten:	In the Moment
Reading Eleven:	He Leads
Reading Twelve:	God's Plan
Reading Thirteen:	I Can't
Reading Fourteen:	Enough
Reading Fifteen:	Subtractions

Reading One

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

“I am the Way...” John 14:6

David was a great warrior. As one looks through the Old Testament it can be seen that this is an unarguable fact. The scripture clearly says that he slew tens of thousands of enemies who opposed God's people. Whether this refers to the numbers he personally killed, or whether it includes those who were killed by fighters under his leadership, it is still impressive. At worst he was a great leader; at best a supernatural fighter.

Let me ask you a question. What are you fighting? What is it that you are battling? Is it a boss who is unfair? Or is financial crisis your problem? Perhaps you are overcome by a habit?

You can triumph over that thing that has hurt you for so long. How? You might ask. The same way that David did. Within the pages of the old testament lies a little gem for you and me to hold onto. It is the secret to David's victories. Before he went to battle he inquired of the Lord.

In 1 Samuel 23 the Philistines were attacking Keilah. David inquired of the Lord saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” God said, “Go” so David did and the Philistines were defeated. This was a pattern repeated numerous times in David's career as military leader. My favourite of all David's victories comes in 2 Samuel 5. The Philistines had heard that David had been anointed king of Israel so they went in search of him. Now by this stage David was an old hand at battling these guys and could have written a book called, “Ten Steps to Winning Battles” or “How to Get Your Battle Breakthrough.” But he hadn't because he knew that there is only one step, and only one way, that is to go to God. So he did and said, “Shall I go up against the Philistines?” Again God said, “Go.” So he went, and the Philistines were defeated. Then David departed from that place, and the Philistines attacked again. Now David had beaten these guys numerous times now, if it was me I would have simply turned around and attacked them. But David inquired of God, and God said, “You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them from the mulberry trees.” So David did and the Philistines were defeated.

After so many victories you would think that David had enough wisdom to know how to fight battles. However David refused the temptation to lean on his own understanding and constantly went to God. David was a great warrior but he professed to know nothing of how to go into battle.

In the same way we need to come to Jesus humbly inquiring of the way to overcome our battles (however small they maybe, and however long we have been fighting them). Then wait for Him to bring the answer. After all He is The Way.

Reading Two A Grater Truth

“And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose...” Romans 8:28

Recently I was grating some carrots with our new grater. I was having a hard time of it, wondering where the old trusty grater had gone. I thought to myself, “That was a fantastic grater.”

While thinking my hand slipped and I nearly cut my finger. “Oh, you stupid thing!” I yelled. Then a thought came to me... “I can’t use this because I don’t have the necessary skills.” If only I had the ‘know-how’ to use this new grater, or maybe if someone who was more skilful was here, they could do it. I had seen my mum use it so effectively. But no one was in sight.

Then it clicked, WHAT A REVELATION!!! All the things in our life that we hate and curse are there for a reason. They may not be a tool in our hands, but Jesus can use them. If you can’t make something work in your life, don’t spend all your time and effort trying to throw it away. Give it to Jesus, he has the skill to use it in your life for GOOD.

We spend so much time trying to cut out the so-called ‘bad’ things in our lives, when actually God has them there for a purpose. I agree that some things are just plain evil. However, we have a God who can take all evil and then ‘work it together’ for our good.

A good life is not the absence of bad things, but the presence of the one who can make every bad thing work together for GOOD!

Reading Three If My People

"...if my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sins and heal their land." 2 Cron 7:14

I have heard this scripture quoted a number of times as an encouragement to pray so that we would see God move. I can't argue with this statement. I want God to move in my life and in the lives of those around me, to His glory. And I believe that prayer is vital if we are to know God's anointing.

Prayer is seen by many as the vital element to experiencing God. But perhaps there is more responsibility on our part than just praying? Here is some other thoughts into the above verse.

"...humble themselves..."

