

LIFEWORDS

Lifewords Prayer, November 2020

"Blessed are the debonair, for they will inherit the earth."
Matthew 5:5 – translated from the French

In a French translation of verses known as the beatitudes, the phrase that the English-speaking world knows as, "blessed are the meek", is translated as, "blessed are the debonair". The dictionary defines "debonair" as confident, stylish, and charming, but when the Bible was translated into French in the mid-1500s, to be "debonair" meant something quite different:

"A person who is not an idolater, one who hasn't gotten hooked up in anything worldly, one who is so sophisticated as to know wealth for what it is, and that it isn't everything ... This is a person who has a kind of centeredness that doesn't let the idols of this world capture it. It's a kind of debonair in which you sit lightly on the offerings and temptations of this world because you have a vision of something better."¹

The kind of people who will inherit the earth are those who dance lightly on it. Those who already instinctively know that human beings have trampled across the earth in hob-nailed boots. Those who understand that wealth isn't everything. Those who don't get caught up in the offerings of the world because they have a vision of something better.

When it comes to climate destruction, dancing lightly doesn't mean tiptoeing around leaving no trace. It means throwing off the temptations of consumption and greed, and instead, loving outrageously. The question is, what does it look like in terms of living life and caring for the earth? Maybe it looks like putting the Bible's life words into practice; an actual lived reality of treating the world the way we are supposed to. Not just knowing that we *can* change things but *doing* it. Not just tipping our hat at the idea of consuming less, and loving more, but choosing to do it. Choosing to be debonair, and dancing lightly where we have been conditioned to stomp.

This is a shortened and adapted version of a blog post. Read the full post and find out more at www.versefirst.com.

¹ "His God Story," in James M. Childs Jr. *The Eloquence of Grace: Joseph Sittler and the Preaching Life*

Welcome to the November edition of Lifewords Prayer. This month we find out more about VerseFirst's EarthFirst campaign, hear about our new Christmas resource, have an update from Australia, and hear from a Pavement Project worker in Zimbabwe. Please join us as we pray.

1–7 November **EarthFirst**

VerseFirst, Lifeworlds social media Bible engagement initiative, is currently running EarthFirst via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Aimed at young people, EarthFirst offers a way to engage with the Bible and respond to the climate emergency, using images alongside verses that reflect creation and our stewardship of the planet.

- VerseFirst was created with the aim to reach young people and encourage them to start their day with a Bible verse. This new campaign uses verses that reflect creation and our stewardship of the planet, focussing specifically on verses from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Pray that as we engage with these issues from God's perspective that we and our worldview would be changed, and that we would be challenged to respond with love and justice.
- "Activism against climate breakdown is being strongly led by young people," says Elizabeth King, from the Lifeworlds UK team. "This campaign from VerseFirst is a great platform to encourage them to be introduced to Scripture that relates to this touchstone issue of our times." Please pray that as young people engage with the images and Bible verses that they would understand more about who God is. Pray that they would share the posts with their friends and be encouraged to engage them in the Bible and the good news of Jesus.
- Along with the ravages of Covid-19, the fight for the future of the planet is the most important issue right now. As governments grapple with the escalating climate crisis, and the surge in natural disasters and extreme weather events, please pray that God would give them wisdom, courage and resources to bring about lasting change. Pray for us as individuals that we would consider our part in this crisis and make changes to the way we live.

Find out more about EarthFirst at www.versefirst.com and follow the campaign on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

8–14 November **The True Light**

As a global pandemic rages, we face a Christmas unlike any other. This year, joy mixes with grief; rejoicing with exhaustion; all the usual trappings are overshadowed. Yet, the Christmas Story encourages us not to be afraid, but to rejoice in the glad tidings of the "True Light that gives light to everyone".

- *The True Light*, our new Christmas resource, invites people to consider where the "true light" finds them this Christmas. Through Scriptures that speak of the moments in the nativity story where hope meets real lives, we are encouraged that whatever the situation, we are not to be afraid – the True Light is coming! Give thanks for this new resource that speaks into the current climate of confusion, despair and uncertainty. Pray that many people would read God's message of hope and love in its pages this Christmas.
- Alongside this new resource is the rest of our Christmas range, with titles to suit different ages and contexts. Praise God for how these resources have been used in the past to help people understand and engage with the Christmas story. Pray that the churches, groups and individuals who use Lifeworlds resources would have

the opportunity to share them this year, and that the Bible's life words would bring insight, hope and fresh inspiration to those that read them.

- This Christmas, churches, schools, and organisations will have to change how they reach out to and serve their communities. Pray for wisdom and creativity for leaders, so that despite restrictions people will still be able to hear about God's love for them and to experience a sense of togetherness and celebration with those in their community.

