

Table Talk

Date: Sunday 19th October to Sunday 16th November 2025

Key point of this campaign: To provide biblical principles around key areas of engagement with society.

Dear CG Leader,

Our writer has written some connect questions/taken them from the notes on each topic. Since everyone will get each topic at different times, she thought it easier for you as connect group leaders to have questions for all topics here.

With love,

The Connect Team.

Announcements:

Online Prayer	<i>If someone in your connect group can't make it to a face-to-face prayer meeting, our Online Prayer Meeting is a great alternative! It is open to everyone across all locations. Runs Wednesday nights on prayer weeks from 6:30–7:10pm and is a fresh, anointed, and engaging 40-minute prayer meeting, centrally led.</i> <i>This isn't just watching someone pray, it's a powerful time where we all pray together. People are walking, praying, speaking in tongues, and leaning in together online.</i> <i>Here's the link to join or share: https://c3syd.church/prayer/</i>
Foundations	<i>Our online Foundations Course is held in the evenings and runs weekly for 5 weeks. Please encourage any new believers in your connect group to attend this significant course to help them establish strong foundations, even if the course runs on your connect group night. Starting at 7pm.</i> <i>Please stay in touch with them to help them plug into community, gather them to church, answer any questions they may have and then resume attending your cg once the course finishes. (Of course, if your cg meeting doesn't clash with the Foundations course, and the new believer is up for it, they could attend both meetings – Foundations and your Connect Group.)</i> <i>Here's a link to the website for more information: https://c3syd.church/next-step-foundations/</i>
Freedom Ministry	<i>Freedom Ministry is Holy Spirit directed and empowered prayer ministry aimed to bring healing to an individual, spirit, soul and body. If you or anyone in your cg is interested in accessing this ministry, please fill in the form below and our team will be in touch: https://c3syd.info/freedom</i>

Connect Questions

○ **Tables:**

1. Have you ever had a conversation over a meal that helped you finally understand someone's pain? Or one that gave clarity to a confusing season of life? That's the power of the table. Are you able to share any stories of conversations at the table that have really impacted you (maybe you sat next to someone famous or maybe it was your last meal with a loved one)?
2. The table says: "You matter. You belong. You are heard here.". Whether it's family dinner, a coffee table, or communion, the table is a great equalizer. Is there anybody you would struggle to invite over for dinner?

○ **Friendships:**

1. What did the speakers say about the world's view of friendship that you can relate to?
2. What difficulties have you found in maintaining friendships as you grew older?
3. What makes a Christian friendship different from a friendship with a nonbeliever?

Consider:

4. What is God's intention for friendships?
5. Are my friendships godly?
6. Do I have friends who champion me and who I am accountable to?
7. Am I a good friend to those I consider closest?
8. If we want a framework on how to love and care for our friends, look no further than Christ himself. He was love incarnate. Have a group brainstorm. What are some of the ways we can show love and care to different types of people, for example, the five love languages and the different needs of introverts and extroverts? One size does not fit all – what different types of friends do you have?

○ **Spirituality: Crystals, mystics, and psychics**

1. How do we navigate the world's spirituality with wisdom, not denying the power but questioning the source. People want the fruit of faith—peace, power, meaning—without the root of relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As a result, we're surrounded by a buffet of spiritual substitutes. So how do we navigate this world of misguided spirituality with truth, clarity, and compassion?
2. What did the speakers discuss that you have experienced or seen in those you around you? For some who grew up in the church, ritual and self-centering of God's promises may be the only spiritual substitute they have seen, so feel free to include things you've seen in advertising, movies etc. What are the antidotes to keep our source God and not something else?
3. What are some of the things that we can open the door to, in what we choose to consume (watch, sing along to, read, scroll etc)? Are there strategies you can share with the group to consciously reject those things?