This part comes before the call to prayer. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). It is pointless praying about anything in pride, the words will go nowhere. We are called to humble ourselves before God, this is our obligation. If we are truly humble this might mean doing things that we have not wanted to do. Simple things like admit it to our family when we are wrong! Saying sorry to a person that we were rude to. You know, so many little things that pride prevents us from doing have to go out the window in humility. Humility means walking in the light of His truth.

"...and pray and seek my face..."

Wow so much in these five words. Firstly, "...and pray..." What is prayer? Well it is interacting with God. I don't believe that it is chanting our requests or laying hands on the refrigerator in a department store and naming and claiming it. Also, prayer can't be confined to a place. Or how can we "...pray without ceasing"? I believe prayer is simple interaction with God. Listening and responding to Him in our lives.

Then we see that in prayer we are to 'seek' God's face. His face is different to His hand. His hand speaks of His provision for us, His face speaks of Himself. Do we know the difference? When I was a little boy I would go to my mum for everything, food, clothes, money for school trips and the list goes on. I loved my mum because she looked after me. Now I am a man I have a different relationship with my mum. We live in different countries but I ring her every week and talk to her usually for 30 to 60 minutes (60 when she is paying). Sometimes I have to ask her to help me by posting something I want, but mostly we just enjoy talking with each other. I learn about what is happening in her life and she in mine. I look forward to these times, and I feel sad when we go any length without talking. Similarly, God is wanting us to grow into a deeper relationship with Himself that involves fellowship, not just asking for all the 'stuff' that we want. Do you enjoy fellowship with God? Or is He just a big Santa Claus in the

sky that you ask things from? He is so much more than the one who provides. Interaction with the Eternal Everlasting God is actually much more interesting than our shallow little shopping lists that we bring thinking, "If only I get these things I will be happy."

"...and turn from their wicked ways..."

Oh wicked ways? What wicked ways would they be? Well you can be sure when you and I approach God in humility we will see the wickedness of 'our ways'. As we see our sin we are called to TURN from it. This is called repentance. Don't make excuses admit it and turn away from it that is what repentance is and this is what leads to us being forgiven.

So there are some thoughts about a well quoted scripture... and the thing that stands out to me strongest through it all is not that we need to pray, but rather how we should pray – in humility.

Reading Four Complaining

“My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:31

Not so long ago I found myself complaining whenever someone asked me how I was. I would complain about how busy I was with all my studies, my work teaching English, leading homegroup and the other things that were taking up my time.

Then God let me see that I am exactly where He wants me, doing exactly what He wants, and that by complaining I was complaining against Him. He brought to memory the times I had prayed, “Open the doors as you will in my life, show me the way you want me to go”. In my heart I knew at that point that I had been complaining against Him. I said I was sorry, and began to thank Him for the position I was in, knowing that it was His place for me at that time. For He is my shepherd and if He doesn't want me doing something, then He is able to lead me out of that thing. As I looked to Him the burden of these things began to lift, even though I was still doing all the same things from day to day.

When we focus on our situation it can become too much to bear, but when we focus on Him, He bears that load.

Reading Five

No Need to Resist

One of my favourite sports to play is touch rugby because it is like rugby but without the tackling. Anyway we have quite a good competition in Bangkok where I live and I play most weekends. Our team was asked to put out a side to play the visiting New Zealand Navy team. I like to run the ball up hard and on one occasion in the game was thinking a little bit ahead of myself about the next play. Taking the ball straight up I met a rather large Maori fellow whose arms kind of reminded me of cave man clubs. Anyway, I ran straight into him and the next thing I knew I was looking up at the blue sky thinking, "What just happened there." I looked at the referee and he just shrugged his shoulders and said that he had briefly looked the other way. Unfortunately this all happened close to the sideline, which left me open to quite a bit of ridicule from the Navy supporters.

