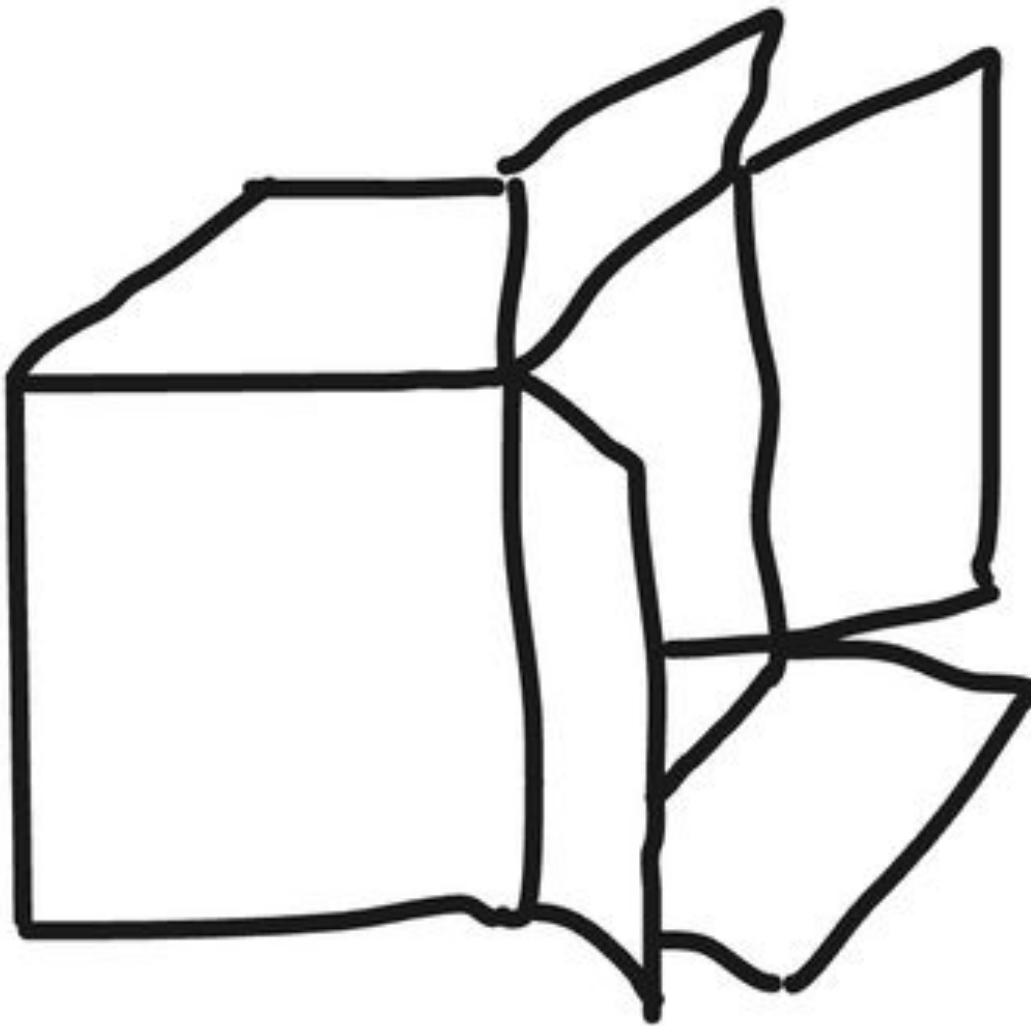


THE WORD BECAME...



**PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES IN SONG
WONDER & BECOMING
YEAR ONE**

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Foreword

Whenever I started reading the Bible, I would always have a sense of hurry and impatience. What does this story mean? What's this about? Get to the point, come on! So whenever I came to a passage where the meaning wasn't immediately obvious, I was frustrated. I would inwardly groan, and whenever possible, find a passage that I *did* understand.

Trouble is, it's my job to help people engage with the Bible, and not just the easy bits. So a couple of years ago I started developing practices that made me slow down. I started by choosing the trickiest passages. Then I would write them out by hand, and then write over my own handwriting again. I was making myself linger with the text, letting my imagination have room to play. Often, as I was taking my sweet time, a few lines would catch my attention. Sometimes, those few lines would link up with a tune that was meandering around my head. I would go for a walk, or a run, singing this little kernel of the passage.

