

Step into

the River

River Guide #3

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself. (1 Corinthians 9:25- 27)

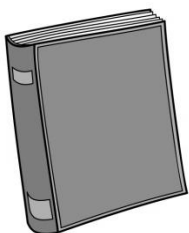
As a congregation we are entering a season of spiritual training to better prepare ourselves to be used by God in whatever He has in store for us on the path ahead. As our map on this journey we are using the imagery of the river as we all seek to move deeper in our relationship with Christ from where we are now – wherever that may be. To learn more about this river analogy surf to our website (saskatoonchurchofchrist.org) click on the “*STEP INTO THE RIVER*” banner and listen to the audio file available titled “*STEP INTO THE RIVER*”.

Our journey together will challenge us to focus on four key streams: *SCRIPTURE*, *PRAYER*, *SURRENDER* and *OUTWARD*. You do not have to follow all four streams, but the more you commit yourself to, the greater impact you will experience. Much like small tributaries flow together to create great rivers, these four streams have the potential to direct us into a spiritual flow that will shape the terrain of our lives in powerful ways.

Each week you will receive a new *RIVER GUIDE* which will lead you through the activities for each of the four streams for that week. If you miss a week the *RIVER GUIDES* can be viewed by clicking the “*STEP INTO THE RIVER*” banner on our website. Our website also contains a link to our *RIVER BLOG* (skchurch.wordpress.com) where Mike will reflect on his journey and invite you to comment on yours.

We hope you will join us for the remaining four weeks of this journey and be here to celebrate with us at its conclusion on Easter Sunday, April 4th, 2010.

Log Book



We encourage you to find a designated **Log Book** to record your thoughts in as you journey. This can be anything from a standard school notebook to a fancy diary from the book store. Anything that has two covers and is filled with empty pages. As you participate in each of the streams every day jot down your thoughts and reflections in your **Log Book**.

THE SCRIPTURE STREAM



This stream challenges you to go deep into the Word and dive into the book of Psalms. During your daily reading time, select a Psalm from the list (available on the foyer table or download it from our website) that seems to fit with where you are at that day. Read through the psalm and reflect on what it says. Then spend some time discussing with God how those words apply to your life and how you feel about what the psalm says. When you are done, check off the box in front of the psalm you have just read and repeat the exercise each day selecting another unchecked psalm to read. Be sure to list the psalm you read and your thoughts in your **Log Book**.

THE PRAYER STREAM



This stream involves several components. Create for yourself a dedicated prayer time every day. Try to meet with God at the same time every day, but if you miss your designated time it is better to make it up somewhere else in your day than skip it altogether. How long you pray is up to you, but challenge yourself to carve out more time from your schedule as the six weeks progress. During this prayer time:

- ✚ Start by spending time in silence, listening as God speaks to your heart. Strive to block out all distractions and wayward thoughts. “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (*Psalms 46:10*) Then spend time praying for:

- **The Leaders of Our Congregation** – that God will give them wisdom, discernment, courage and His blessing
- **All Those Stepping into the River** – that this will be a time of blessing to them and that they will be challenged to go deeper in their faith and their relationship with Christ
- **Any special needs** mentioned in our bulletin or during worship on Sunday
- **For people who do not know the Good News**, those who have not accepted God’s grace and those who have given Jesus full control of their life
- **For our city, country and planet.** For governments, leaders and all those with great public influence. For all those suffering due to war, hardship, hunger, disease and poverty

✚ Finally, spend time in prayer and thought over this week’s daily prayer themes.

This Week’s Daily Prayer Themes

Sunday – God’s Holiness: Holiness is one of God’s defining characteristics. It’s an essential part of who He is. In God there is a complete and total absence of evil and wrong; there is nothing in Him that is not right and true. In a fallen world where everyone has their angle, their baggage and their skeletons in the closet holiness is a difficult concept for us to wrap our minds around. Write in your **Log Book** your own definition of holiness as it applies to God. In your prayer time today ask God to reveal His holiness to you and give you a clearer understanding of it.

Monday – Your Holiness: Is holiness one of your defining characteristics? Is it an essential part of who you are? If you are a Christian then Jesus has already made your life holy, the only question that remains is will you live that way? Write in your **Log Book** what your greatest struggles are when it comes to holy living and then ask God to work in you to overcome those obstacles.

Tuesday – Holy Eyes & Ears: More than anything else, other than God's Spirit, the purity of our lives is dictated by what our eyes see and our ears hear. We cannot live out holiness if we are inputting impurity. We cannot nurture holy lives until we first weed out these influences. Ask God to reveal to you the things you are looking at and listening to that are working to corrupt and taint your mind, heart and spirit.