You must be wondering what my point is. Well, I learnt a little lesson in physics. When two forces go up against each other there is a collision and both forces feel the pressure of the impact because they are resisting one another. In this case I felt it more than he did. How often we experience pressure in our lives. Work, family, church, sport, financial and other commitments come up against us and we experience pressure. But the answer for removing pressure is simple – don't resist the thing that is causing it. Pressure is the measure of our resistance to a situation. If we stop resisting, the pressure disappears. I was the one that caused the pressure with the opposition by running straight at the other player. Boom! There was a crash and I felt the pressure. We feel the pressure when we resist our situation. Yielding takes away the pressure caused by another external force that is compelling us. Jesus said, "If a man compels you to go a mile, go with him two." When we yield we take away the impetus of compulsion.

Reading Six Pleasing God

I know that many Christians are getting ready. They are preparing for the great someday when they will finally... be a pleasure to God.

I have news for you if you are one of those people, it's not coming. I know! I have waited long and hard for that great someday when I will be 'Mr Faith and Power'. It never came and I got sadder and more frustrated at my apparent lack of worth.

Let me tell you some good news though. You can please God today! You may say, "My life is a real mess, there is no way that I am able to bring Him pleasure, not yet anyway." But let me tell you that you can!! How? The only way that anyone can please God...faith. Having a ministry doesn't please God, neither does being drug free. It is faith that brings God pleasure (Heb 11:6). Faith focuses on God and not our behaviour, it considers Jesus' ability and not our inability. That's good news for you and me, it means that we can please God today.

Reading Seven Are You Offended? – Watch Out

I am learning to overcome my fear of repetition. The theme in this article is one that I have laboured before. The simple point that I would like to make, again, is – if you get offended by someone then you are an offender.

The way it works is quite simple. Someone says or does something that you don't like. For example, commenting on one of your 'undesirable qualities'. Then you get offended and resent that person and what they have said. So how do some come to the place of being offended so easily? Well firstly you have to understand that only offenders get offended. To be offended you must hold the heart attitude that YOU deserve a certain level of glory and honour from another. The truth is that there is only one who deserves this and that is God Almighty. So you see if He is the only one worthy of it and you are trying to get it you are committing the crime of attempted robbery. You are trying to take something that isn't yours. This makes you an offender. So we see that the offended person has already committed an offence before he gets offended which is to try and have what is rightfully God's. Furthermore, when you are offended you have double condemnation because the One that walked this earth who was worthy of honour and glory never claimed it. So if Jesus being worthy of honour and glory allowed Himself to be mocked and ridiculed publicly without raising a word, how wrong are you when you fight those who threaten your glory (even though you don't really have any)? So watch out next time you are offended! It is revealing something far worse than someone else's bad manners.

Reading Eight He Knows

“I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord...” Jer 29:11

He knows the plans that He has for me and that is all I need to know. Because of my unbelief I want to know what the plan is, but I don't need to know because He knows. He will let me know what I need to know when I need to know. I know Him that is enough. So often so we beseech God to show us His. Why do we do this? We should just trust that He will fill us in on the details as we need to know them.

Some people just have to know one thing before they move forward. But you can't move into a little bit of unbelief. Unbelief is like dog that eats from under the table, once you give it a little bit of food it will be back for more. Once you need to know one thing you will need another and another. I am not saying that God won't let us know some of the details for the future. But we don't need to know anything more than what we have right now. We have Jesus, and He knows the plan. We have all that we need!

If we knew all that our future held then we would no longer be living in faith. It is faith that pleases God, and it is the life of faith that will ultimately please us too.

Reading Nine You Have Amazing Potential

Recently I was asked to write a paper about the potential value of counselling as a people helping activity. By the end of the essay all I could think about was the tremendous potential that a person has in Christ to help others. During my research I came across a very interesting article by Carl Rogers about the key attributes required in counselling. These attributes were not what I thought they would be. I thought that they would be things like knowledge of various counselling models or ability to explain ideas in a concrete way. These 'vital' qualities that a counselor should possess were in fact personal qualities such as empathy and respect. This article that was supported by others like it made the statement that these 'personal' attributes were all that was needed to be successful in therapy. Now this has tremendous application for you and I in the way that we serve others. We have the life of Jesus in us and He has an endless supply of love, empathy, kindness and anything else that we need to bless others. This means we can help people today! Not when we finish Bible College or become more patient. Now is the time to draw on His life in us to be a blessing to others. You have such amazing potential in Christ.