I found the passage would start to open up like a pine cone, that what had been hard and impenetrable was now beautiful and multifaceted. A passage that I hadn't thought meant anything much now seemed to be about *everything*. I realised that I wasn't really *reading* the Bible anymore. I was praying it. It might have been my voice I was hearing, but it was God's words. This practice of slowing down and singing myself into the story meant that these words were sometimes like a mirror, revealing things in me that I wouldn't have seen otherwise, they were sometimes like a scalpel, cutting things out that were making me sick, they were sometimes like a bright light, at other times like a warm fire. And in all these things, God spoke, and I was changed.

Words don't just stay words with God. They *become*. The Word became flesh in Jesus. The promises of God became real in him, they started breathing and walking around and talking to us. As I have given these words time to live in me, to wonder at them, and to wonder *with* them about myself and the world, I have become...changed. I like to think that more of the life of Jesus is happening in me. There seems to be a little incarnation taking place, as I give the Word of God space and time to work on me. I wonder what you might become if we gave the Word of God space and time? What dream of God might become real in us?

Malcolm Gordon - Eastertide 2026

1) Genesis 1:3-30

Let there be light
To govern the day
And shepherd the night
And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

Let there be sky
Spanning the deep, opening wide
And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

It was good, so good
It was good, so good

Let there be earth
Let there be oceans, island and surf
And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

Let there be trees
Let there be fruit
And flower and seed

And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

It was good, so good
It was good, so good

Let there be stars
Marking the seasons
And where we are
And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

Let there be life
Life that swims and runs and flies
In the image of the divine
And evening and morning came
And God delighted again

It was good, so good.
It was good, so very good.



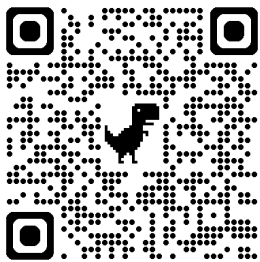


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2) Deuteronomy 5:12-15
(Mark 2:27, Galatians 5:1)

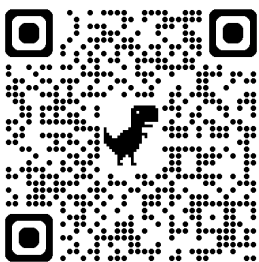
Remember how you were a slave
Out of Egypt our God made a way
So let others find rest
As you lay your work down
The sabbath was made for people
And not the other way round

Its for freedom we are free
Lay your labour down and breathe
The sabbath was made for all of us
Be still, my friend, and be



3) 1st Kings 17:13-14

Do not be afraid
For your jar of flour
And your jug of oil
O they will not run dry
Til the Lord sends rain
Upon the land



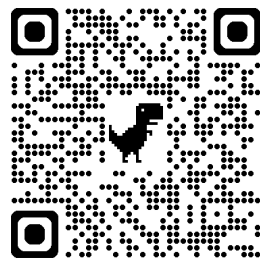
4) 1st Kings 19:3-9

Afraid I ran away
Lord, take my life, I prayed
An angel woke me up
With bread and water
I ate and slept once more
Ate again and then I walked
Forty days and nights
To reach the mount of God



5) 1st Kings 19:11-13

There was a wind
That tore at the mountain
But God was not in the wind
And there was a quake
That shattered the boulders
But God was not in the quake
There was a fire raging around
But God was not in the fire
Then: silence, absolute silence
Then I covered my face.



6) Ruth 1:16-17

Do not urge me to leave you
Or turn me away
I will go wherever you go
Where you stay there I will stay
Your people will be my people
Your God will be my God
Where you die, there I will lie
May God be my witness
Not even death should come
between us



7) Psalm 8:3-4

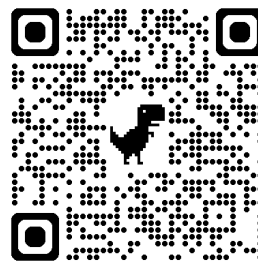
When I look at the heavens
At the work of your hands:
Moon and stars
That you set in place
Oh who are we that you care for us
Mere mortal ones
That you're mindful of



