

THE EDIFIER

Church of God (Seventh Day) Australia June 2026

Rhythm of Rest

The Nature of Idolatry

Gospel: The Basic Message

Who says you are unloved?

A magazine dedicated to uplifting
and transforming peoples' lives
through the uncompromised Word of God

THE EDIFIER



The truth will make you free

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From the Editor

You may have wondered about our masthead title of "The Edifier." Though languages change, the meaning and intent of "to edify" hasn't.

The word "edify" means to uplift, upbuild, instruct, familiarise, to encourage and motivate.

In this regard, each of us have opportunities every day to be a blessing to others. What we say and what we do often has great impact on others.

Words can build up. Words can also tear down. In one sense, words are also like seeds, implanting notions that are either good or bad. Thus, what we say to others either encourages and edifies, or can be dismissive and disempowering.

An ancient proverb tells us that, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." (Proverbs 25:11) That is, the right words spoken at the right time. You've probably heard the term, "That was pure gold," meaning what was just said was absolutely perfect!

Jesus said of his disciples, "You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth." His example during their ministry years together and His edifying and investing in them laid the foundations for the church era and the prolific growth that followed.

By the Holy Spirit, we too have that same power and capability of investing in the lives of others. Sometimes this is in what we say, but more often in what we do, and always in who we are.

The edification from now on is to carefully evaluate everything we propose to say and do. The apostle Paul reminded those in Colossae of this virtue when he wrote that: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17) □

*John Klassek, Pastor
Western Australia*



The Word at the Centre

True Sabbath rest is found when Christ is at the centre. John reminds us that Jesus is the Living Word - present at creation and active in sustaining all things. The Sabbath is not merely a pause from work; it is an invitation to re-centre our lives on Christ, the One who gives meaning to all of Scripture and all of life.

Throughout the week, countless voices compete for our attention and shape our thinking. The Sabbath creates space to step back from those influences and return to God's Word. It is a time to listen again to the voice that brings light, truth, and life. When Christ is central, rest becomes meaningful and relational rather than merely physical.

Opening Scripture on the Sabbath is not about rushing through passages or achieving a reading goal. It is about allowing God's Word to speak slowly and deeply. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible consistently points us to Christ as the source of rest, hope, and renewal.

As we re-centre our hearts on the living Word of God, we discover that rest flows from relationships. The Sabbath becomes a sacred space where Christ reshapes our priorities and restores our perspective. □

Jesus is my
Living Word,
draw me to You
and provide
space for me.

Quiet the noise
around me and
help me listen
deeply. May my
rest be rooted in
knowing You.

*Omar Afiouni
New South Wales*





THE SIGN OF JONAH

When people read the book of Jonah, one of the most common questions raised is: why did the entire city of Nineveh repent so quickly? Jonah delivers what must be the shortest, least enthusiastic sermon in prophetic history — *“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown”* — and an entire pagan city, from the greatest to the least, immediately puts on sackcloth, including on their animals, and turned from its evil. It can seem almost too easy, even implausible.

Some suggest a vague spiritual atmosphere came over the city. But Jesus himself gives us a far more specific and satisfying answer in Luke 11:30, and once you follow that thread back through the narrative, a remarkable picture emerges.

The Key to this Sign

Jesus says: *“For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.”* (Luke 11:30)

Notice what Jesus did not say. He does not say Jonah’s message was the sign, or that a spiritual feeling came over the city. He says Jonah himself was the sign. The man. His existence. What had happened to him.

A sign by definition requires witnesses. It points beyond natural explanation to divine action. It must be seen and testified to in order to function as a sign. So, the question becomes: who witnessed the sign of Jonah, and how did it reach Nineveh?

What the Sailors Knew

Jonah 1:10 is a critical and often overlooked verse. When the storm came and Jonah was identified as the cause, the sailors were exceedingly afraid and asked him: *“What have you done?”* The text then tells us they already knew he was fleeing from the Lord, because he had told them.