Reading Ten In the Moment

“Now faith is being sure of what we hoped for and certain of what we do not see.”

Heb 11:1 (NIV)

Jesus will give us all that we need when we need it. This is the way of faith. If He gave it to me three weeks before, then faith is more or less eliminated from the situation.

Because of my own unbelief and lack of faith I generally want things in place, ahead of time. However God will never allow everything to be in place ahead of time, but He will allow everything to come into place right on time. This is the only way He can get the kind of response that He wants from us – faith. “Faith is... being certain of what we do not see.”

Recently I was running and thinking about a person who had been saying some unpleasant things about me. I began to get angry as I continued to think on this. Then I looked to Jesus and this changed my focus. But less than a minute later I was going down the same road again, thinking thoughts like, “He deserves a good beating,” and, “I should be the one who gives it.” Perplexed at my current state of mind I couldn’t see how I would be able to face that person next time. Again I looked to Jesus and a thought came into my head, “I’ll see you in the moment.” Then I said it to Jesus, “I’ll see you in the moment.” That’s great I thought, I can’t see myself facing this guy because I’m just too angry. The reality is I must face him and trust that at that moment Jesus will meet me with all I need to love, bless and not curse. And do you know what, He did.

When the future is too fearful to face, Jesus will face it with you and be all you need. Remember though, He may not show up with exactly what you need until that exact moment you need it.

Reading Eleven He Leads

“...He leads me beside the still waters.” Psalm 23:1

Life can often seem to be a real balancing act between helping with the needs of others and tending to our own needs. If we go too far toward the former, we find ourselves burning out, if we lean too far to the latter we can fall into condemnation from passivity. The question for many is ‘What is the right balance? We can find that trying to play this balancing game only adds to stress as one person or issue is weighed up against another.

God’s way is far more simple, choose Jesus. As we choose Him He leads us as we make choices about our lives. I can’t qualify what I am saying with deeds that many would call ‘great’ such as miraculous healing, walking on water, or starting a church. But doing ‘great’ things isn’t the Father’s goal for our lives - Jesus is. When we invite Him to lead us, no matter how mundane are the things we do, we have confidence that He is the Good Shepherd and He is leading. When we acknowledge Him, and put a situation in His hands we can then trust that He is in control. If He wants us in a certain place then he will get us there.

Invite Him to lead you and everything that you do will mean something because the Son of God will be leading you.

Reading Twelve Gods Plan

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in Me...” Galatians 1:15, 16

The ultimate goal God has for our life is to reveal His Son to and through us. Some of the goals and thoughts I had for my life four years ago are miles from where I am today. I remember when I was 18 and had had only been a Christian a couple of years I thought, “By the time that I am 22 or 23 I will hopefully be coming home for a sabbatical, after serving on the mission field for a few years.” Instead I worked in a number of different (less than thrilling) jobs, and returned to school. It sounds unexciting and unspiritual, but looking back on it, it hasn’t been. As I remember the four years of my life after I had that thought I am so pleased how God has revealed His Son to me and through me, I am thrilled at the way things have worked out. I say that I am thrilled because there is nothing greater than for Jesus to be made known in a person’s life, and that is exactly what has happened to me. Jesus has been revealed to me and through me. Getting to know the Lord of the work is much better than knowing the work of the Lord.

God’s plan for our lives is that His Son is revealed to us, and in us. Whatever leads to this is great. I wanted the mission field because it would be good for my image as a Christian. Instead he gave me things that were necessary to squash my image so His could be revealed. God takes everything and works it out for the good of those who love Him. That means there is nothing in your life that He can’t work into His plan of revealing His Son in you.