8) Psalm 85:4-7

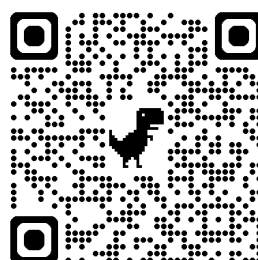
Restore us again
O God of our salvation
And put away your anger
Toward us

Will your fury burn on
At us forever?
Will it spread
Through all generations?
Revive us again
So your people glory in you
Show your steadfast love
And grant us your salvation



9) Psalm 118:17, 22, 28

I shall not die but live
Recounting the works of the Lord
The stone that the builder's rejected
Has become the cornerstone
And blessed is the One
Who comes in the name of the Lord
Blessed is the One
Who comes in the name of the Lord



10) Psalm 139:1-18

Lord you know me so well
When I rest, when I rise
My thoughts before they form
My path before I walk

Lord you hem me in
From behind and before
You lay your hand on me:
More than I can believe

If I rise on the wings of the dawn
And leave no trace where I've gone
If I climb to the peak
Or fall to the deep
You will find me
If I wear the night like a shroud
And let all the lights go out
Darkness won't hide me
Still you will find me

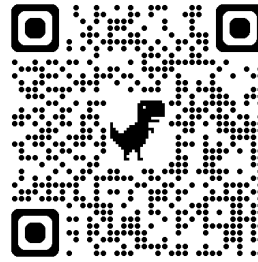
Lord you made me so well
Knit me in my mother's womb
In awe and wonder made
In Your hidden holy gaze

Lord how vast your thoughts
Like the sand on the shore
Like the stars in the night
When I wake, you're by my side



11) Psalm 139: 23-24

Search me, O God
And know my heart
Test me and know
My anxious thoughts
See if there is any wicked way in me
And lead me in the way everlasting



12) Proverbs 3: 5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
Lean not on your own
understanding
In all your ways acknowledge him
And he will direct your path



13) Proverbs 8:29-31

When God laid out the earth
And drew on the face of the waters
Wisdom was right there beside him
Helping him plan and play
She found joy in the Lord
And the Lord delighted in her
She rejoiced in the world he made
She rejoiced in the human race.



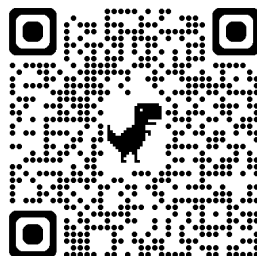
14) Matthew 5: 3-10

Blessed are the poor in spirit
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven
Blessed are those who mourn
For they will be comforted

Blessed are the meek
Theirs is the earth
Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst For what's right
They will be, they will be filled

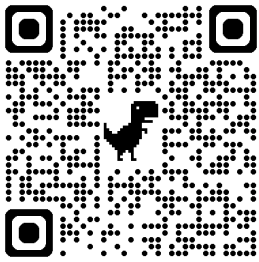
Blessed are the merciful
For they will all be shown mercy
Blessed are the pure in heart
For they will see God face to face

Blessed are those makers of peace
As children of God, they will be seen
Blessed are those
Like prophets before
Doing what's right and suffering
All that may come
Theirs is the kingdom of heaven
Theirs is the kingdom of heaven



15) Matthew 6:6

When you pray
Go behind a closed door
And pray to your Father
Who is unseen
And your Father who sees
What is done in secret
He will reward you



16) Matthew 11:28-30

Come, come, come
all who are weary
Come, come, come, you heavy laden
Take my yoke for it is easy
Feel my burden rest ever so lightly

For I am gentle and humble
And you will find rest for your soul

Haere mai koutou katoa
Haere mai, e taimaha ana
Tangohia taku ioka
He mama taku pikaunga

He ngakau mahaki toku
E whiwhi koutou te marino



17) Matthew 25:34-40

When I was hungry
You gave me bread
When I was naked
You gave me clothes
I was a stranger you welcomed me
You came to me when I was alone

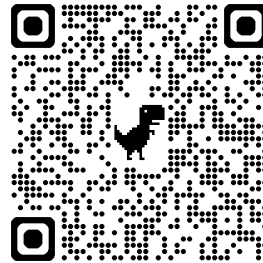
Lord, what do you mean?
Lord, how can this be?
Whatever you've done
For the least of my kin
My friend, you have done for me



18) Mark 5:34-36

My daughter
Your faith has made you well
Go in peace and be free
From your suffering