○ ***Talking About living in a world of extremes***

1. In a world where extremes are prevalent, in politics, in wars, how do we as Christians navigate the extremes of this world to encompass balance, loving all people and embracing Kingdom principles. It means speaking with wisdom, not reaction. It means learning to disagree without dehumanizing, and to stand firm without becoming unkind.
2. Every issue seems to demand that you pick a side, draw a line, and cancel the other. Nuance is lost. Listening is rare. When was the last time that you allowed someone to change your mind on something?
3. Wisdom invites us to slow down, to listen deeply, and to refuse the pressure to pick a team. Jesus told us to pray for everyone, even "enemies". What should our prayers look like after hearing of a conflict?
4. It's become normal to assign motives to people we've never met, but we rarely know someone's full story. What are some questions you can ask yourself as you consume news to keep the door open for grace and empathy?
5. Peace requires spiritual maturity. It means you may have to hold your tongue, back out of an argument, or resist the urge to win. Our culture has grown addicted to outrage. Share if you are comfortable, any "buttons" you have that people or content seem to press. What can you do to maintain your peace and not get drawn in?

○ ***Mental Health***

1. Consider the things we talked about. Was there anything that was new to you?

2. Our Heavenly Father desires that His children have a healthy mind. We are instructed to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). How do I know what thoughts align with my Identity in Christ?
3. Even when I fully know my identity in Christ, if I am not taking thoughts captive, I am vulnerable to further anguish. What is my part in living in according to Gods word?
4. What can I do when I am disobedient, when I have sinned (missed the mark) and have not addressed the injustice in a kingdom way? How do I move forward if in fact the devil's foothold has become a stronghold?
5. We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). How do I live from a place of a loved, safe, secure happy Child pose as compared to a scared, vulnerable and angry child posture?

○ ***Lastly:***

1. Is there a particular topic that has really challenged your thinking? What could be your next step?

Table Talk

Date: Sunday 19th October 2025

Key Scripture: Luke 24:30-32 (The Road to Emmaus)

Key Point of This Week: Big Conversations at the Table: Where Hearts are Heard and Lives are Changed

Historical Context, Commentary + Supporting References:

Luke 24:30-32 (The Road to Emmaus)

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him...”

Introduction:

The Power of the Table

There’s something sacred about a table. Not just because of what’s on it—but because of what happens around it. We eat. We laugh. We tell stories. We share memories. And sometimes, if we’re brave enough, we have *big conversations*. Conversations that heal old wounds, open new understandings, and shift the direction of lives.

In Scripture, the table is more than a piece of furniture—it’s a place of encounter. A place where truth and grace meet. A place where Jesus often did his deepest work.

1. The Table Is a Place of Revelation

Look at the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. They’re disillusioned, heartbroken, confused. Jesus walks with them, teaches them, but they don’t recognize him—until the moment *at the table*, when he breaks bread.

Big conversations at the table reveal what we were blind to.

When we take time to slow down, sit down, and open up, God often reveals things we couldn’t see in the chaos or the crowd. The table becomes a thin place—a space where heaven meets earth.

Have you ever had a conversation over a meal that helped you finally understand someone’s pain? Or one that gave clarity to a confusing season of life? That’s the power of the table.

2. The Table Is a Place of Equality and Honor

In the Gospels, Jesus is constantly criticized for *who* he eats with—sinners, tax collectors, the broken, the excluded. Why? Because in Jesus' culture, to eat with someone was to accept them, to treat them with dignity.

Big conversations happen best where there is mutual respect.

The table says: "You matter. You belong. You are heard here." Whether it's family dinner, a coffee table, or communion, the table is a great equalizer.

In today's world—divided by politics, race, theology, generational gaps—we need tables, not platforms. Places where people can listen before they speak, understand before they judge.

3. The Table Is a Place for Difficult Conversations

Jesus didn't avoid hard talks at the table.

At the Last Supper, he confronted betrayal, taught about suffering, and prepared his disciples for the cross. That table wasn't comfortable, but it was necessary.

We often avoid deep conversations because they're uncomfortable. It's easier to keep things light. But there are things that can only be healed, only be understood, only be changed when we are willing to go deep.

You cannot disciple someone with silence. You cannot reconcile without conversation. Whether it's addressing forgiveness, mental health, racism, addiction, grief, or calling—it needs space, time, and intentionality. That happens best at the table.