It seems that before Jonah was thrown overboard, these sailors possessed a complete account: his name, his nationality, his God — the Creator of sea and land — where he was supposed to be going, and why he was running. They understood he had been sent to Nineveh with a message.

Then they threw Jonah overboard at his own command, but not before praying to God to not be accountable. And the sea immediately calmed.

Jonah 1:16 records their response: they feared the Lord greatly, offered a sacrifice, and made vows. These were not casual bystanders. They had just

been converted. They had made solemn commitments to the God of Jonah, and they carried a complete, detailed, first-hand testimony of everything that had occurred.

The City of Departure & Return

Jonah fled from Joppa. Is it likely that after the storm calmed, the sailors returned to Joppa – the nearest port, and the one from which they had departed? They would have needed to make repairs and report what had happened. Perhaps then Joppa had eyewitnesses telling an extraordinary story: a prophet of the God of heaven and earth had been thrown overboard, the storm had instantly ceased, and the man had been swallowed by a great fish.

Jonah was in the fish for three days and three nights before it deposited Jonah back onto dry land. The text says God prepared this fish for this specific purpose, to enable Jonah to breathe and survive while it travelled under water. And when it came to shore, releasing Jonah alive onto the beach, where there people witnessing it?

Jonah was alive, emerging from the belly of the fish. He'd been there for a full three days. Some have suggested that his skin may have been bleached white from his time within the fish. Can we presume that with a strong fish smell that had the people wondered whether this was an appearance of Dagon, the fish god that they worshipped? Those who may have witnessed the fish spit Jonah out, may have also associated him with the worship of an idol that was supposedly part man and part fish!

A Celebrity With a Destination

At this point Jonah was not an obscure wandering preacher. He was a man whose story may have spread through the port. Nineveh was one of the great cities of the

ancient world, sitting on major trading networks. Sailors talk. Merchants carry news. A story this dramatic would have travelled fast.

Crucially, everyone who told this story also knew his destination to be Nineveh. By the time Jonah arrived, the king of Nineveh may already have known who was coming. The brevity of Jonah's message reflected only the bare minimum because he didn't want Nineveh to repent but be destroyed. The immediacy of the royal response, however, makes far more sense in this light. The sign had alerted the whole city.

Jesus identifies the sign of Jonah as the only sign he would give pointing to his death and resurrection!

The Sailors' Sense of Responsibility

One more element deserves attention. The sailors had thrown a man overboard with their own hands. Yes, he had told them to. Yes, the sea confirmed it was necessary. But the weight of that act would not have sat lightly. They had made vows to the God of Jonah, and the testimony they carried would have felt like an

obligation – not just a remarkable tale to share, but a duty to declare what the God of heaven and earth had done.

The sailors were not passive witnesses. They were motivated, converted, vow-making eyewitnesses who would have told this story to everyone they met.

The Resurrection Parallel

Jesus identifies the sign of Jonah as the only sign he would give pointing to his death and resurrection. The parallel is precise. Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights. Jonah was in the giant fish for three days and three nights, and the testimony of his restoration then spread presumably all the way to Nineveh!

The sign functioned because there were witnesses to verify it. Many witnesses attested to Jesus' bodily resurrection. And the only sign Jesus gave of His Messiahship and identity was the sign of Jonah swallowed by a great fish only to emerge three days and three nights later.

Conclusion

Nineveh repented but not because of an unusually persuasive message. They repented because the man standing before them was someone whose God had gone to extraordinary lengths to send him — lengths that were probably already widely known and testified to by the time he arrived.

Jesus gives us the interpretive key:

'When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."' (Luke 11:29-30 ESV)

Jonah himself and the time he was in the fish was the sign. He spent three days and three nights "entombed" in that fish. Everything else — the sailors, Joppa, the fish, the beach, the trade routes, the testimony — flows as we might understand from its natural inference with that ancient account.