Wednesday – Holy Heart: A holy heart desires what is right and good, in other words a holy heart desires what God desires. A holy heart longs for the things God longs for and wants the best for everyone. Of course our own desires often conflict and overrule God's desires. Spend time talking with God about the things your heart desires and ask Him to instill His heart and desires in you.

Thursday – Holy Thoughts: Half the battle of maintaining holy thoughts is fought by controlling the input we receive from our eyes and ears. If we are filling our mind with holy things, it will think holy thoughts. The other half of the battle comes in addressing all those thoughts that seem to slip through our outer defenses. The challenge lies in identifying the impure train of thought your mind has got itself on to and exercising the discipline to get off at the very next station. It seems rare to be able to linger on unholy thoughts without falling into unholy actions. Talk with God about the places in your mind that you are most lured into loitering in. Ask Him to remind you, even jar you from pondering those impure thoughts when they do arise.

Friday – Holy Hands: Throughout history people have confused holiness with ceremony and ritual. Holy living is simply doing what is right and good in all situations. It is the uncommercialized version of "what would Jesus do" that prompts us to act as God would, to do what God would and to treat others as God would. Ask God to give you a clear understanding of His nature and to help you know **and** do what is right, good and best in **His eyes** on every occasion. Ask for the Spirit's guidance in your choices and actions.

Saturday – Holy Words: Pure speech encompasses more than avoiding swear words, it also involves the elimination of derogatory terms, racist comments, put downs, joking at another's expense, gossip, rude sarcasm, hurtful comments, judgmental remarks and anything else that tears people down instead of building them up and glorifying God. Ask God to help you identify habits and tendencies in your speech that consist of unholy words or intentions.



THE SURRENDER STREAM

Fasting is a practice that is foreign to many twenty-first century Christians, but for Jesus fasting was not a question of if, but when. (Matthew 6:16). In that spirit, each week you will be challenged to abstain from a certain item or activity. Some weeks the things you give up may actually be impeding your walk with God. Other weeks simply the act of surrendering something may prove to be of great value.

In addition to the above we also invite you to consider setting aside one day to participate in a traditional fast as well. Select one day as your fasting day, preferably the same day each week, to

conduct your fast. Begin by skipping supper one evening and consume nothing but water and unsweetened fruit juice until supper the next evening.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE CONDUCTING A FAST

- ✚ **Do not** fast if you are diabetic, hypoglycemic, are required to take medications with food, receiving treatment for an eating disorder, or are attempting to impress others.
- ✚ If you have **any** medical concerns please consult your physician before fasting.
- ✚ When fasting avoid vigorous exercise and expect some lightheadedness, bad breath and irritability.

This Week's Fast



In conjunction with our holiness prayer theme, this week's fast is from all beverages other than water. That means no coffee, tea, pop, energy drinks, juices or whatever else you would usually consume from a cup, bottle, carton, jug or can. Let the purity of each glass of water you drink be a reminder of the purity God desires in your life. Use every sip as a prompting to focus on God, the cravings you experience to remind you of God and any cash you save to honor God. Be sure to record how you feel about letting go of these things in your **Log Book**.

THE OUTWARD STREAM

This stream adds an outward dimension to our season of training. If you haven't already identified your three people to pray for/interact with, please see River Guide #1 for instructions:

This Week's Interaction

This week include each of your three people/families in your daily prayer time. Specifically ask God's blessing upon them and for opportunities to connect with their lives in meaningful ways. Ask God to reveal to you any ways that you can be an emissary of His love and grace to these people this week. Deliver cards to your two people/families from our congregations letting them know that you appreciate them and are thankful that God has made them part of our church family. Schedule an activity or meal with your third person/family for sometime this week. It can be anything that gives you an opportunity to spend time together with them. If this week is completely booked, schedule a time in for next week.

The River is

Here - Down the
mountain the river
flows and it brings
refreshing wherever
it goes. Through
the valleys and over
the fields, the river is
rushing, *THE RIVER*
IS HERE. The river
of God sets our feet to
dancing. The river of God
fills our hearts with cheer.
The river of God fills our
mouths with laughter and
WE CAN REJOICE FOR THE
RIVER IS HERE. The river of
God is teeming with life and all
who touch it can be revived. And
all who linger on this river's shore
will come back thirsting for more of
the Lord. The river of God sets our
feet to dancing. The river of God
fills our hearts with cheer. The river
of God fills our mouths with laughter
and *WE CAN REJOICE FOR THE*
RIVER IS HERE. Up to the mountain
we love to go to find the presence of the
Lord. Along the banks of the river we run,
we dance with laughter, giving praise to the
Son. The river of God sets our feet to dancing.
The river of God fills our hearts with cheer. The
river of God fills our mouths with laughter and
WE CAN REJOICE FOR THE RIVER IS HERE.