4. The Table Reflects the Kingdom of God

One of the most beautiful images in Scripture is the banquet table of God. Isaiah 25 says: *"On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast... a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines."*

The kingdom of God is a feast. Jesus often described it as a wedding banquet. And when we gather around our own tables, invite others in, share stories, and seek understanding, we're practicing the kingdom. We're rehearsing eternity.

Big conversations at the table are practice for heaven.

Practical Encouragements

- **Make space.** Schedule intentional meals where conversation is the focus, not just food.
- **Ask brave questions.** Go beyond "How was your day?" Try "What's been heavy on your heart lately?" or "What's something you've changed your mind about?"
- **Listen more than you speak.** Create safe space, not debate space.
- **Invite people different from you.** Different backgrounds, ages, and stories help us grow.

Conclusion:

When Jesus sat at the table, people were transformed—not just because of what they ate, but because of what they *heard and shared*. Eyes were opened. Hearts were set on fire. Lives were changed.

So may your tables be full—not just of food, but of faith. Not just of noise, but of *meaningful conversation*. Not just of people who look and think like you, but of voices that stretch and bless you.

Because sometimes, the greatest miracles start with a conversation at a table.

Amen.

In this campaign we are going to have "table moments" where we are going to talk about four big topics that impact our daily lives.

- Mental health
- Spirituality including crystals, psychics
- Friendships
- Living in an extreme society

TOPICS FOR WEEKS 2 – 5

Talking About Friendships

Key Scriptures: John 15:12-17

Summary:

Let's talk about friendships, how do we cultivate healthy relationships. What constitutes a good friendship and a bad friendship? How do I know which one is which. In a world of cancel culture, how do we not isolate, forgive and bring life to our friendships.

NOTE: The thought is to essentially give people a 5-min rundown of friendship throughout history. How the world has approached it and how the church has approached it. Then to fast-forward to today, we want to dive into the cultural currents we find ourselves in NOW. How does the world approach friendship now?

The history of friendship in the last few centuries has been influenced by many things; not least the, "Freudian suspicion that all relationships are ultimately motivated by erotic attraction; the elevation of marriage and the nuclear family as the most significant forms of human relationship (often to the exclusion of friendship); and the belief that being less relationally entangled will bring us greater freedom and happiness."¹

"To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few "friends." But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as "friendships," show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book. It is something quite marginal; not a main course in life's banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one's time. How has this come about? The first and most obvious answer is that few value it because few experience it." – C.S Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Pg 88.

The art of friendship is lost for many today. In 2023, the NSW Mental Health Commission released a report that showed that almost half (48%) of NSW residents report experiencing loneliness at least 'some of the time' or 'often'. 39% of people reported experiencing loneliness between 'some of the time' to 'always' in duration.

"Each of us has contact with hundreds of people who never look beyond our surface appearance. We have dealings with hundreds of people who the moment they set their

¹ Allberry, S. (2017, June 16). Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian. The Gospel Coalition. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/spiritual-friendship-celibate-gay-christian/>

eyes on us begin calculating what use we can be to them, what they can get out of us. We meet hundreds of people who take one look at us, make a snap judgment, and then slot us into a category so that they won't have to deal with us as persons. They treat us as something less than we are; and if we're in constant association with them, we become less. And then someone enters our life who isn't looking for someone to use, is leisurely enough to find out what's really going on in us, is secure enough not to exploit our weaknesses or attack our strengths, recognizes our inner life and understands the difficulty of living out our inner convictions, confirms what's deepest within us. A friend."²

CULTURAL CURRENTS – Excerpt from Nate Holdridge (Calvary Chapel) on our loneliness epidemic:

“One clear culprit is the paradox of digital connection.

Though we're more connected than ever—thanks to social media and technology—study after study shows a strong link between digital engagement and increased loneliness, depression, and decreased well-being. Why? Because online interactions are often superficial, passive, and addictive. We scroll endlessly, compare constantly, and substitute real relationships for curated digital ones—and our souls suffer for it.

Another cause is our culture of mobility.