The irony that the book of Jonah is built around remains intact, and is now even richer: the most reluctant prophet in Scripture preaches the shortest sermon imaginable — and it causes a wicked city to repent, changing the course of history. ■

*Daniel Webster
Queensland*



Rhythm Of Rest

From the very beginning, God reveals that rest is part of His good design. After six days of creation, God rested—not from exhaustion, but from completion. The seventh day was blessed and set apart, establishing a rhythm for life that honours both work and rest. Sabbath was not created because humanity was weary; it was created so humanity would not become weary.

In a culture that measures value by productivity, the Sabbath quietly challenges our assumptions. When we stop, we declare that life is sustained by God, not by our constant effort. Sabbath is a weekly opportunity to step out of striving and back into trust.

Resting on the Sabbath is not about withdrawal from life, but about realignment with the Creator. It is a time to remember who God is, who we are, and how life is meant to be lived. By embracing God's rhythm, we allow space for gratitude, worship, and renewal.

The Sabbath teaches us that rest is holy. It invites us to slow down long enough to notice God's presence and goodness. In resting, we honour the God who both works and rests—and who invites us to share in that gift. ■

*Omar Afiouni
New South Wales*

The Nature Of Idolatry

An analysis of the sin of idolatry is a sobering testament even in the absence of physical idols.

It seems that we still fashion spiritual substitutes. Throughout the Scriptures, we see humanity constantly creating idols rather than being satisfied in God. A theologian once said, "The human heart is a perpetual idol factory." Is he right? How does the Old Testament prophetic message concerning idolatry apply to the contemporary church today? We'll explore specific principles and situations.

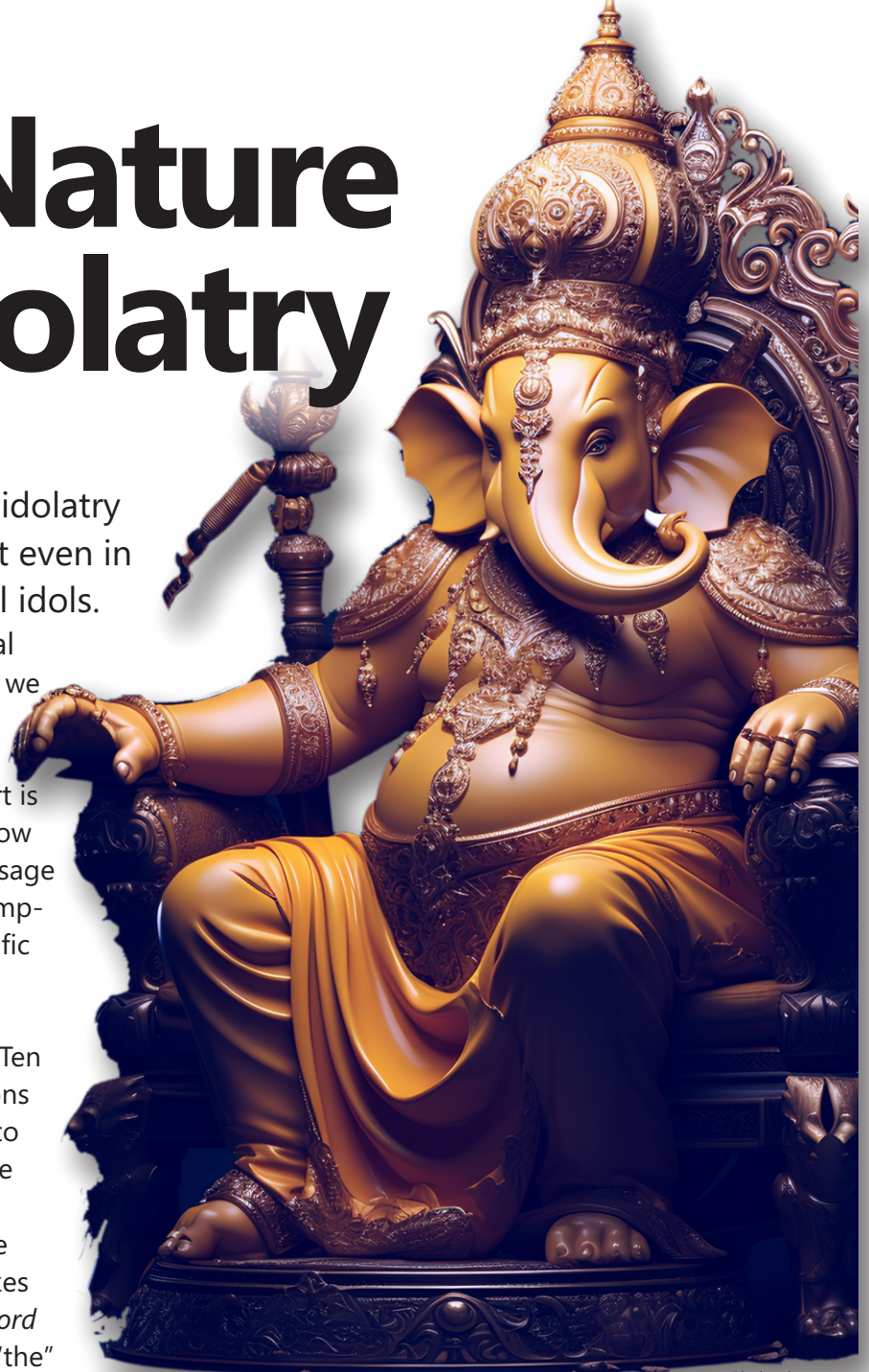
Delivered to Israel through Moses, the Ten Commandments are principal obligations in which God stipulates how Israel are to relate to Him and with one another. The first four directly apply to God, the remaining six, to man. Focussing on the first three, the first commandment makes the monotheistic revelation "*I am the Lord your God*". God is not "a" or "one" but "the" God. The second commandment continues in stating "*You shall have no other gods...*". Him being the only true God, one without equal. Finally, "*You shall not make for yourself an idol... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.*" God desires nothing to be worshipped, whatever form the idol takes, other than Him alone. In fact, God commanded that the places where idols were worshipped be destroy-ed (cf. Deuteronomy 12:2).

