

We at St Luke's are in unusual times following Matthew's announcement on Sunday morning that he will be leaving St Luke's in May to take up the position of Diocesan Director of Ordinands for Bath & Wells.

We have been so blessed to have had Matthew and Stephanie and the family with us for the past 15 years; we will need to take time to come to terms with this sad news. Take the time you need.

Can I suggest that we begin this week's Home Group meetings with a time of prayer, in grateful thanks for the Godly leadership Matthew has modelled for us, for the many God given gifts that he has shared with us, for the warmth and friendship he and Stephanie have extended to us?

As we noted, Nehemiah's leadership was marked by (at least) 7 qualities which we have been privileged to see modelled in Matthew. Perhaps this is a good time to consider how we too can develop these qualities in our own lives.

- 1) Prayerfulness. Paul urged the Thessalonians '*Rejoice always, prayer continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*' 1 Th 5.16
Is this the way our prayer lives look? Let's consider taking the opportunity during Lent to make a fresh start with our prayer lives.
- 2) Guided by God. We noted that Nehemiah's heart, mind, body and spirit were fully committed to God's will for him. Proverbs 3.6 tells us '*in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.*'. Are we fully submitted and committed to seeking the Lord's will for our lives? What might we begin to do differently during Lent to enable us to be more attuned to God's direction for us? Please share any helpful experiences of hearing God's voice or sensing His leading in particular ways.
- 3) Wisdom. In what areas of our lives are we especially in need of God's wisdom just now? Let's pray for one another using Paul's prayer in Ephesians ch 1: '*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe*'
- 4) Focussed. Nehemiah was passionate about the things that really mattered, especially the honour of God. What are our top priorities? Do you think we have them rightly ordered? Paul urges the Colossians '*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God*'. *It is so easy to be distracted and disheartened by the storms of life.* Let's take these weeks of Lent to reset our hearts to focus on the things above.
- 5) Inspirational. Thank God for leaders who have inspired you in your life of faith. Who are you inspiring to follow in the way of Christ?
- 6) Strong. Resilient. Robust. In what areas of our lives do we need to experience God's strength; His resilience; where do we need to become more robust? How well do we handle uncomfortable issues and awkward conversations. How could we develop strength in these areas?
- 7) A great team player who led from the front. Where do we see opportunities to bless leaders and team members we know and encourage people to '*work with all their hearts*'. (Neh.4.16). We will need encouragement in the coming days. Jesus told us '*in this world you will have trouble; but take heart. I have overcome the world.*' John 16.33.
Let's give Him thanks and praise.

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