In many ways, the ability to move—to go to college, pursue a better career, or find more affordable housing—is a gift. But that gift often detaches us from rootedness. It pulls us away from home, from familiarity, from belonging. We find ourselves in new cities, among strangers, and often struggle to rebuild what we left behind. [NOTE: We know Sydney is a VERY transient city]

Add to that the pace of modern life.

We idolize individualism, personal freedom, and autonomy, and fill our schedules to the brim. With no clear borders between work and leisure, we're always on and barely present. We know we need people, we know we crave connection, but we just don't have time.”

Things people are thinking/asking:

- Why can't I just stay connected online? AI?
- Friendship was easier when I was young and had time.
- Now that I have a family of my own, my space for friendships is far smaller.
- Do I need friendships if I'm married?
- How do I do friendships well if I am married?
- How do I do friendships well if I'm not married?
- Are close friendships with people who don't know Jesus good?

² Peterson, E. (1998). Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians. HarperCollins Religious US. Pg 54.

What we want people to be thinking/asking:

- What is God's intention for friendships?
- Are my friendships godly?
- Do I have friends who champion me and who I am accountable to?

As Stanley Grenz so famously worded it, we are created for community. Our life, let alone our LIFE WITH JESUS, was NEVER intended to be done in isolation. As we know well in Sydney, having people around you does not necessarily mean they are WITH you, championing you, challenging you, loving you, pointing you to Christ.

If we want to have good friends, we must first be good friends ourselves. This week is not about how to pick good friends, it's about how to be a good friend.

Characteristics of grace-filled friendships (as modelled by Jesus):

Our greatest model of friendship is in our Saviour:

John 15:12-17 - ¹²“**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.** ¹³**Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.** ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

1. Love and Care:

Proverbs 27:9

“Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel”

LOVE is the foundation of all fruitful relationships. In John 15 Jesus speaks of the greatest of love, that someone would lay down their life for their friend. Obviously, he was foreshadowing a point in the not-too-distant future when he himself would lay his life down.

What an immensely profound thing that Jesus, God Himself, might call us His friends. If we want a framework on how to love and care for our friends, look no further than Christ himself. He was love incarnate. He *wasn't* best friends with everyone. He had his few who were very close to him, whom he loved and cared for “to the end” (John 13:1).

His friendship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus is a great example. From all four of the gospel accounts, it's clear Jesus visited them at their home multiple times. John

particularly makes it clear in his gospel that Jesus *loved* these siblings dearly (see John 11). They enjoyed each other's company, grieved with each other, were honest and open, and supported each other unwaveringly.

Galatians 6:28

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Job 6:14

"He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty."

2. Honesty and Trust:

Proverbs 27:5-6

"Better is an open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

Would you rather a doctor who prescribes the medication you need when you are ill, or a doctor that puts a margarita in your hand to distract you, because that's what you asked them to do?

Friendships that last the distance are forged through situations that demand honesty and trust. Having fun with someone and getting along with them is a super important part of friendship. However, when the rubber hits the road, you want to be that person in your friend's corner who can be trusted to be honest. Godly, loving friendships must invite the messy moments where honesty and kindness is practiced and trust is built.

Proverbs 17:17

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

Jesus was the realest of friends for this. He was a hardcore, get-in-the-mud kind of friend. Although he was a Rabbi and leader, he didn't leverage that title to demand trust or speak plainly to people. He proved his trustworthiness but never used it to his own advantage. He always sought to serve others.

John 13 is arguably the most profound picture of Jesus' servant-hearted posture, as he washed the feet of the friends he had spent the last 3 years doing life with. Jesus built trust with the people in his world, but never transactionally. This trust enabled him to be able to speak honestly to people and build people up through challenging them.

EXTRA:

Proverbs 17:9

"Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends"

Proverbs 18:1

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”

Proverbs 18:24

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

3. Christ-Centeredness:

Godly friendships are those that partner together and support each other in God's greatest mission. Nothing can shape friendship in the same way that being on mission together does. There is no substitute for it.