Idolatry is the gravest of sins. It is the devotion and worship of anything that is placed above God, whether consciously or unconsciously. It can include emotions by enjoyment, enlightenment, and entertainment, tempered with feelings of

both enslavement and willing submission. Idolatry is not only a mental act, but one that can be physical and spiritual. We replace the God of Creation with the god of our creation.

In the Old Testament, we read of how idolatry devastated the nation of Israel. The stories revealed in these books are lessons for us today, more so than ever, as the idolatry of our modern world has eclipsed those of the past.

Idolatry today appears in various forms, and within the broader church, from the pew to the pulpit too has been greatly affected, all too often



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Gospel: The Basic Message Of the Christian Faith

The letter to the Galatians was written to address one central issue: how a person is made right with God. The theological term for this is justification.

The apostle Paul leaves no room for confusion — the Gospel is about how sinners are justified before God. Let us examine key passages that clearly define the Gospel:

“God the Father... raised Jesus from the dead.”
(Galatians 1:1)

“Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:3)

“Jesus gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age.” (Galatians 1:4)

Paul emphasizes that this message is not man-made, when he wrote, *“I want you to know... the gospel I preached is not of human origin... I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”* (Galatians 1:11-12)

What, then, did God reveal to Paul? *“God was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.”* (Galatians 1:16)

The Truth of the Gospel

Paul makes the heart of the Gospel unmistakably clear: *“A person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”* (Galatians 2:16)

“We seek to be justified in Christ.” (Galatians 2:17)

“If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.” (Galatians 2:21)

This means the death of Christ was absolutely necessary for our justification. The Galatians themselves experienced this truth: *“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by believing what you heard?”* (Galatians 3:2, 5)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.”
(Galatians 3:13)

“The promise is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Galatians 3:22)

Paul goes on to note that even Abraham encountered the Gospel beforehand: *“Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’”* (Galatians 3:8)

The Nature Of Idolatry

invaded with emotionalism, pop-psychology and intellectualism.

