

Sunday 27 July 2025



SERMON TOPIC: Christ is the head of the Church
BIBLE TEXT: Ephesians 1:15 - 23
PREACHER: Chris Pretorius
ELDER ON DUTY: Peter Williams
OFFERINGS:
1st Collection: The work of the Church
2nd Collection: Solomon Islands workgroup

Disrupting the Worries that Stall Spiritual Maturity ~
By Jo Gibbs as published on The Gospel Coalition

The third group in Jesus' parable of the soils, in Luke 8:4-15 (and parallels) hits close to home and provides us with some wise insights to restart our spiritual growth:

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (verse 14).

The Parable Is Not Just About Evangelism

I used to think this parable was only about how people respond when they first hear God's word. Some reject it, some embrace it briefly, and some truly believe. Reading it this way provides a level of comfort: Jesus tells us to expect different responses. The takeaway? Faithfully scatter the seed and trust God with the soil. That's true. But there's more here. On closer reading, Jesus is also saying something for us as lifelong followers of Christ. For this parable reveals long-term threats to spiritual maturity. And so it speaks powerfully into seasons of spiritual plateau.

Notice the shift in pacing in Jesus' parable of the soils. The first two soils involve short-term reactions: the seed is snatched or the plant is scorched quickly. But the third soil is different: its plant grows. Slowly. Alongside the thorns. Until it's eventually choked and fails to mature. As commentator Alfred Plummer puts it:

The choking is not a sudden process, like the trampling and devouring; nor a rapid process, like the withering: it takes time. It is as they go on their way through life and before they have reached the goal, that the choking of the good growth takes place. Therefore they never do reach the goal.[1]

Darrell Bock adds:

The parable looks at a career of response, as is clear when one considers that the good soil brings up various levels of fruit. The assessment is built on moments, to be sure, but it requires a life of response to consider what one's soul looks like relative to a slowly developing crop. A plant does not sprout forth overnight, nor does the harvest of the heart.[2]

This parable isn't just a snapshot, it's a slow-motion video of spiritual drift. It forces us to ask what thorns are growing in our lives, threatening to choke our maturity in Christ. Because identifying these subtle but powerful distractions is a key step toward disrupting the plateau.

Weeding Out Our Worries

What keeps you awake at night? Work stress? Family pressures? That discouraging comment that still stings? Scripture does have a category for “faithful anxiety” using the same word we find in Luke 8 (In Greek, *μέριμνα*). See 1 Cor 7:32-34; 2 Cor 11:28).[3] This “faithful anxiety” is a single-minded concern for the things of the Lord rather than the things of the world. It is seen in a pastor’s concern for the flock (1 Pet 1:2-4). This type of anxiety is good and proper in a follower of Jesus. But there is a way of worrying, even about the Lord’s affairs, that chokes our spiritual growth. This is the kind of worry we need to be ready to weed out.

Worry has a way of swirling through our minds.

It clouds our view of God’s sovereignty and leaves us feeling like we’re carrying everything alone. But we’re not meant to. Scripture doesn’t tell us to suppress our worries or manage them on our own, it tells us to “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Pet 5:7). Jesus invites us in the Sermon on the Mount:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ... So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:26, 31-33)

When we hold onto our worries they slowly take over, cluttering our thoughts, distracting our hearts, and choking the word’s fruitfulness in us. But when we turn to him? He gives us a peace the world can’t: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

There’s no quick fix. But every time we pray, trust, and persevere, God loosens worry’s grip. And slowly, over time, the word begins to grow again.

Why Do We Stop Weeding?

For those of us who’ve followed Jesus for years, we know all of these verses well, so why do worries still choke our spiritual growth? Midlife often brings heavy burdens: ageing parents, growing children, increasing financial and work responsibilities. But I suspect there’s something else going on, too: ingrained habits that dull our engagement with God’s word.

It could be that we’re not soaking in God’s word. A few hours a week—church, Bible study, skimming a few verses—might feel like enough. But Psalm 1 pictures the flourishing believer as one who delights in God’s word and meditates on it day and night (v. 2).