Jesus did not go about his earthly ministry alone. He had many friends whom he ministered with, with whom he forged strong bonds. Friendships should not be reserved purely for dinner parties and day trips, or even DnMs and dire moments.

See how Paul farewells those in Ephesus who he had grown friendship with – “³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again.”

Paul had spent 3 years building the church in Ephesus with these people, stirring them on to Christlikeness. He wrote this in his letter to them:

Ephesians 4:1-3

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

“A friend is unique in not quite being the same as a brother or a sister, and not being quite the same as a spouse, but being a — what should we say? — a comrade in a shared vision as you pull together for some significant cause. And my assumption is that the importance of this kind of friendship is why Jesus always sent out his emissaries — his apostles and workers — two by two, not by themselves, and why the apostle Paul always traveled and ministered in groups, in friends. He was very eager not to be left alone anywhere. In other words, this kind of friendship is crucial for us in life and ministry.”³

John 15:12-17

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

³ Piper, J. (n.d.). What Makes a True Friend? [Interview]. In Desiring God. Retrieved August 28, 2025, from <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-makes-a-true-friend>

Resources:

- ["The Four Loves" C.S. Lewis – Chapter 4, Friendship. \(pdf\)](#)
- [Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Life Together \(pdf\)](#)
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-makes-a-true-friend>
- 2022 Relationships Report Australia - <https://www.relationships.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Relationship-Indicators-Full-Report.pdf>
- <https://www.crossway.org/articles/a-brief-biblical-theology-of-friendship/>
<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/martha-mary-lazarus-value-of-human-relationships>

Talking About Spirituality: Crystals, mystics, and psychics

Supporting Points:

Summary:

In a world where manifestation is taught on tik tok – if you believe hard enough it will manifest in your life. What is spirituality with Christ look like and how can we navigate life in a world full of crystals, mystics and psychics. Like the mystics of Egypt their power worked, so how do we navigate it with wisdom, not denying the power but questioning the source.

Introduction:

We are living in a deeply spiritual age. People are no longer satisfied with materialism, cold logic, or surface-level success. They're asking deeper questions. They're hungry for healing, purpose, energy, peace, connection, and wholeness. They want to feel grounded. They want to be "aligned." They're open to matters of the soul. And many are willing to try just about anything to satisfy that hunger.

On the surface, this openness can seem like a good thing. And in some ways, it is—it shows that people are waking up to the reality that we are more than flesh and blood. That our wounds go deeper than our bodies. That the ache we feel is spiritual in nature. But here's the danger:

Spiritual hunger doesn't always lead to spiritual truth.

We are not just in a spiritual age—we are in an age of misguided spirituality. People want the fruit of faith—peace, power, meaning—without the root of relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As a result, we're surrounded by a buffet of spiritual substitutes: horoscopes, tarot cards, crystals, manifestation, ancestral practices, energy healing, psychedelics, and all kinds of mystical techniques.

These practices promise a sense of connection. They promise to help you "find yourself" or "heal your energy" or "unlock your purpose." They borrow spiritual language—light, love, the universe, higher self—but leave you to carry the burden alone. It's a do-it-yourself spirituality: You must find your own truth, heal your own wounds, manifest your own destiny, and align your own energy. At best, it offers temporary relief. At worst, it leaves people more disillusioned, spiritually bound, or further from the truth.

Here's what we must understand: Spirituality without Christ is not neutral. It's not just "another path" to the same God. The Bible is clear that not all spiritual practices are innocent or harmless. Some are deceptive. Some are demonic. Some promise freedom but deliver bondage.

“For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” — 2 Corinthians 11:13–14

And yet, the hunger itself is not the problem. The ache for meaning is not the issue. The desire for healing, for peace, for wholeness—that’s a God-given longing. The problem is when we try to satisfy that longing in ways that exclude or replace the One who created us.

Jesus isn’t threatened by spiritual hunger. He’s the only One who can truly fulfil it.

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.” — John 6:35

In a culture full of spiritual noise and counterfeit light, Jesus offers a better way—a truer way. Not a technique, not a trend, but a person who knows you, loves you, and can actually make you whole.