My son
Do not be afraid
Hold onto faith
Let us walk this way together



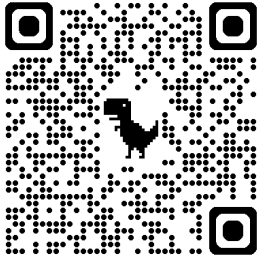
19) Mark 9:35-37

If anyone wants to be first
You must be very last
A servant of all
Welcome these little ones
And you welcome me
And the one who sent me



20) Mark 9:38-42

Whoever is not against us
They are with us, they are for us
Whoever gives you a cup a water
In my name
Because you belong to Christ
They will not lose their reward



21) Mark 10:42-45

Among the people of this world
Their rulers lord it over them
Their great ones are tyrants
But not so among you

Here the greatest one
Will be a servant
Here the first will humbly be a slave
For the Son of Man came
Not to be served but to serve
And to give his life
As a ransom for many



22) Mark 10:46-52

Jesus, Son of David
Have mercy on me
Son of David have mercy on me
The crowd bid me be silent
Still I cried for help
Son of David have mercy on me

Jesus stopped dead,
Saying 'Come to me.
What can I do for you?'
Leaping to my feet
I said, 'Teacher, let me see.'
He said, 'Go,
Your faith has made you well.'



23) Mark 12:41-44

One poor widow
Gave two small coins
Jesus said, 'Truly,
She has given more
Than all the others have
For they gave from abundance
But she from her poverty
She has given everything
She has given all she had.'



24) Luke 1:46

My soul will magnify the Lord
My soul will magnify the Lord
May my life bring our God nearer:
Make the love of our God clearer
And my soul will magnify the Lord



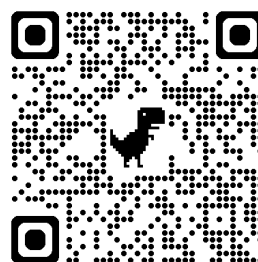
25) Luke 1:78-79

Because of the tender mercy
Of our God
A heavenly dawn will break upon us
To shine upon those
Who wait in the dark
And live amid the shadow of death
To guide our feet
Into the way of peace
To guide our feet
Into the way of peace



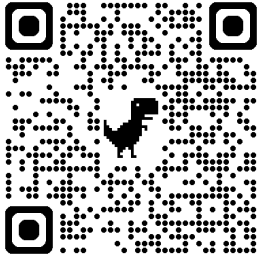
26) Luke 6:34-35

Love your enemies
Do good and give
Hope for nothing in return
Your reward will be great
You will be children of God
For God is kind to the ungrateful
Be merciful
As your Father is merciful



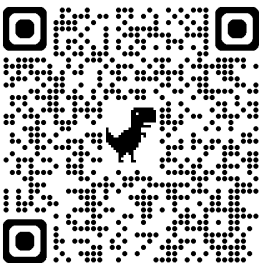
27) Luke 10: 41-42

You are troubled by many things
Pulled in many directions
When so few really matter
Maybe only one



28) Luke 12:15, 21

Friend, guard against the riches
That you crave
For life cannot be found
In all you gain
But it can easily be lost that way
Be generous with God
Mind what you save
Through your days



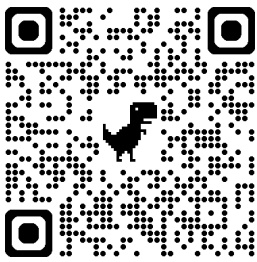
29) Luke 13:6-9

A man had a fig tree
Planted in his vineyard
Came looking for fruit
And found none
“Three years I have waited
But still there’s no fruit
Cut it down,
Why should it waste the soil?”
But the worker replied
“Give it one more year
Let me tend it and feed it well
If it bears fruit next year
Then all well and good
If not, you can be the one
To cut it down.”



30) Luke 13:34

Jerusalem, Jerusalem
The city that kills the prophets
And stones those sent to you
How often I have desired
To gather your children together
Like a hen gathers her brood
Under her wing
But you were not willing



31) Luke 15:20-24

While he was still so far from home
His father saw him
Coming down the road
And the father's heart
Was filled with compassion
And he ran to embrace his son

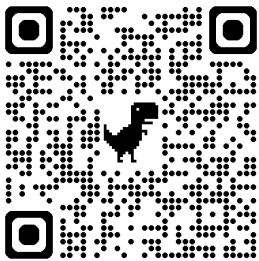
'I am no longer worthy,'
The boy began to say
But the father would not listen
To a word he said
'Place a robe around his shoulders
And sandals on his feet
Place a ring around his finger
And prepare a feast.
For this son of mine was lost
But now he's found again
He was dead but now
I have him back alive
We will celebrate all night.'



