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Briefing 97: Wednesday 12th January, 2022.

Dear friends,

Last week I reflected a little on dramatic change, those times when tables of sin, doubt or unbelief in our lives need to be overturned so that our lives as disciples of Jesus can get back on track. But for most of us, most of the time, spiritual growth and change happens slowly, incrementally, sometimes even imperceptibly. That's the normal Christian life. But whilst we may not see it happening, we will be able to look back and see that whilst we are not yet the people we would like to be, we are, by God's grace, not the people we once were.

So how do we make sure that kind of change happens? How do we make sure that bit by bit, slowly but surely, we grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Wonderfully, this isn't rocket science. It's the same way that children grow. As a very proud grandfather of 6 growing grandsons, almost every time I see them they are slightly taller, stronger, wiser than they were before. These children are growing into adults as they eat, drink, work and rest. As we grow into mature disciples of the Lord Jesus, we need those same things, day after day, week after week, year after year. What follows will not surprise you, but why not use it as a checklist on your own spiritual growth, for if any of these are missing or lacking even in part, you will not be growing in your faith as you should.

EAT: growing children eat, and they eat a lot. Even after meals they come looking for extra snacks to satisfy their appetites. If we want to grow in our faith, we need to be feeding our souls and our minds, and whilst Christian books can also be very helpful, this primarily means God's word, the Bible. So are you reading God's word every single day? Are you thinking about what you've read? Are you making church a priority every Sunday? Are you part of a home group where you can study God's word with other Christians and get to know God better? If you're not doing these things, then you won't be feeding yourselves and you will stop growing. Do you need to eat more?

DRINK: whilst our grandchildren eat a lot, we sometimes struggle to get them to drink enough water. It's the same with Christians. In John chapter 7 Jesus spoke these words: *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."* Jesus is speaking about the Holy Spirit, and reminding us that for true spiritual refreshment we need to spend time with God. Key to this is prayer. In prayer, we commune with God, we bring our lives and concerns and thankfulness and praises to him and by his Holy Spirit he refreshes our souls. Many people know their Bibles very well, but without an active prayer life, without time with God, his word remains dry. Are you drinking enough?

WORK: for our grandchildren to grow they need to be active, strengthening their muscles, developing their talents and skills. The same is true for Christians of every age. A growing faith will always be an active faith. So when Jesus gives us commands we need to obey them. This will also affect how we live, work, speak and relate to others at home, at work, amongst neighbours and friends and at church. It's also a call to serve in the church, perhaps through teaching, reading, praying, welcoming, singing, cleaning, supporting, giving, organising, encouraging, bellringing, feeding, or watering in various ways. But we also need to be active for God out in the world as we live out lives of kindness, generosity, patience and love, and tell others the good news of Jesus. If the sum of your Christian activity is simply attending church, then you will not grow in your faith. Do you need to be more active?

SLEEP: as our grandchildren have entered their teenage years they need to sleep more. Sleep and rest are important for all of us, whatever our stage of life, but rest is vital for Christian growth as well. It is possible to be so busy at work, at home and in church that we don't ever rest. That isn't good. The pattern God gives us in Genesis and in his 10 Commandments is one day of rest every week. Is that true for you? But the need to sleep is also a reminder of active trust in God, day after day, moment by moment. When troubles come, when the rain falls, when you're carefully made plans come to nothing, do you panic or get angry, or rush around trying to fix everything yourself? Or are you able to pray with Job, *"the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."* As Christians we can trust the Lord even in the midst of the darkest nights or the fiercest storms. While we may be helpless, God is not. And whilst we sleep and trust in him, we have a God who never slumbers or sleeps. How are you sleeping and resting? How are you trusting?

Eating, drinking, working, sleeping, these are not dramatic things. They are the things of ordinary life, the things of the Christian life. But as we do them, day after day, week after week, year after year, we will gradually, slowly, sometimes imperceptibly, grow more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus as the Holy Spirit works within us.

May that be our experience this year.

Dave

IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

COVID PROTOCOLS: A reminder. If you sit in a *masked* area of the church, please keep your face coverings on for [the whole service](#). If you'd rather sing without a mask, please sit in the 'mask free' areas provided. Government advice is that we take a **lateral flow test** before meeting lots of people. We have some free kits in church. Why not take one and use it either on Saturday evening or first thing Sunday morning before you come?

HOPE EXPLORED:

In January we will be running 2 short HOPE EXPLORED courses. Invitations are in church.

If your faith needs a reboot, why not come along?

If your faith is strong, why not come with a friend who needs to hear of the hope Jesus brings?

More details are below or here: [Christianity Explored Ministries: Hope Explored](#)



HOPE|EXPLORED

WHAT'S THE BEST FUTURE YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE?

Monday afternoons from 1:30pm on 17th, 24th and 31st Jan

OR **Thursday evenings** from 7:30pm on 20th, 27th Jan and 3rd Feb.

To book a place or find out more, email enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk or call Dave on 01438 213587

Hope Explored is an informal and relaxed 3-week course, looking at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We believe that in Jesus we find **real hope** and a joyful expectation for the **future**, based on true events in the **past**, which changes everything about our **present**.

It's for anyone who wants to find hope, peace and purpose in life.

It's run by ordinary Christian people local to you, and is completely free.

You don't need to know anything about the Bible, you won't be asked to pray or sing.

You can ask any question you like, or you can just sit and listen.

Whoever you are, whatever you're thinking, **Hope Explored** is a place for you to discover the hope of a future that is better than you could ever imagine.

Why not come and find out more?

PRAYER GATHERINGS: Our prayer gatherings have now resumed and our next Prayer Gathering is on Wednesday 12th from 7:45pm. This will be an in-person only meeting. Our next 7-8am early morning zoom prayer will be on Tuesday January 18th. Why not put those dates in your diary now and commit to coming along?

The church will also be open for **visitors and private prayer** on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon. If you'd like to join the band of church sitters, please speak to Karen Walker.

READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS: The readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

16th January: Matt 21:28-32 23rd January: Matt 21:33-46 30th January: Matt 22:1-14

THE FUNERAL OF BARBARA CRAWLEY, who worshipped with us at St Nicholas for many years, will take place on Wednesday 19th January at 1pm. All who knew her are invited to come and join her family in giving thanks for her life.

FLOWER ARRANGING: If you'd like to join the Flower Arranging Team at St Nicholas, please see Chris Chambers – full training is given. Sessions are on Thursdays 10am-12pm, and 7-9pm at St Nicholas.

Save the date! EVANGELISM TRAINING ON SATURDAY 29th JANUARY from 9:30am-2pm in the Parish Room at St Nicholas - The London City Mission team are coming to help train us to go out with the Gospel whether that is door to door or reaching out to family and friends (see Karen Walker for more details). Lunch and refreshments will be provided.