So how do we navigate this world of misguided spirituality with truth, clarity, and compassion?

Let’s look at 3 key elements of spirituality and some ways to put Christ back in the centre:

1. Source – What We’re Looking To

From Counterfeit Power to God’s Power

Problem: Many look to spiritual tools (tarot, crystals, horoscopes, manifestation, “the universe”) as sources of wisdom or power. The danger is mistaking *creation* for the *Creator*. These things may seem harmless, but they can distract us from God and even invite deceptive influences.

Practical Strategy: Re-centre on God’s Word and Spirit

- Immerse in Scripture daily. God’s Word is the true source of wisdom and direction (Psalm 119:105). If you’re tempted to look to other sources, ask: *What does God’s Word already say about this?*
- Invite the Holy Spirit. Before making decisions, pray: *Holy Spirit, lead me into truth. I don’t want substitutes—I want You.*
- Replace rituals with relationship. Instead of reaching for objects or symbols, develop rhythms of prayer, worship, and gratitude that keep your heart fixed on God as the true Source.

2. Self – What We’re Focused on

From Counterfeit Purpose to God’s Will

Problem: Practices like manifestation and affirmations place us at the centre, teaching that we can bend reality to our will. It sounds empowering, but it subtly feeds self-exaltation and keeps us from surrendering to God’s greater plan.

Practical Strategy: Surrender Through Prayer and Alignment

- Shift from “my will” to “His will.” Pray like Jesus in Gethsemane: *“Not my will, but Yours be done”* (Luke 22:42).
- Reframe desires. Ask: *Does what I want align with God’s character, His Kingdom, and His purposes?* (1 John 5:14).
- Practice trust. Instead of demanding outcomes, pray with open hands: *Lord, I trust You with the results. Shape my desires to match Yours.* This moves you from striving to resting.

3. Strongholds — What We’re Allowing In

From Counterfeit Freedom to God’s Freedom

Problem: Alternative spiritual practices often promise healing, peace, or freedom, but they can become strongholds—patterns or influences that bind rather than liberate, that allow the Devil a foothold in our lives. What starts as curiosity can open doors to lies, oppression, addiction and deeper emptiness.

Practical Strategy: Renounce, Replace, and Remain in Christ

- Renounce. Explicitly reject and repent of counterfeit practices (Ephesians 5:11). Speak it out in prayer: *“Jesus, I renounce [specific practice] and close the door to it in my life.”*
- Replace. Fill that space with God’s truth and presence. Worship, prayer, and Scripture meditation displace darkness with light (James 4:7–8).
- Remain. Freedom is not just a one-time break—it’s a daily walk. Stay in community, remain accountable, and continually invite the Spirit to renew your mind (Romans 12:2).

Concluding Thought:

Every counterfeit spirituality leaves us thirsty for more, because it cannot give what only Christ can. He alone is the true Source of life, the One who aligns us with God’s perfect will, and the Deliverer who breaks strongholds and brings lasting freedom.

Salvation Segue:

The spiritual hunger in your heart is real. You were made for something more—someone more. Jesus is not just another spiritual option. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Jesus is inviting you to step into the real thing. You don’t need to strive or perform—just receive His love and grace.

Talking About Living in A World of Extremes

Supporting Points:

Summary:

In a world where extremes are prevalent, in politics, in wars, how do we as Christians navigate the extremes of this world to encompass balance, loving all people and embracing Kingdom principles of neither Jew nor gentiles, slave nor free, male nor female.

Introduction:

We are living in an age of deep polarisation. Whether it's politics, race, gender, religion, or social ethics, the world around us is increasingly marked by outrage, extremes, and tribal loyalties. Every issue seems to demand that you pick a side, draw a line, and cancel the other. Nuance is lost. Listening is rare. And even Christians can find themselves caught in the undertow of culture wars, ideological echo chambers, or reactionary faith.

So how do we live well in a society like this? How do we hold to truth without becoming hard-hearted? How do we walk in love without compromising our convictions? How do we model Jesus in a world that often wants to use Him to justify its own agendas?