The key to conquering idolatry according to the prophet Isaiah, is collaboration between God and mortal (Isaiah 2:6-22). Believers must engage with spiritual disciplines and live according to His commands, abiding in Christ, and guided by His Spirit. No path or program in the absence of God and His Word will conquer idolatry.

In exploring the prophet Micah's conclusion (Micah 5:9-14), however, the prophet prefers to highlight only the role of God alone in discontinuing idolatry in the life of a believer.

There are times that pride will lead to idolatry. However there are times idolatry emerges out of culture and tradition, not because of self-driven achievements or material wealth. Regardless, it comes down to the heart of sanctification. This holy process is the refining and purifying of the heart, soul and mind until our offerings to Him are righteous (Malachi 3:3; cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7). Empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, practically, the means of sanctification are the Scriptures, prayer, fellowship, providence and obedience to God's teachings, and abiding in our Messiah Jesus.

In conclusion, idolatry will continue to exist for sin is common to all men. The church is not free from sin, but unlike the secular world, is blessed by the presence of God, by means of His grace and Spirit. We are no longer defined by sinfulness but by holiness.

In exploring Micah 5:9-14 and Isaiah 2:6-22 we are able to not merely identify differences in how to understand the origin of idolatry, but understand the reasons as to why it emerges in order to be the overcomers through the sanctification given to us. □



Benjamin Szumskyj
Western Australia

The result of this Gospel is profound: *“To redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons.”* (Galatians 4:5)

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” (Galatians 5:1)

“If I were still preaching circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.” (Galatians 5:11)

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 6:14)

The Core of the Gospel

Paul states the Gospel plainly: *“Jesus gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age.”* (Galatians 1:4)

The Gospel is not primarily a system, a law, or a program — it is a person and His work.

Jesus Christ is the Gospel

He is God's rescue plan. Through faith in Him — specifically in what He has done — we are: justified before God, freed from sin, adopted as children of God, and made heirs of His promises.

This is the message echoed in John's testimony: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

The Gospel and the Kingdom

It is important to be precise: The Kingdom of God is not the Gospel itself. Rather, the Kingdom has a Gospel — the good news. And that good news is this: The King has come. The Saviour Jesus Christ has entered the world. And through Him, humanity can be made right with God. □



Panom Top
Western Australia



**Who
says
that
you
are**

Unloved?

When we think about self-esteem, it is usually based on perceptions of how we see ourselves. Because we cannot see ourselves as others do, we tend to rely on our past experiences to create that image. This often determines the way in which we interact with others.

Holding the thought, "I am unloved," for example, may subconsciously cause our mind to interpret this as an instruction to bring to remembrance an experience from memory that supports that notion.

The solution to this negative view, we are told, is to learn to love ourselves. That is, "you must love yourself before you can love others."

The problem is that it puts the focus entirely on you. You fall prey to "victimhood." You become the priority. In other words, you need to be complete before you can consider helping others.

When Jesus said, "*Love your neighbour as you love yourself*," He wasn't giving approval to hate your brother on the basis that you hate yourself. As an old adage says, He was "accentuating the positive."

We all suffer from unrealistic thoughts and expectations, especially when encouraged by a worldly/Satanic narrative. However, not only does God want us to reject such thoughts, He wants us to recognise where they came from. They did not come from Him! In the Garden of Eden, God asked, "*Who told you that you are naked?*" In this way, He may ask of us, "Who says that you are unloved?"

God wants us to claim the promises He has made throughout the scriptures, such as:

"I have been chosen, I have been justified, I have been sanctified, I have been purified by God." (Paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 6:11).

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose". (Romans 8:28)

I was told many years ago that our self-esteem was in Christ. I initially rejected that idea because it defied the very meaning of what self-esteem is. I reasoned that if it is found in another then it cannot by definition be my esteem!