32) Luke 24:36-39

Peace be with you
Why are you troubled?
Peace be with you
Why are you troubled?

Look at my hands, my feet
See it is I
Touch me my friend and see
I am no ghost, I'm flesh and bone



33) John 12:1-8

Mary took a jar of rich perfume
And anointed the feet of the Lord
Then she wiped them
Dry with her hair
And the fragrance
Filled the whole house

‘What about the poor?’
Judas then complained
Not because he cared
But because he was a thief
Then the Lord replied,
‘You leave her alone
For she saved this gift
For the time of my death
You will always have the poor
But you will not always have me.’

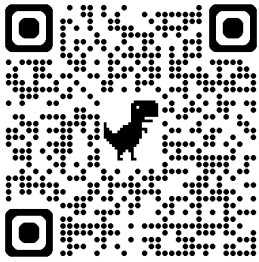




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34) John 13:34-35

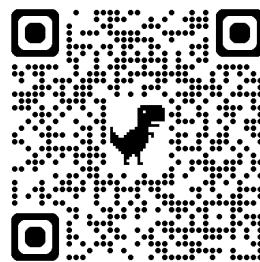
A new commandment I give to you
Love one another
As I have loved you
By this all people will know
You are mine
If you will love one another



35) Acts 2:17-18 / Joel 2:28-29

Hear what the Lord is saying
How a day is coming
I will pour out my Spirit
On all people
And your daughters and sons
They will know
They will know and speak the truth

Hear what the Lord is saying:
How a day is coming
When the young will hold
Heaven's hope
And the old will dream
New world's into being
Even the lowly, no one left out
I will pour out my Spirit
On all people
And your daughters and sons
They will know
They will know and speak the truth.



36) Acts 9:1-6

Still breathing violence
At the followers of the Lord
Saul was going along
Toward Damascus
To bind any man or woman
Who belonged to the Way
When a blinding light from heaven
Shone around him

He fell to the ground
As he heard a voice:
'Saul, why do you persecute me?'
'Oh Lord,' he replied.
'Tell me who you are'
'I am Jesus the one
You are harming so.'



37) Acts: 9:36-43

A disciple named Tabitha
Who was always doing good
She fell ill and died
So they sent for Peter
And urged him to come
Weeping widows, they greeted him
Wearing all she'd given them
He cleared the room
Knelt down and prayed:
'Tabitha, get up.'

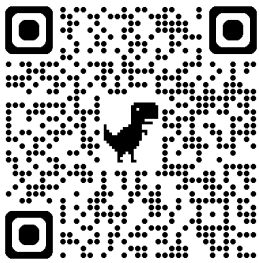
She opened her eyes
And sat up in bed
Then he helped her to her feet
Peter brought them
All together again
And he gave her back to them alive.



38) Romans 8:39

Nothing at all in all creation
Nothing at all in heav'n above
Can separate us from Christ Jesus
Or keep us from God's love

No angel or demon or power
No present or future hour
No death and no danger
Nothing can separate us



39) 2nd Corinthians 4:14-16

No, we do not lose heart
For the One who raised Jesus to life
Will raise us also with him
So we do not lose heart, oh no

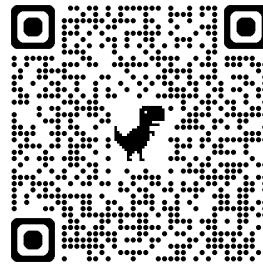
Even though we are wasting away
Yet unseen
We are being renewed, each day



40) 2nd Corinthians 5:16-17

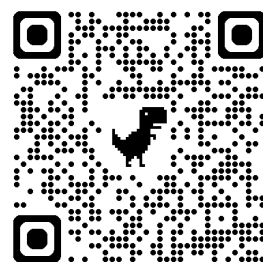
From now on we regard no one
From a human point of view
We will judge no one
Based on who they are
On what they have or do