The first step is remembering where our ultimate allegiance lies. As Paul reminded the Philippians:

Philippians 3:20

"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

We are not first and foremost conservatives or progressives, Australians or Americans, activists or pacifists—we are citizens of a Kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36). That means our responses should not be dictated by the tone or tactics of culture, but shaped by the character of Christ and the wisdom of Scripture.

In a world of shouting, we are called to be slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to anger (James 1:19). In a culture of division, we are called to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers—people who step into the mess with both truth and grace (Matthew 5:9, John 1:14). And in an age of self-promotion and opinion-shouting, we are called to humility:

Philippians 2:3–5

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves... Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

That doesn't mean silence. It means speaking with wisdom, not reaction. It means learning to disagree without dehumanizing, and to stand firm without becoming unkind. The world doesn't need louder opinions—it needs deeper discipleship.

The truth is, Christians have always lived in tension with the world around them. But now more than ever, we must resist the temptation to adopt the extremes of culture—whether that's fearful withdrawal or aggressive confrontation—and instead embody the third way of the Kingdom: one marked by courage, compassion, conviction, and love.

Jesus prayed this over His followers:

John 17:15,17

“My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one... Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.”

We are in the world, but not of it. Called to be salt and light. Called to think clearly, love deeply, and walk wisely.

We have an enormous opportunity in a world divided by fear and ideology, Christians have the chance to offer something radically different: a life shaped not by the culture around us, but by the Christ within us.

Here are 4 strategies for representing Christ in a polarised world:

1.Avoid Extremes

Extremist thinking—on either side of any debate—is often more about fear or pride than it is about wisdom. Whether political, theological, or social, extremes tend to dehumanise the “other” and elevate ideology over relationship. They demand loyalty to a side rather than faithfulness to truth.

Scripture warns us against this kind of thinking. Proverbs 18:17 says, *“The first to speak in court sounds right—until the cross-examination begins.”* In other words, there is always another side to the story. Wisdom invites us to slow down, to listen deeply, and to refuse the pressure to pick a team.

Philippians 4:5 (ESV)

“Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.”

We must come down from our ideological castles, step into the messy middle, and seek common ground—not because we compromise truth, but because we care about people. Wisdom is rarely found in the loudest opinion. It's found in the quiet strength of those who don't need to shout to be heard.

2. Don't Assume

In our hyper-reactive culture, it's become normal to assign motives to people we've never met. We say things like, *"They just want to control people,"* or *"They obviously don't care about others,"* or *"They're part of the problem."* But Jesus consistently called out this kind of judgment.

Matthew 7:1–2

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged... For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged."

We rarely know someone's full story. We don't know their pain, background, pressure, or reasoning. That doesn't mean all opinions are valid—but it does mean we should approach people with humility, not presumption.

When we lead with curiosity instead of assumption, we make space for empathy, which in turn builds real bridges. In a world of snap judgments and social labels, Christians should be the most understanding people on earth—not gullible, but gracious.

3. Pursue Peace

Peace doesn't happen by accident. It's not passive. It's not just the absence of conflict. Biblical peace—*shalom*—is wholeness, harmony, and reconciliation. It takes real intentionality to be a peacemaker.

Matthew 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Notice: Jesus didn't say "peacekeepers." Peacekeepers avoid tension. Peacemakers engage it—but with redemptive purpose. And true peace isn't about pretending we all agree. It's about learning to honour difference without letting it divide.

Peace requires spiritual maturity. It means you may have to hold your tongue, back out of an argument, or *resist the urge to win*. It's not about watering down your convictions; it's about being governed by love rather than pride.

4. Be Bigger

Our culture has grown addicted to outrage. Offence is often worn like a badge of honour. But Christians are called to lay down the victim mindset and step into a larger story—one not defined by wounds, but by the resurrection power of Christ.

Proverbs 19:11

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."

Romans 12:21

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Not every battle is worth fighting. Not every comment needs a reply. There's a strength in choosing not to be small, not to get drawn into every firestorm. We are people of eternity. That means we can rise above petty fights, Twitter spats, and ideological point-scoring.