And it could be that when we do read and hear God’s word, we’re not storing it in our hearts. What sets fruitful soil apart? The word is retained (Lk 8:15): It’s memorised, meditated on, held onto. When we hide God’s promises deep in our hearts this shapes our reactions, not just our intentions. It helps us, including in our weak spots, like worry.

Maybe we’re simply not doing what the word says. We know the verses, but don’t act on them. Instead of casting our cares on God, we stew or scroll or try to fix things by ourselves. If we’re not hearing, holding onto, and obeying God’s word, our worries will quietly overtake us like lantana—invasive, and choking.

Pursuing Spiritual Growth

But it doesn’t have to be this way. James exhorts us:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says... whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it... they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1: 22-25) Even when we find ourselves in a midlife spiritual plateau we can, by God’s grace, receive his word and apply it to the worries of life and ministry that overwhelm us. And so we might find ourselves in a new season of spiritual growth:

the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (Luke 8:15)

Our Giving, an Act of Worship

In our Church we have two offerings every Sunday. The first goes toward the ministry of this congregation. The second offering goes toward various Christian causes. This week our second offering is for the Solomon Islands Workgroup.

If you would like to support the work of you can do so by in Church giving - simply add your offering to the bag at the back of Church or by bank transfer -

BSB 063-167. A/C 1015-8356

If using bank transfer please indicate whether it is for the first offering "Sun1" or second offering "Sun 2" in the reference line. Or you can give online via our Church app

<https://wpcrc.org.au/give>

This week's **PRAYER POINTS**

Be not afraid to pray--to pray is right.
Pray, if thou canst, with hope; but ever pray,
Though hope be weak or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.
Hartley Coleridge

Personal **PRAYER POINTS**

As we go into the coming week let us daily pray;

Being assured that our God hears us for he is near us, even indwelling us through his Holy Spirit.
The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. (Psalm 145:18 NRSV)

Give praise and thanks to the Lord our God for honouring us with his presence.

Congregational PRAYER POINTS

Please pray for Lydia Oppermann as she is now scheduled to have her operation next Wednesday the 30th of July, pray for God's peace and comfort as the time grows nearer.

Please continue to pray for Maralin and Steve Miller. Pray that the Lord will uphold, strengthen them and heal them as they struggle with their illnesses and all that that entails.

Please pray for all those involved in the education sector that what ever role they play the Lord will guide them and sustain them as they have great influence on our young people and children.

Please continue to pray for our church as we look to our Lord and Master to guide us in the paths he has chosen for us.

Local & Global PRAYER POINTS

Please continue to pray for our Nation that many will be attracted to the light shone through God's people bringing them into a saving relationship with Jesus.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Syria.

A pastor was among a group of Christians killed in southern Syria by Islamists loyal to the government in Damascus. Barnabas Aid sources confirm that at least 12 believers - possibly as many as 20 - were killed in this incident. More than 1,120 people have died in sectarian violence that has raged across Sweida province of southern Syria for over a week.

The victims included Khaled Mazher, pastor of Sweida's Church of Jesus the Good Shepherd and a convert to Christianity from the Druze community. Also murdered were Pastor Khaled's mother Amira; his disabled father Joudat Hassan; his sister Jihan; his sister Aseel along with her husband Marwan Al-Halabi, and their sons Fadi and Mu'in; his sister Asma along with her husband Yamen Al-Khatib, and their daughters Shahd and Sarah. "The church, devastated by this loss, calls for urgent prayer," said Barnabas Aid's regional expert. "They are appealing to the international community to intervene for the protection of civilians in Sweida and across Syria, and to help end the escalating cycle of violence."

"Let us stand together in prayer and action for our brothers and sisters in Syria, trusting that God is their refuge and defender," she added.

The violence in Sweida first broke out on 13 July between the Sunni-majority Bedouin tribal group and the Druze, an Islamic sect regarded as heretical by many Sunnis. Syria's transitional government deployed the Syrian Armed Forces to the region in the days that followed, supposedly to restore peace.

