

Have you had a good weekend? I wish I could say that I had a good weekend but I just can't. I think it's been quite boring actually, in fact it's probably been one of the worst 'Youth Weekends' I have been too but I'm glad it's Sunday though because that means it's almost over.

I know I'm going to leave here this afternoon feeling like I have just finished my GCSE's, I mean it was hard work being here. And when other people ask me what the weekend was like I will say, "It was alright, we had some fun and we got to stay up late but we had to read the Bible and listen to these boring teachers."

Now I'm wondering if that is how you feel this morning, you're here just for the sake of being here! Because the real question is, is that how this weekend really was? Because if that's how you felt the weekend went, then maybe you were at a different 'Youth Weekend' from the one I attended.

If I remember correctly we had great lessons from our teachers and I praise God for them all because I know the effort it takes to put a lesson together. I thank God for the Corby congregation who fed us and provided us with a place to sleep over night. I loved the Bible discussions, which challenge our lives, our thinking and our understanding of the Bible. I loved the fact that we can cut ourselves off from the world for a short while and just focus on God and being together. And 'Yes' we had fun during it all.

So let me ask you, how do you prepare for an occasion like this? I'm not talking about how the church prepares to host such an encouraging event like this. I'm talking about you, how did you prepare for this 'Youth Weekend'?

If you have been invited to a wedding, you usually plan weeks ahead to pick out the clothes your going to wear and you may even think of some nice words to say to the bride and groom on their big day. If you're attending a birthday party, you would take your time in choosing some outfit to wear and go out and buy a birthday gift for them. But if the place you're going to isn't important to you, you usually won't put much thought or effort into at all. You would hardly do any preparation for the event.

But just how much preparation did you do for this weekend? I bet you packed extra clean clothes just in case you spill some food over the one's your wearing. You probably packed some toothpaste so that you can have nice breath. You probably packed some deodorant just so that you can smell fresh everyday. And if you're a boy, I bet you packed some deodorant, hair gel, and possibly a mobile phone and a comb for your hair to keep it nice looking. And if you're a girl I bet you packed some, perfume, hairspray, a brush, lipstick, eyeliner, mascara, and possibly a small mirror, all of which fits into this tiny little hand bag.

I bet you all put a lot of effort into your preparation for this weekend. You see loved ones how you worship God depends on your preparation. But I'm not just talking about the physical preparation; I'm talking about being prepared both physically and spiritually. Because sometimes we come to worship unprepared both physically and spiritually.

We come with an unprepared attitude and it's no wonder we sing, "Restore my spirit lord, I need restored." And the reason we need restored from time to time is due to a lack of preparation. Some of you might even think this sermon wasn't very well prepared by the time you have finished hearing it. You see restoration starts with you; it starts by remembering who you are and why you are here.

So let me ask you, are you a person who weeps or are you a person who rejoices? What kind of noise do people hear coming from your lips?

Ezra 3:10-13 "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away."

Do sounds of joy come from your lips or sounds of weeping? According to the actor Will Smith everything his father did, he did for a reason. And Smith recalls: Once his dad wanted his brother Harry and him to repair a 4 metre long and 1 metre high wall in front of his business. They had to dig a 1 metre long trench first and rebuild the structure. It took six months. Years later Will's father told him why he'd given them that task. He said, "When a kid's growing up, he needs to see something that looks impossible to do, and then go out and do it. There are always going to be walls in life." Will says that, "His father helped them get over one wall, so we would never be scared to take the first step and try to do the impossible."

You see restoring God's temple probably looked like an impossible task for some of the Israelites. But they remembered who they were, they were God's people and they remembered that their focus was to be on God. And the temple wasn't to be built for God's benefit as much as it was for His people's benefit. And when you remember who you are and your purpose as a Christian then there can only be one outcome, **the sounds of joy!**

Instead of the 'Youth Weekend' was good because we got to stay up late, **it will be let me tell what I learned about this amazing God of ours.** Instead of, I go to church because church is what I do, **it will be I went to worship God this morning and it was great.** I was so encouraged; I was so uplifted as I was reminded of His love for us. I learnt that I am not alone with my struggles; I'm not the only one who feels down in the dumps and wants to give up building my relationship with God. I'm not the only one who doesn't know all **the books of the Bible** and **the apostle's names.**

You see I'm wondering how you sound this morning. I remember when I was baptised into Christ and I started to build my relationship with Him, it was pure joy. But sometimes I stop building on my relationship with Him and I lose that joy. **Ezra 3:12 "But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid."**

Why did they weep aloud? Well this new temple was going to be slightly smaller than the original temple and so they thought it wouldn't be as grand. And I'm wondering if that's you, maybe when you were first baptised into Christ, your faith was great and no wall was too big for you to get over. But now some of those walls are so big you just can't get over them.