Reading Thirteen I Can't

The two words that mean more and more to me each day are 'I can't'. It never ceases to amaze me how I will refuse to admit some of the most obvious things about myself. This is pride. Pride is the fight to maintain ones own image. Pride is the biggest stumbling block to receiving God's life and power. The words 'I can't' are the prides worst enemies. To say that I can't do something is to admit that I am deficient in some way. "I can't love that person"... "I can't evangelise"... "I can't stand up to my bullying boss"... These are all statements that work against my pride. But here is the little secret... Jesus loves to hear us say them. He is waiting to hear us humbly confess our inability, and when we do, we open the way for Him to be to us what we are not. I can't love some people, but He will be love in me. I can't evangelise to some people because I am too afraid of what they might say and think... He will be boldness in me. When Moses told God that he could not speak, God never said, "O yes you can, you just need to put more effort in." It was nothing to God that Moses could not speak except an opportunity to reveal His power in a more wonderful way.

Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 12 that there is a way to be and that is weak, because when we are weak God's power shows up all the more. I don't know about you but it sounds like the kind of life that I am suited to, and it all starts with admitting the way that it has always been... I am weak and He is strong. Will you admit it today? Can you see how the person who admits this is the person most qualified for God's power?

You may have been a Christian for a while and thought that you are absolutely dreadful at it. Well you are right. Because before you can receive God's way you must be willing to give up on your own. In some areas you might be still quite confident. For example, you may really rate yourself as a mother or father. Well good for you, you're a good parent. But if you want to be the best admit that you're not, and ask for Jesus to be in you everything in your parenthood. It really comes back to pride and the protection of that image that we want others to believe about us. If we would daily deny that image we will slowly find ourselves being conformed to His likeness as His life that lives in us manifests itself through us. Start the ball rolling with those two wonderful words – I can't.

Reading Fourteen Enough

“For in Him Dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of every principality and power.” Colossians 2:10

When we have Jesus we have enough. You wouldn't believe it looking at the huge amounts of Christian paraphernalia around today. But its true Jesus is enough.

Often I find myself saying, 'If onllys'... If only I had this that or the other thing I would be all right. Ever find yourself saying 'if only'? If only I had more money... If only I had more time... If only I didn't have such a boring job... If only I could feel God more... If only I could have that experience... If only God would speak to me... If only we had more time then we could do this or that... If only I had gone to university. The list goes on and on.

What we really need is to see Jesus, because He is God's everything. When I have Him I have enough. It is fine to acknowledge what I perceive to be a thing that I need, and desire to have it. Nevertheless this is only my perception of what I need. If I go to God and ask for what I think I need, and I then do not receive that for which I have asked, then I obviously don't need it. He is the good provider; He will not hold back what we need.

Reading Fifteen Subtractions

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Romans 12:2

“And if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:7

“And I fear, lest somehow. As the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

Jesus Christ lives in every believer! He is the sum total of all we need to live the Christian life. As a part of growing in Him He is cleansing and renewing our souls. There is something about cleansing that we all need to remember, it is subtraction not addition. It involves taking away not adding to something. So much of our thinking is geared toward additions. We are told that if we add a discipline like prayer then we will grow and be cleansed of our problems. Potential pastors are told that if they spend three years at Bible school then they will be ready to lead a church. Moreover, we are fed those lines about needing more seminars, books, services, study guides and the like. I am not against any of these things, but as a way to overcome they are not sufficient. On the other hand if the person discovers Jesus at the seminar or in the book then awesome! But so often these things only bring more additions to our already overloaded lives. What we need is – Jesus and guess what? Every believer already has Him living within them. As we put our focus on Jesus He will relieve us of the baggage that we carry, and empower us to live freely and lightly. We don't need more, but a revelation of what we already have.

Reflection Sheet

Article Title: _____

Article summary:

Application:

Notes: