

Call to Worship

The Lord delights in those that fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. (Ps 147:11)

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 111

Prayer of confession

Loving Father,

You open your arms to us in love and, in the safety of your love, we confess:

You have blessed us with love and hope, but we have not caused your name to be blessed.

You have taught us your truth and your ways, but we have chosen our own truth and strayed.

You committed yourself to us on a cross, but we have committed ourselves to our own comfort.

Forgive us Father.

This day, we commit ourselves afresh to you. Help us to stand by your truth, stand amidst the trials of life and, when all is done, to stand by you. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn 1:9)

Prayer of thanksgiving

For the gift of existence in the extraordinary reality of the universe, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of meaning within the chaos of the universe, we bless your holy name

For the gift of value within the vastness of the universe, we bless your holy name

For the gift of forgiveness within the pain of a hurtful world, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of hope within the pain of a hurtful world, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of peace within the pain of a hurtful world, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of love for the pain of a lonely heart, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of salvation for the pain of a sinful heart, we bless your holy name.

For the gift of a future for the pain of an aching heart, we bless your holy name.

BEFORE YOU EAT THAT APPLE!

Holy Communion

There was day, once a year, when the entire Jewish nation held its breath as they asked themselves whether God could possibly forgive his people yet again?

It was the job of the High Priest to perform a ceremony that enabled the Jewish people to access the forgiveness of God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, two goats were brought to the temple. One goat was sacrificed to symbolically pay the price for the sins of the people. The other goat stayed alive. The High Priest would place his hands on the head of the goat and symbolically transfer the sins of the people to the goat. This goat was then taken out of the city and set free in the wilderness. It became the scapegoat who symbolically took the sins of the people away.

The Day of Atonement was a vital day in the life of God's people. On this day, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed goat (or lamb) in the Holy of Holies. This was a room in the heart of the temple that symbolised the very presence of God. The room was considered so holy that only the High Priest was allowed to go there once a year to perform this ritual.

As important as these rituals were, the Jews knew that no sacrifice of an animal could ever really take away the sins of the people. God required this ritual because he was making the point that sin could not be overlooked. It needed to be dealt with. God instituted this ritual because it foreshadowed a time in history when he would come to us as the man Christ Jesus. Jesus would allow himself to be sacrificed on a cross and shed his blood for your sins and mine. He did this to pay the price for our sins that would otherwise disqualify us from God's presence.

Before Jesus died, he asked us to remember his sacrifice by sharing bread and wine together. This we gladly do.

Thank you Lord Jesus for paying the price for our sins on the cross. We honour you as we share bread and wine together.

The Bible Reading

- Genesis 3:1-10

The Message: **BEFORE YOU EAT THAT APPLE!**

Christians are meant to live *"life in all its fullness"* (Jn 10:10). We know that God has richly provided us *"with everything for our enjoyment."* (1 Tim 6:17). However, there are just some things God does not want us to do – not to spoil our fun but because they hurt us. As Benjamin Franklin said: *"Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, but sin is forbidden because it is hurtful."*

Temptation, on its own, is harmless. Temptation has to mix with our own wrong desires before a sin is committed (Jas 1:14-15). Therefore, Satan can't make us sin by tempting – us unless we want to. Satan needs our "yes" first.

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So let's be clear: It is not a sin to be tempted. Even Jesus was tempted (Mk 1:9-13). It is what we do with it that matters.

1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches that you and I are not alone in the temptations we face. Many face the same temptations. This is perhaps a relief. This passage also teaches that God will not let us be tempted beyond that which we can endure, but will always give us the ability to overcome temptation – if we want it. The problem is, of course, that we don't always want God to give us the ability to overcome a temptation, a fact that prompted Noel Coward to say: *"I can resist all things except temptation"*.

We have been called to train bodies and our thinking, i.e. renew our minds (2 Cor 10:5; Eph 4:22-24; Phil 4:8). What on earth does this mean practically? Some answers to this can be found in Genesis 3:1-10.

The anatomy of deception, the sequence of the temptation process, as seen in Genesis 3:1-10.

(V.1) Know that you have an impressive adversary. Satan is crafty. He is:

1. the Father of lies (Jn 8:44)
2. the deceiver (2 Cor 11:13-15; 2 Thess 2:9-11; Rev 12:9)

Therefore, be aware of Satan's scheming (2 Cor 2:11).

Gen 3:1-10 is a great description of a typical scheme of Satan. See if you recognise any of Satan's strategies from what you have experienced in your own life.

Step 1)

Cast doubt about what God really says. *"Did God really say..."* Begin by casting doubt in God and God's word. "The Bible is not really authoritative in its consistent principles" say the advocates of libertine behaviour.

(V. 2-3) Eve knew God's instructions (she quoted them right back at Satan) but she didn't commit to them. She didn't "own" them for herself and as such, they weren't part of her.

(V.4 Step 2)

Cast doubt about the real consequences of your anticipated sin. Satan tells Eve, *"You won't really die."* Every time we sin, we are relying on the fact that God doesn't exist and that holiness doesn't matter.

(V.5 Step 3)

You cast God in the role of being a "kill-joy", and you ridicule God's standards of holiness. Satan tells Eve that God doesn't want Eve to be as wise and knowing as he is, and that that is the only reason God doesn't want her to eat the fruit.