Do you ever look back on your Christian life and remember the good times? Do you ever look back and remember the joy you had in your life as a Christian? You see when I look back at the joy I had when I was first baptised it makes me weep. I'm a weeper when I **look back** but when I **look forward** and keep my eyes focused on the Christ, the joy returns as I am reminded of who I am and what my purpose is.

You see to help us to stop looking back and weeping, God asks us to replace our old way of thinking with a new way of thinking. He asks us to set our hearts on heavenly things instead of earthly things. He asks us to replace the earthly things in our minds with heavenly things.

Colossians 3:1-3 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

I heard a story about young university student who lived on campus and his bedroom was a typical student's bedroom. There was rubbish lying all over the place, his bed was never made and his bedroom walls were just covered in posters of Marilyn Manson, and Eninem. And one day his mother came to visit him and she gave him a picture of Jesus hanging on a cross. Well two months later she went back to visit him and his room was tidy, the bed was made but what caught his mother's attention the most was his bedroom walls. There was only one picture on the wall and that was the picture of Jesus she gave him. And so she asked him, "Why"? And he said, "Well I tried to place the picture of Jesus on the wall with the others but I had to take all the others down because it just didn't seem right."

And I'm wondering today whose picture is on your wall? Have you got pictures of David Beckham on your wall? Or maybe you've a picture of Kylie or Robbie on your bedroom wall? Or what about Brad Pitt or Leonardo Decapio? Because if I was to give to you an artist impression of Jesus hanging on a cross and asked you to hang it in your bedroom wall, something would have to give, something would have to go.

It's a bit like what that television programme says, "Who goes, you decide!" Talking of television, Eastenders is getting very exciting this week isn't it? I wonder who is going to kill whom this week. Coronation Street is heating up too, isn't it? I wonder if Katie is going to get caught for murdering her father. And wow did you see Holly Oaks?

I mean it's amazing how people can tell you every single character in a television soap but they can't tell you who Ezra was. It amazes me when people can name every person who was on Big brother, but they can't tell you the names of Jesus' disciples.

Loved ones we fill our minds with junk information all the time. But renewing your mind means replacing all that junk that you have taken in over the years with the word of God. It's all about preparation, both physically and spiritually. You see when I read out the list of things you probably did for preparation for this 'Youth Weekend', there were certain things I never asked you.

Let me read out some things to you so that you can measure just how prepared for this weekend you really were. If you didn't pray to God and ask that the weekend would be a success in terms of God being glorified, you were under prepared. If you didn't pray to God and ask Him to bless the church here, so that they can cope with lots of kids and all the organisation, which is needed, then you were under prepared. If you didn't ask God to bless the teachers that they may teach the truth with conviction and help us understand our Bibles then you were under prepared. If you didn't ask God to open the non-Christian's heart, so that they might become Christians then you were under prepared.

Now what about the physical ways to prepare? If you didn't offer your Non-Christians friends a chance to come, then you were under prepared. If you weren't willing to help serve the church here in some way while you are at this weekend, then you were under prepared. And the most under prepared thing, which many people forget to do. If you didn't bring a Bible to the weekend, you are definitely under prepared.

You see loved ones it's about preparing your mind for spiritual things. Because it amazes me how many people come to "Youth weekends" and "Mid-week Bible studies" without a Bible. It amazes me how many people come to morning worship and the preacher says, "Turn your Bibles to a book, chapter and verse", and only a few people do.

I mean why are you here? Or let me put it another way; are you here to rejoice or to weep? What sound is coming from your lips? You know we're allowed to smile from time to time, it's called letting our faces know what is going on in our hearts. Psalm 104:33+34 "I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord." When was the last time you felt like that in your heart?