For we once knew Christ this way
But we were wrong
Now we are changed
For whoever is in him
The old is gone: a new creation



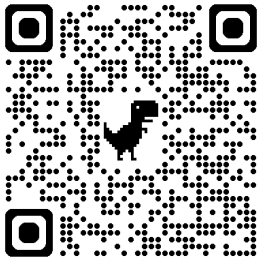
41) 2nd Corinthians 12:9

Your grace is sufficient for me
Your power is made perfect
In weakness
I will boast all the more of my failing
So the power of Christ
Will dwell in me



42) Ephesians 1:22-23

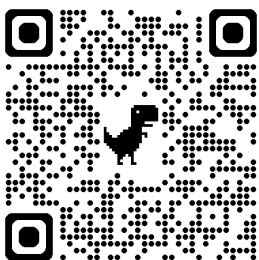
God has placed all things
Under the feet of Jesus
And made him head over all
For the church which is his body
The fullness of Him, filling all in all



43) Ephesians 6:11-17

Our struggle is not with flesh
So put on the armour of God
Then on the day of trouble
You will stand your ground

Truth and goodness
To guard your heart
Peace, your place to stand
Faith and salvation
To ward off the dark
The sword of the Spirit at hand
God's living Word



44) Philippians 2:5-11

Let us have the same mind as Christ
Who, though he was just like God
Did not cling to equality
With God on high
But made himself nothing, a slave
Then he humbled himself
Submitting to death
Even to death on the cross

And then God raised him on high
And gave him the name over all
That at the name of Jesus:
Every knee bows
In heaven and on the earth
And every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord
To the glory of God
Our God the Father.



45) Philippians 4:4-7

May God's peace
That surpasses understanding
Guard your heart and your mind
In Christ Jesus / In Christ (*2nd time*)

Rejoice, and again rejoice
Let your gentleness be known to all
Do not fear for the Lord is near
Bring every need with your thanks
In prayer



46) Colossians 3:1-4

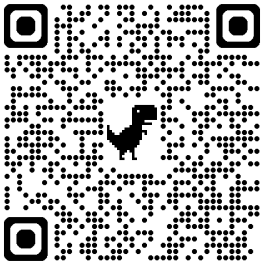
Since you've been raised with Christ
Let your life rise with him
Setting your minds
Not on things below
But things on high
For you have died
And your life is hidden
In God with Christ
And when Christ
Who is your life, appears
Then we will all shine
Beside him in glory.



47) 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough
For all the joy you give to us
Night and day we earnestly pray
That God will bring us face to face

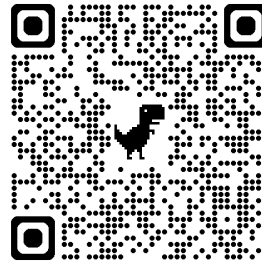
May you abound in love
For each other and for everyone
As we abound in love for you
May your heart be strong
Till Jesus comes



48) Hebrews 4:14-16

One who has passed
Through the heavens
Who can sympathise
With all our weakness
Whose been tested in every way
Like us
This is Jesus, our great high priest

So let us approach
The throne of grace boldly
And mercy we shall receive
Let us approach
The throne of grace boldly
To help in our time of need



49) James 4:6-8

God opposes the proud
Gives grace to the humble
Submit yourself to God
And you'll be graced

Resist and the devil
Will flee from you
Draw near to God
And God will draw near
Resist and the devil
Will flee from you
Draw near to God
And God will draw near

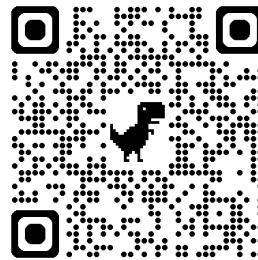


50) 1 John 4: 7, 16, 18-19

Beloved, let us love one another
For love is from God
Everyone who loves is born of God

God is love and all who live in love
Abide in God, and God abides in us
There's no fear of any kind in love
For perfect love
Will drive away all fear

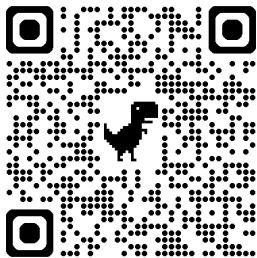
Beloved, let us love one another
For love is from God
We can love
For God has first loved us