Being “bigger” means choosing forgiveness. It means living unoffended. It means knowing who you are in Christ so deeply that nothing the world throws at you can steal your peace.

Concluding Thought:

In a polarised world, the Church is not called to shout louder or retreat further—we're called to live differently. To avoid extremes, to seek understanding, to pursue peace, and to be bigger people—shaped by grace and grounded in Christ.

Salvation Segue:

In a world full of noise, extremes, and confusion, Jesus offers a better way—one marked by truth, peace, and wholeness. Jesus invites us to come to Him and to learn from Him.

Talking About Mental Health

Supporting Points:

Summary:

A mind that is healthy

Just like a good earthly Father desires for his children to have a healthy mind, our heavenly Father also desires this for his children. However, we know that our mind is not always clear and sound – so what thwarts and obstructs living with a sound-mind?

Sermon Focus: to grow in authority over your own mind

Introduction:

- Everyone has a mind - mind is not the brain – what is the mind?
- What agency do I have over my mind?
- The mind – body – soul – spirit connection
“What the mind believes, the body feels. What the body experiences, the mind interprets – (sometimes our interpretations can lead to further distress)

Our Identity:

- We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.” Believers sharing in Christ’s wisdom and spiritual discernment through the Spirit.

Agency/Efficacy of the mind:

- Bring thoughts in alignment (2 Corinthians 10:5)
“...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” The mind of Christ is disciplined, discerning, and aligned with God’s truth.

How do I know what thoughts align with my Identity in Christ?

“A child” – concrete - Cognitive shortcut: “If a parent says it, it must be true” Children think in **concrete, literal terms**. They take what parents say at face value – not much nuance or abstraction yet. Over time, children develop **theory of mind** (realizing others have different thoughts and feelings)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8–9:

Bible talks about two Fathers.

Two Fathers – we can be vulnerable to listen as a child to both. We need to be able to discern the difference between Father of Lies/Father of ½ truths (Intra-psychic father voice [kills, steals, destroys, dis-ease, and distress] OR True Father voice [tone, gentle, life] - (Tone) If a lesson comes with warmth and safety, children encode it deeply. If with harshness, encode fear alongside it even though you might see the same behavioural changes.

Sheep + shepherd **John 10:14 (NIV)** *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."* **John 10:27 (NIV)** *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

Injustice, pain and anger

Even when I fully know my identity in Christ, if I am not taking thoughts captive, I am vulnerable to further anguish – I can be vulnerable to emotional and mental distress and pain, and this can come when actual wrongdoing has been done against me or when I perceive injustice ...I will feel anger on both occasions. Anger is important. It can be an indication of righteous evil and it is valid we feel anger – we should feel anger when sin/trauma have happened – when there is a violation of and misalignment **with God's ways, standards, and character** - anger can also be in response to perceived injustice, that can be from a self-serving posture – it is interesting to me that the bible doesn't say that only unrighteous anger gives the devil a foothold – instead 1 Peter 5:8 ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

We must be extremely vigilant of the true enemy, so as not to give access points/a foothold.

Ephesians 4:26–27:

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

What is my part in living in according to Gods word, am I being an obedient child?

What can I do when I am disobedient, when I have sinned (missed the mark) and have not addressed the injustice in a kingdom way? How do I move forward if in fact the devil's foothold has become a stronghold?

What behaviours and actions may indicate that I am surrendered to and entrapped in cycles that lead to further pain? Am I aware of any pattern that acts to entrap and keeps me stuck in a place of fear or hopeless surrender to the Father of Lies/Half truths?

How do I receive freedom and wholeness – How do I live from a place of a loved, safe, secure happy Child pose as compared to a scared, vulnerable and angry child posture?

ONLY Jesus is needed. Jesus death dissolved the power of ALL strongholds.

We have a choice – we can live in a heart posture as a Child of God and exercise our authority. Call to repent and forgive - His kindness leads to repentance ([Romans 2:4](#))

Secure and Loved ([Romans 8:38-39](#)) - For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor

depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.