



Step into

the River

River Guide #4

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 in the midst of 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 final three weeks of this journey and be here to celebrate with us at its conclusion on Easter Sunday, April 8th, 2012.



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 final 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 – Missionaries: Our congregation is directly involved in numerous mission works and indirectly connected to several others. Spend your prayer time today focusing your thoughts on the people involved in these mission works. Ask for God's protection and blessing on these workers. Ask for good health, full financial support, comfort while separated from family members and effectiveness in their kingdom work. Some of the mission works to remember include: **McMillans** – NE India; **Sass** – Salvador, Brazil; **Krogsgaards** – Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico; **Summer Project** – Maneadero, Mexico; **Naresh** – Siliguri, India; **Tualdouthang**, Manipur, India; **Swami** – Kolkata, India; **Brighter Academy 2**, Khumbong, India; **Village of Hope**, Ghana, Africa.

Monday – Christian Calling Card: Jesus stated that the calling card of Christianity would be the unity of the church and our care for each other. Unfortunately over the centuries the church has often been better known for its bitter divisions than its loving unity. Spend time discussing with God the importance He places on unity of the church. Consider what unity in the church (or the lack there of) communicates to non-Christians.

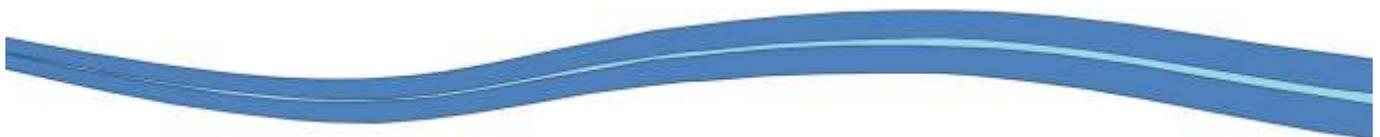
Tuesday – Broken 1: The list of things that Satan uses to disrupt and destroy the unity of God's church is endless. Make a list in your **Log Book** of things that might threaten the unity of the church and then pray through your list. Reflect on whether you have ever contributed to division in the church in any of these ways. Ask God's forgiveness for time in the past that you have put other things above maintaining the unity of His church and ask for the guidance to avoid doing so again in the future.

Wednesday – Broken 2: Sometimes the unity of the church can be strained by actions and events that you personally had very little control over. The actions of others can create a rift between us whether we like it or not. Discuss with God the things that have separated you from others in the church and (regardless of who caused the separation) ask Him to show you ways to mend, heal and restore those rifts.

Thursday – Build: They say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When it comes to relationships you can multiply this axiom exponentially. Nurturing loving relationships built on the common foundation of our faith in Jesus is the very heart and soul of unity in the church. Seek God's counsel on what you can do to build and nurture your relationships with others in our congregation. Ask Him to fill you with love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Ask Him to inspire you to strengthen existing ties and give you the courage and drive to establish and build new ties as well.

Friday – Elders & Ministers: Our leader's desire is to see our congregation become a vibrant and growing place of faith in Jesus. They seek to lead in a way that is Christ-like and God honoring. Spend time today thanking God for the leaders He has given us and ask His protection on them and their families as they serve this congregation. Ask God to give them wisdom, tender hearts and the conviction to follow His leading above all else.

Saturday – Workers: Servant-hearted people are the arms and legs of the church. God has blessed this congregation with many people who are willing the help out whenever and wherever they are needed. Jot down the names of those who first come to mind when you read the previous sentence in your **Log Book**. Spend time thanking God individually for each of these people and the Kingdom work they do. Ask God to cultivate a servant heart in even more of our congregation and discuss with Him your current level of service and involvement in His work.



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



This week we will be submitting in silence. **As much as it is possible**, avoid sounds and words. Outside what is **required** by work and school, give up reading and listening music. As much as you can, without being impolite, limit how much you talk as well. Use every quiet moment as a prompting to focus on God, the urges 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. If you didn't complete your Outward Stream assignments from last week, be sure to do so this week. Next week you will be challenged to invite your third person/family to join us to celebrate Easter Sunday on April 4th. Spend some extra time in prayer this week asking God for courage accept the challenge and wisdom to present the invitation in the best way possible. Also ask God to be working in your third person's/family's heart(s) to be open to the invitation when it is given. Please also pray for those leading and preparing our Easter service.

*River
of Praise*

**Praise is flow-
ing like a *MIGHTY
RIVER*. Praise is
flowing to Your Holy
throne. Praise is flow-
ing for the love You've
given. And praise is
flowing from my heart
to yours. The rocks will
cry out and the mountains
will shout. The whole earth
will sing of Your glory. I'll lift
Your Name and I'll sing of Your
grace. For You put this love in
my heart. And you gave my life
a new start. Praise is flowing
like a *MIGHTY RIVER*. Praise
is flowing to Your Holy throne.
Praise is flowing for the love
You've given. And praise is
flowing from my heart to yours.
The seas will resound, let the
music abound. As all nature joins
into the chorus. *THE RIVER FLOWS
STRONG* and our song must go on. For
God is still ruling on High. The creator
and giver of life. Praise is flowing like
a *MIGHTY RIVER*. Praise is flowing
to Your Holy throne. Praise is flowing
for the love You've given. And praise
is flowing from my heart to yours.**