Today, people also portray God as a spoilsport who doesn't want people to experience the fun of that drug trip, that sexual excitement or whatever. People rebel against God because they want more. They want the prize of (as Satan puts it) "your eyes will be opened." The truth is: God puts boundaries on our behaviour for our good, i.e. so that we won't hurt ourselves by doing hurtful things. The psalm writer says:

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*Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance. (Ps 16:5-6)*

In other words... the boundaries God has set up for us keep us in a 'pleasant place'. I invite you to respect those boundaries and allow them to keep you safe.

(V.6 Step 4)

You entertain the idea. You savour it. At this point you could cut off the temptation before it grows in power. But you don't let it. You savour the idea. After all, there can be no harm in thinking about it. But somehow, thinking leads to action.

"each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (Jas 1:14-15).

Do you see the process? Temptation, desire, sin, death.

Step 5)

If at all possible, get others to sin with you, so you don't feel so alone. Listen this fairly extreme example from the latest *Marie Claire* magazine:

"I was introduced to Wicca (witchcraft) by one of the girls I went to school with. At the time, I was pretty screwed up. I was sexually abused by a member of my own family and had become addicted to crank (an amphetamine derivative). I spent a lot of time being high so that I didn't have to face up to things. I slept around and had to have an abortion when I was fifteen. Wicca allowed me to gain some feelings of control over my life and my body."

What "I want" gradually edges out what God wants. The *Marie Claire* article continues:

"It is easy to see why Wicca attracts young people in search of spirituality. A nature-based, 'free choice' religion, it is open to the practitioner's interpretation. There are no fixed rules..."¹

There is a strong sense of personal empowerment which allows you to do what you want. In this article, the Wiccan devotees speak of having power over others by casting of spells. And so it is that the "self" has ousted God's sovereignty.

(V.7)

However, there is always a consequence. It is a truism that whilst you may be free to choose what you want; you are not free to choose the consequences of them.

What was the consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience against God? We read that their "eyes were opened". The trouble is, they saw a whole lot more than they could handle.

¹ Juniper (not her real name) reported in "Witchcraft – the new teenage religion" pp. 146-152 *Marie Claire*, No. 147 November 2000, p.149

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There are so many stories of people who say, “If only I didn’t mess it up on that one occasion. If only I hadn’t cheated. If only I hadn’t had that affair, my marriage, my ministry and family would still be intact. If only I had not been dishonest, I wouldn’t have the reputation of someone who can’t be trusted. If only...” Too late, our eyes have been opened and we now see the dreadful consequences.

(V.8)

These dreadful consequences contrasts with the innocence, peace and wholesomeness implicit in the description of God. Adam and Eve are in a frenzy sewing fig leaves together, being embarrassed and hiding. And what is God doing? He is walking in the cool of the day looking for his friends, Adam and Eve. The difference between the two parties is stark.

This is the picture of some today. They are hiding from God. They feel they are not worthy to be seen by God, to come to church, or be accepted by God. They hide in the shadows of life – away from God’s best intention for them.

Are you hiding from God?

If you are, God is calling out to you in your hiding place – “*Where are you?*”

Where are you? Are you hiding? If you are, know that God is looking for you. He sent his son Jesus to die and take the blame for you sins that would otherwise make you ineligible for life with a holy God. So God is calling you from out of hiding: “Where are you?”

There is nothing so broken that can't be forgiven by God. There is nothing so hopeless that God cannot change. There is nothing so lost that cannot be found. Is it time for you to return to God, and know the new beginnings we can have in him? It was for this purpose Jesus came for you. It was for this purpose Jesus died for you. Will you come to him... to be made whole?

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let's not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb 10:25)

This service was provided to HopeNet SA by Dr Nick Hawkes

BEFORE YOU EAT THAT APPLE!

KID'S CHURCH or KID'S TALK or SUNDAY SCHOOL

Keep your love red hot (Revelation 2:1-7)

You will need:

- a frozen meal and a cool box to keep the meal frozen until you use it.
- Alternatively, if you and the children have access to a kitchen, you can use a fry pan, some butter and some pancake mix. Ensure you also have some honey or golden syrup to put on the pancakes.

Say to the children that you haven't had time for a meal so, if they don't mind, you will have yours right now.

Take out a frozen meat pie, or a complete dinner with vegetables (all deeply frozen) and make a fool of yourself trying to eat it. Ham it up.

Alternatively, you can pour the pancake mix into the cold fry pan and then call for volunteers to try the pancake you've just made (still runny and uncooked). Enjoy the children's responses.

Settle the children down and tell them that if things are not as hot as they should be, things don't work very well. The same is true for love. If our love goes cold, it doesn't work. People sometimes speak of their love "dying" or "going cold". God warns us in the Bible never to let our love for God go cold. (Read Revelation 2:1-7.)

Go on to teach them how they can prevent their love for God going cold:

How do you keep your love hot?

1) **Know** about the one you should love.

You can't love them if you don't know them. Learn about them. Learn about their character and what pleases them. Do the same with God by learning about him by reading the Bible each day.

2) **Talk** to the one you should love.

If a boyfriend and girlfriend never talk to each other, their love will die away. (Teenage girls spend ages on the phone talking with their boyfriends – and vice versa.) Do the same with God. Don't forget to talk with him and listen to him each day in prayer.

3) **Do** things together with the one you love.

People who are in love, want to do things together all the time. They want to go to the pictures together, they want to buy houses together, they want to go walking together and they want to go on holiday together. We can keep our love hot for God by doing things together with God. We can work with God in organising to tell others about God's love for them. We can work with God to help the poor, the sad and the bullied.

Don't let your love for God go cold.

If you have made pancakes, end by cooking proper pancakes and enjoying them.