Find out more about and order *The True Light* and the rest of our Christmas range at www.lifewords.global/christmas.

15–21 November Australia and New Zealand

For Lifewords offices around the world, the pandemic has meant adapting to new ways of ministering. Dan Hardie updates us on the work in Australia:

- “Orders for resources have been down,” says Lifewords Australia Director, Dan. “Many of the chaplains, churches, ministries, and partners have had their activities restricted by social distancing rules and closures. We’ve been speaking and praying with chaplains who are not allowed on campus to do their work – in prisons, hospitals, care facilities, and more. Our prayer list has grown and both Vera [part of Lifewords team in Australia] and I have been talking with key partners each week and sharing in their burden.” Give thanks for the support Dan and Vera are able to offer to Lifewords supporters and partners. Pray for these individuals and groups who have had to rethink and change the way they minister. Pray that despite restrictions that the communities they serve would be reached and looked after.
- “We’re just starting to see orders for our literature resources start to come back in both New Zealand and Australia,” says Dan. “We expect this to grow as we move into the Christmas season.” Pray that as people adapt to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic that they would be able to find ways to share good news. Pray that as Christmas plans are put in place that Christians in Australia would be inspired to reach out and share resources in new and creative ways.
- “Community-based public benevolent institutions like Kogarah Storehouse in New South Wales have been flooded with requests for support since the Covid-19 restrictions have taken effect. Kogarah Storehouse serves those who are needy, providing food, welfare and social service assistance, and support for vulnerable women. Vera has been actively joining their weekly activities, setting up a booklet stand, and serving the poor and needy.” Give thanks for initiatives like Kogarah Storehouse who are offering vital support during the pandemic. Pray that they would have the resources and volunteers they need, and that they would be kept safe and healthy as they serve.

22–28 November Answered prayer in Zimbabwe

Pastor Chikadzhe uses Pavement Project with young people in Zimbabwe. Here she shares a story of transformation, hope and God's provision:

- “It is an afternoon in June. Most people are indoors because of fear of the coronavirus and also fear of the authorities that are restricting movements.

Maurice*, who is 12 years old, comes to the children's home. I take him to our counselling room. He sits down with a sigh and immediately I begin talking to him about coronavirus and whether he understands what he should do to protect himself from it. He recites the basic regulations like they are programmed into him." Pray for children like Maurice, who are living in the midst of great uncertainty, with restricted access to friends, school, and wider family.

- "I pull down my green bag, which is always hung on the wall waiting for times like this," says Pastor Chikadzhe. "I get Maurice to talk and ask him about the worst thing that happened to him. He tells me that his father left some time before the lockdown ... he thinks his father will not be coming back to the family. His mother, who was employed at one of the bakeries in town, has not been going to work since the start of the lockdown. The boy feels hungry and vulnerable, and he compares himself to a rat. I share a Bible story with him and tell him that Jesus loves him and wants him to be part of God's family. I go on to tell the story of how Jesus miraculously fed the 4,000 and I pray for him, and offer him a pocket card – he chooses the image of the protective hands. When I ask him again what he can compare himself to, he says he compares himself to a tree that is secure on the ground. Before he goes, he says to me, 'Pastor may I have a Bible so that I can read for myself at home.' I am a bit surprised, because most children do not ask for a Bible from me, but I give him my NIV Bible, and he thanks me and leaves." Praise God for people like Pastor Chikadzhe who are working to care for and give hope to young people. Give thanks for the transforming power of God's Word, and for the hunger Maurice has to read more.
- "I go back to the prayer room and pray that God may provide for the family in a miraculous way like he provided for the 4,000," says Pastor Chikadzhe. "The following week as I go out to empty our bin, the boy beckons me to stop and he comes running to me, this time smiling from ear to ear. He tells me that his mother received a phone call to come and collect her travel permit so that she can resume work. I smile calmly and say, 'praise God', but when I get back to my prayer room, I dance before the Lord in ecstasy! I feel glad that God answers prayer!" Praise God for answered prayer and for the provision for Maurice and his family.

* Name has been changed.

Thank you for praying with us! Your partnership in prayer is vital to all that we do as we share the Bible's life words around the world.

In the midst of the coronavirus crisis our resources are still available, our stock is good and our distribution still operational. Please bear with us, as naturally there may be some element of delay as postal services are impacted, but in so far as we can every order is still being processed.

We encourage you to visit our website and social media, where you will find up-to-date information on our resources. In coming weeks, we will be looking to add to online ways of serving, encouraging and equipping you during this season. We want to provide you with Bible resources that will help you, help your friends and neighbours and community, and help your church to navigate these uncharted waters.

You can also make a donation to our work online at www.lifewords.global, by post, or by calling 020 7730 2155.