But I was mistaken. I learned that in Christ we are made into a new creation. We have died (to self) and those former things have passed away. I am no longer my own. Christ owns me. Being part of and abiding in Jesus means I have confidence in Him, and having as Paul says, *"The mind of Christ."*

We are also invited to share in His glory and esteem. This means that we can now see ourselves exactly as God sees us: in Christ! □

*Richard Todd
South Australia*



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Simple Life Forms?

Scientists who try to explain life without God in the equation come to improbable and impossible conclusions.

For example, evolutionists say all living things emerged through the processes of natural selection (survival of the fittest) and mutation. However, natural selection only selects what already exists, so it can't add any new DNA and does not create new things. This leaves mutation which, put simply, involves genetic copying errors during the process of reproduction.

The insurmountable problem for the evolutionist is that mutations must be of a beneficial nature to be selected and must add a novel trait. Most mutations, like a fifth leg for a horse, for example, are not beneficial. Given the billions of extremely complex and irreducibly complex mechanisms in nature, there must be billions of extremely lucky beneficial trait-adding mutations for the theory to be true. Any scientist who says there is enough evidence or sound reason for this is living in denial. (See web link below.)

The difficulty for the scientist is exponentially compounded by the fact "simple life-forms" capable of reproducing themselves do not just pop up. Without such, natural selection and mutation don't come into play. Further, there's no such thing as "simple" life-forms, because the greatest scientists cannot create life (from non-living materials) that can live and go on to reproduce.

Isn't it time to put God back into the equation? Jesus did everything we would expect of our Creator, Redeemer and Saviour. You will discover this truth if you search for it. Discover that our lives do have meaning and eternal potential. We are not a random accident in a meaningless universe! □

<https://answersingenesis.org/genetics/epigenetics/what-about-beneficial-mutations/>



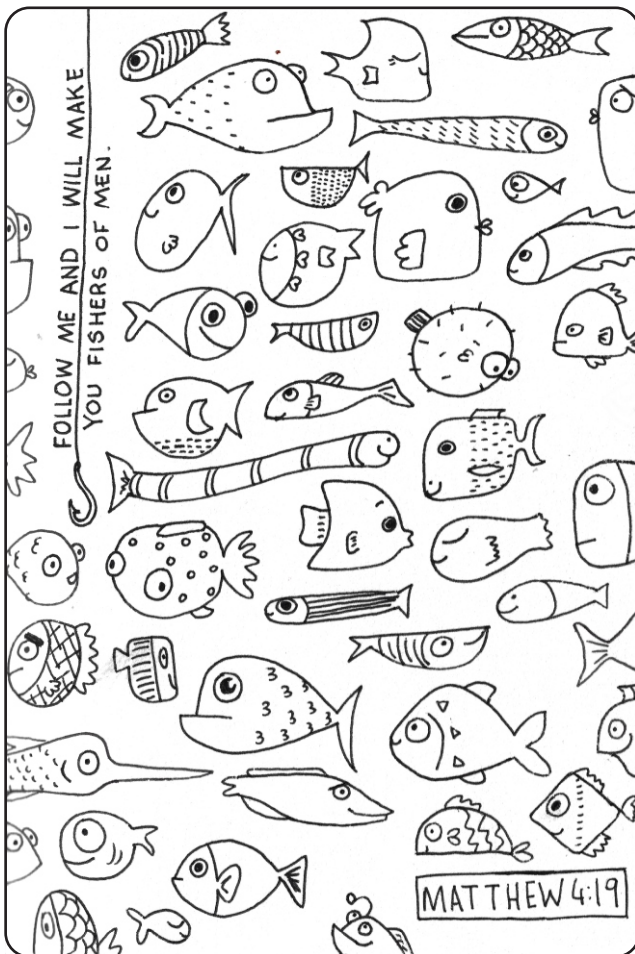
*David Kidd, Pastor
New Zealand*

“

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Ephesians 3:14-21 ESV)

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Artwork by Leah Anderson

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