These forces are alleged to have carried out attacks on civilians, including the unlawful execution of 83 Druze as well as the killing of the believers at the Church of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Christians are also among almost 2,000 people displaced by the violence. The current government of Syria, headed by interim president Ahmed al Sharaa, came to power in December 2024 following a successful armed rebellion. Al Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammad al Jolani, is the leader of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a designated terrorist organisation that was formerly affiliated to Al Qaeda.

When he first returned to Syria from Iraq in 2011, al Sharaa worked closely with Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who later declared himself the caliph of Islamic State (IS - also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh). After the split between IS and Al Qaeda in 2014, the HTS remained affiliated to Al Qaeda. More recently, al Sharaa has sought to present himself as a moderate who will protect religious freedom. However, a Reuters investigation has uncovered evidence that Syrian government forces massacred 1,500 Alawites, another minority group, in western Syria in March 2025. At least 12 Christians were killed during this wave of violence. Church leaders have also criticised the government for failing to prevent an Islamist suicide bombing on 22 June in Damascus, which claimed the lives of at least 25 worshippers and injured more than 60 during a church service.

How you can pray:

Ask our Father to comfort the grieving families of Pastor Khaled Mazher and all those who have lost loved ones in Sweida. Pray that He will strengthen His scattered church, protect those still facing danger, and provide for their basic needs. Ask that He will grant wisdom and courage to those working to bring aid and hope amid this darkness. Pray that there will be peace in this troubled land. Barnabas Aid.

Our next prayer meeting will be held on Tuesday the 5th of August at 7.30pm.





Dear church family & friends

You are invited to a morning tea in the church hall on the 31st of Aug 2025 after the morning service to celebrate my significant birthday milestone and recent retirement from my full-time job.

All are welcome! Looking forward to celebrating with you!

Kind regards
Brendina Saul

Ways to serve at the **DINING ROOM MISSION**



The next opportunity to cook for the Dining Room Mission is 26 August.

Contact Joy van Veen on for details.

Their food pantry would love donations of pantry staples such as... Cereal, long life milk or other beverages, tuna and other tinned goods, rice, pasta etc.

Even a little money to support the cooks or pantry is also gratefully accepted.

Welcoming **NEW COMERS LUNCHEON**

Looking forward to host all new families for lunch after the service this Sunday.

For any queries please contact Jenna (jenna@wpcrc.org.au)

Finance update **JUNE**

Monthly Profit and Loss with Budget

Christian Reformed Church of Wonga Park

For the month ended 30 June 2025

Cash Basis

	BUDGET	ACTUAL	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL
Income			
Church Income	17,360	24,721	209,320
Total Income	17,360	24,721	209,320
Gross Profit	17,360	24,721	209,320
Operating Expenses			
Church Expenses	14,619	12,113	210,386
Total Operating Expenses	14,619	12,113	210,386
Net Profit	2,741	12,608	(1,066)

Upcoming events **OUR CHURCH CALENDER**

Friday 25 July 19:30 Super Dash

Sunday 27 July 10:00 Deacon & Elder Installation

Sunday 27 July 12:00 Newcomers Luncheon

Sunday 3 August Church Centre activation for the Church community

Tuesday 5 August 19:30 Prayer meeting

Wednesday 6 August 19:30 Young Adults Bible Study

Friday 8 August 19:30 Super Dash

Sunday 10 August Church Centre Activation for the Church Community



TERM 3 **2025**

SUPERDASH

25
JUL

SOCIAL : ESCAPE ROOM

7: 30 PM @ WONGA PARK CRC

8
AUG

BIBLE STUDY: MARK

7: 30 PM @ WONGA PARK CRC

10
AUG

STATE YOUTH SERVICE

4 PM @ GEELONG CRC

22
AUG

BIBLE STUDY: MARK

7: 30 PM @ WONGA PARK CRC

5
SEP

BIBLE STUDY: MARK

7: 30 PM @ WONGA PARK CRC

19
SEP

BIBLE STUDY: MARK

7: 30 PM @ WONGA PARK CRC

FOR MORE INFORMATION SPEAK TO YOUR YOUTH LEADERS

Term 3 2025

YOUNG ADULTS

23 July	YA Bible study ^a
6 Aug	YA Bible study ^a
10 Aug	SYS* (Geelong)
17 Aug	YA Social
20 Aug	YA Bible study ^a
3 Sep	YA Bible study ^a
13 Sep	YA Social
17 Sep	YA Bible study ^a