51) Revelation 1:4-5

Grace to you and peace to you
From the One who is
And the One who was
Grace to you and peace to you
From the One who is to come

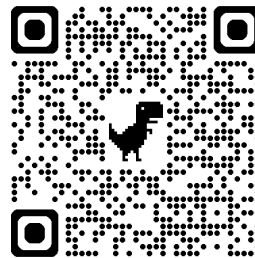
And from Jesus, the faithful witness
Oh from Jesus, firstborn of the dead
Oh from Jesus, king over all kings
Grace to you and peace to you



52) Revelation 21:1-6

I saw a new heaven and earth
For the old had passed away
And I heard a voice speak
From the throne
The dwelling of God is with people

For God will wipe away every tear
And death will be no more
No mourning and no more pain
Behold, I am making all things new



How to be a Song Keeper

Songs help us remember and songs help us to be present. These songs help us remember Scripture, and be present to Jesus (the Word behind the words). But Scripture needs a home, the Word longs to become flesh.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider which Scripture you, or your family and friends need most. Dedicate yourself to learning that song, so that it can be at home in you. Let it be your companion day and night. In doing so, you will become a Song Keeper for those around you, for those who have forgotten what God is like or who have never known in the first place. You may never sing the song to anyone, but that won't matter if you are living it out, if it has shaped your attitudes, actions and relationships. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Col 3:16). Let the Word become flesh in you.

How to use this resource

In my own practice, I find that spending a week with a song to get to know it and to let it get to know me, is about right. If I try to pack in more songs than that I don't have the time to get properly acquainted with the words, and they don't get a long enough look at me. So in this resource are 52 songs. That's a year's worth at that rate. But you can go slower. Better to know a handful well, than a hundred hardly at all. The effectiveness entirely depends on how disciplined you are in spending time with the song, which is really about spending time with the Scripture. Once I've familiarised myself with the passage, I find going for a nice long walk or run with the song turning over in my mind is most helpful. Giving it three quarters of an hour to roll around up there seems to do the trick for me.

How will you know if its working? These are the things that have happened for me. In the short term, I have noticed things in the Scriptures that have had a depth of insight that I couldn't have made up by myself. That's what makes me think God might be talking to me through this. In the longer term, I have noticed that well after my week focussing on a particular song, it will come back to me, unbidden, just when I need it most. I suspect, if we carry these songs with us a little way, just long enough to get them in our hearts, they will carry us the rest of the way. The real test for me has been noticing changes in my attitudes and my actions that link back to the long, slow insights that have grown in me out of these songs, and the Scriptures behind them.

A word about the songs and the recordings

I worked hard to keep these songs as close to Scripture as possible, and if not the exact words, then the sense of those words. Sometimes, I've paraphrased a longer passage (like Genesis 1 or John 12), and there are often verses skipped over. I have been clear about which verses are in and which aren't. You can fill in these gaps by reading the full passage. Also, I resisted the temptation to leave out weird passages (ones about fig trees, for example) because God often spoke through these ones too.

The recordings are not perfect. I had to make a decision between recordings that were studio quality, like some of my earlier work, but far fewer because of the time involved, or recordings that were good enough, allowing me to record far more songs. What helped me to decide for the latter was the realisation that these songs are not meant to be listened to endlessly, they are meant to be *learnt*. It's my hope you'll outgrow the need for the lyrics fairly quickly, and for the recordings soon after, once the songs have made a home in you.

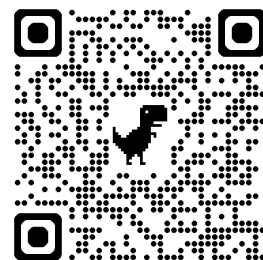
Thanks:

The Saints of Servants Health Centre, Night Chapel, Team Lawrence, The Seedling, AA, Forge, Flagstaff Community Church & First Church of Otago. Special thanks to Sue Mepham for the Te Reo translation of 'Come, come, come,' and to Sarah Lea West for her wonderful art. Find more at sarahleawest.art

You can download the pdf of this booklet to print, as well as access the chord charts for the songs here:



The full playlist of this collection can be found here:



Contact: malcolm@firstchurchotago.org

Songs written by Malcolm Gordon © 2026
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First Church
of Otago

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