Now we all get tired from time to time and sometimes we just go through the routine of worship but its times like that when we need to recognise that, that maybe the very time we need to be restored. We need to remember why we are here on the Lord's Day. We need to ask God to 'Light that fire' which we sing about and ask Him to help us find that zeal we once had back into our hearts again.

You know that we are blessed with technical and scientific advances when it comes to restoration. Where people maintain and preserve works of art or a building, to prevent future damage, deterioration, or even neglect. And so sometimes these experts have to repair these works of art from further deteriorated or damage. But why do they painstakingly, hour after hour do it?

Well it's not always just because of their great monetary value; sometimes it is because they want the painting to look how it's supposed to look. And there are times when God needs to do some restoration work in our lives too, but we shouldn't be surprised if it's painful restoration work.

1 Peter 4:12+13 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

You see that's why when we sing, "Restore my spirit Lord, I need restored." were actually inviting God to do that work on our hearts. We sing it because we recognise we need some restoration work in us from time to time. We sing it because we need to remember that He is trying to get us to look like what were supposed to look like, His Son.

There was a paediatric nurse who wrote an article in a hospital magazine one time and she said that what she liked to do, a lot of times with little children when she was checking them up. When she was putting the stethoscope in their ears and when she was putting it over their heart she would let them listen. So she had a little 4-year-old boy named David, she put it over his chest, and he heard that, "Thump, thump, thump." She said, "David do you know what that sound is?" And little David paused for a moment and said, "Is that Jesus knocking?"

Well loved ones, in a way he's right. Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Now notice two things, Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me," and if you have baptised into Christ then you can be sure that Christ is living in you. And if you listen closely to your heart this morning and you've been weeping a lot lately then maybe you will hear Christ knocking on your heart too.

Paul also says that, "The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." You see God has showered us with blessings all week, from the roofs over our heads, to the clothes that we wear. And when we come together to worship Him at the start of each week, it's to remember what He has done for us and what the price of sin costs.

You see worship is a way of restoring our souls every week. It's a time to put aside all the worldly things and replace them with the godly things. And we don't worship God because we have to; we worship Him because we want to. We worship Him because of our love for Him.

Ephesians 2:3-5 "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions."

Let me ask you [when was the last time you felt alive with Christ?](#) Maybe if you haven't felt alive for a while it is because you have spent too much time with dead people, people who are dead in their transgressions and sins. Or maybe you have just forgotten what worshipping God is all about.

[Did you know that God is moved when we worship Him?](#) Turn your Bibles to the [Book of Leviticus](#). The Lord has just called Moses from the tent of meeting and He is giving Moses instructions about how the Israelites were to prepare their offerings before they offer them up to the Lord.

In [Leviticus 1:9](#) He's talking about young bulls and He says, "He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord." When He's talking about sheep and goats, He says in [Leviticus 1:13](#) "It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord." Again He says about birds in [verse 17](#), "It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord."

Now God obviously doesn't have a nose but the writer is trying to tell us that God is moved by worship. [8 volunteers, \(5 Minutes\) \(Coffee, Onions, Oranges and a nappy.\)](#) Now I'm wondering how you smell this morning.

[2 Corinthians 2:14-16](#) "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life."

[How do you smell? Do you smell of the sweet aroma of Christ or do you smell of used, dirty nappies?](#) [Romans 12:1](#) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."

You see when we live our lives the way He wants us to live our lives God is moved. Just like the offerings of the Old Testament, He is pleased. But it's not with burnt offerings and sin offerings anymore, He is pleased if we offer our very lives to Him as living sacrifices. Because He tells us that when it comes to the spiritual act of worship, that's what's required of each and every one of us.

Let me leave you with this thought. When you leave here today you will smell, now I'm not talking about bad breath or sweat. I'm talking about you will either smell of life or you will smell of death. You see when you leave here your worship to God isn't over; in fact your worship has just begun.

Let me challenge you to live for God, speak for God and smell of God. Let me challenge you to go home and tell your friends and family about what this weekend was really like and invite them to come to the next one. Let them see, feel, and know that you are just stinking. Not of the stench of death but of the pleasing fragrance of life. This world stinks loved ones and it needs more than just an air freshener, it needs us to spray the fragrance of our knowledge of Jesus all over this world.