Series: Jesus the game changer

a — Location: 70-72 Ennismore Crescent, Park Orchards
Time: 7:30-9:30pm

* — State Youth Service

Discussion QUESTIONS

1. Ephesians 1:15-16 celebrates "your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints." Where have you spotted that pairing in our congregation recently?
2. Paul prays in 1:17 that God would give believers "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." How can we ask for—and recognize—that gift during worship today?
3. In 1:18-19 three riches are listed: "the hope of his calling, the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe." Which of those do you most need the Spirit to make vivid right now, and why?
4. Verse 20 says God "exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead." How does that resurrection power encourage you in a present struggle?
5. Verse 21 places Christ "far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given." Name some modern "powers" that can feel bigger than Jesus. How does his throne relativize them?
6. According to 1:22, God "subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church." What difference should that make to how we pray for and treat Christ's body?
7. If every human authority is derivative and accountable to Christ (implied in vv 22-23), how might that correct leadership abuses—and give us courage to follow godly leaders?
8. Husbands, parents, elders: what concrete step can you take this week to mirror Christ's servant-headship rather than worldly domination?
9. Those under authority: when has submitting to a Christ-like leader brought freedom instead of oppression? Share a brief example.
10. Verse 23 calls the church "his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way." How might that breathtaking identity reshape our expectations for gathered worship and scattered witness this week?

Sermon NOTES

Bible passage: _____

Date: _____



Something
that shines
from the
passage



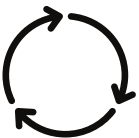
Anything
hard to
understand
or any
questions



Personal
application
for your life



Theme of passage



How does it
fit with other
passages in
the Bible



Who will you
tell about
what you have
learnt?

[illegible]

Helping HANDS

	27 July	3 August	10 August
Preacher	Chris Pretorius	Chris Pretorius	Chris Pretorius
Elder on Duty	Peter W	Kasha	Peter W
Prayer Leader	Peter W	Herman D	Peter W
Music Leader	Inge	Neil	Mia
Children's Talk	Nicky	Lize	Sarah
Bible Reader	Danika	Salme	Marlene
Sound	Nic	James	Nina
Visuals	Ene	Salme	Isaac
Broadcasting	Pieter	Cassie	Christo
Sunday School	Ilze, Sarah, Lynette	Sarah, Lynette, Lize	Sarah, Lynette, Lize
Coffee	Theron Family	Ilze & Peter Kellerman	JD & Izelle Steenkamp

Upcoming BIRTHDAYS



Leana van Gent 28 July
Suzanne Theron 30 July
Lynette Dyer 31 July
Jack Organtzoglou 1 August
Neil Bester 8 August
Anne Keegal 11 August
Telise Steenkamp 11 August
Martin van der Merwe 13 August
Marizanne van Staden 14 August
Marlene Theron 18 August
Brendina Saul 24 August

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

Who Should I Contact?

Pastor:	Chris Pretorius	0423 889 913	pastor@wpcrc.org.au
Chairman of Session:	Peter Williams	0431 500 006	session@wpcrc.org.au
Church			
Administrator:	Sarah Pretorius	0409 221 277	admin@wpcrc.org.au
Deacons:			deacons@wpcrc.org.au
Music Ministry:	Mia Van Wyk	0420 817 800	
Sound & Visuals:	Cassie Van Veen	0499 230 872	
Children's Talk:	Sarah Pretorius	0409 221 277	
Sunday School:	Sarah Pretorius	0409 221 277	
Youth Group:	Lauren Palmer	0488 453 834	youth@wpcrc.org.au
Young Adults:	Michael van der Merwe	0456 960 424	
Growth Groups:	Chris Pretorius	0423 889 913	
Prayer Chain:	Herman Linde	0411 069 808	
Facilities & Maintenance:	Dale Reed	0412 216 300	deacons@wpcrc.org.au
Outreach:	Lauren Palmer	0488 453 834	
Newsletter:	Leana Van Gent	0452 334 224	newsletter@wpcrc.org.au