

Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light
Jesus
Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song
Jesus
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus
Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

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Happy Birthday Tabby (19th May)



Lord, we praise you for the beautiful colours taking centre stage in nature. Be the centre and focus of our worship today. We pray for all those struggling with difficulties and hardship, whether pain, anxiety, or situations of war and unrest. We pray particularly for the peace of Jerusalem, and surrounding areas at this time. Bring peace to your world, and into our lives today. We open our hearts in faith to hear your speaking voice. In Jesus name, Amen.

Colossians Ch 1: 13-20

13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14**in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16**For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **17**He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18**And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19**For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20**and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Some context and back ground to our theme...

God has always wanted to dwell among his creation with his people, and be at the centre of their lives. We see this in the garden of Eden when God would walk with Adam and Eve each day, but we know that sin blocked human beings from being in the presence of God. Human hearts have been hiding from God ever since.

Jump forward approximately 2.5 thousand years and we see over two million Jewish people wandering in the desert on their way to the promised land after God had rescued them from Egypt. We see God among them, leading them from the front in the form of a pillar of cloud to guide them by day and a pillar of fire behind them at night. **Exodus 13:21-22**

God then gave them specific instructions on how to set up camp whenever they temporarily settled somewhere, and at the centre of the camp was a place reserved for the tabernacle -

a moveable tent where the people were to gather to worship God. **Exodus 25:8**

Tabernacle means to “dwell” and it was built as a temporary place where God would dwell within the central holiest place where the people would be shielded from the power and glory of his presence.

Through the sacrificial burnt offerings that were to be made at the tabernacle, the

people learned the gravity of their sin and how much they needed a saviour. In the same way that you cannot be casual or flippant around nuclear power, it was no casual thing for the people to come into the presence of God safely.

The most holy place within the tabernacle - and later the more permanent temple - where God’s presence would be centred was separated by a thick curtain, a barrier through which only the high priest could enter once a year to atone for the sins of the people

Throughout the centuries, human sin continued to be an obstruction to drawing close to God and people *kept* taking God’s presence for granted until we read in **Ezekiel 10** that God stopped dwelling among them and removed his glory from the temple.



Here's where it gets really awesome! God's love never stops pursuing humanity, and it was his plan to ultimately enable us to have access to him and be with him, and he with us anytime, anywhere, without the monstrous obstruction of our sin - just as it had been in the beginning!

Jesus the Son of God became flesh and was given the name Emmanuel which means God with us. He lived among us without sin and then sacrificed himself for sin, and rose from death, so that human beings could dwell with God forever.

When Jesus died, something happened. The thick curtain in the temple, the barrier was supernaturally ripped from top to bottom, opening the way into the most holy place, the presence of God.



...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... Hebrews 10: 19-20

No more pillar of cloud or fire, no more tent, no more temple, no more sacrificial lambs, no more barrier.

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to Heaven, he asked the Father to give believers His Holy Spirit to be with them and to dwell *in* them. God, through his Holy Spirit now dwells in our hearts through faith, at the very centre of our lives . We are now the living temple where God resides, until that day when he returns in permanence.

John 1:14 tells us that Jesus came and temporarily tabernacled with us. We see in Revelation 21 that future permanence, the full circle of God dwelling at the centre of his people

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Our desire as a church is to experience the presence of God as we meet together and to

Make Jesus Central, with spirit led prayer and worship at the heart of all we do.

This is the second of our core values. For Jesus to be at the centre of all we do, it means that his ways govern all aspects of our lives and decision making. We no longer get to independently run our own lives, but surrender our whole self to Jesus, following his lead.

Why does Jesus want to be at the centre of our lives?

What about what I want, my dreams, my plans, my expectations for my life?

Let's take a quick look at the magnitude and the credentials of just who it is that desires to have the central place in our lives, and we just might find that our dreams and plans fade into insignificance compared with having Jesus in the driving seat.

Our reading taken from Colossians gives us some of the unique credentials of Jesus....

He is the image of the invisible God, God clothed in flesh! The one who existed before creation, the one by whom everything was created and for whom it was all created throughout the whole cosmos; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. It's the visible things that are most accessible to us as human beings and which vividly illustrate his power, wisdom and goodness, and for these he is worthy of our worship. Light and darkness, sky and land, plants and trees, sun, moon and stars; sea creatures, birds, animals, insects and every other life form. The whole world and everything in it, including humanity - distinct from the animals and created in the image of God - is a product of God's mind, his purposes and of his words which not only specified everything he made, but powerfully brought them into existence. He controls and masters all things because they are made to his exact specification.

He also designed and controls all things invisible; we can only scratch the surface as we study the laws of physics, biology, astronomy etc not to mention the vastness of the spiritual, unseen energy forces that exist all around us. He is the one and only ever to come through death as the first born from the dead. No super-good person, no spiritual guru, no founder of any religion or movement, no dictator or any ruler, however powerful has ever defied death. Only Jesus has supremacy in all things. Only in Jesus is the fullness of God replicated by which he is able to reconcile all things to himself and bring humanity into the presence of God and the presence of God into the centre of each life that acknowledges him as the Son of God who came into the world.



**Rooted in the authority of the Bible,
with Jesus central in all we do.**

Jesus wants to be at the centre of our lives, because that was the reason he created us. We were created by him and only he truly knows and understands who we were created to be. He loves us and wants nothing more than to be with the ones he loves.

Can I trust him with my life?

In **Thessalonians 3:3** we see another important aspect of putting Jesus at the centre of our lives.... **He is faithful, He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.**

In trusting God with our lives, there will be times when he takes us way out into very deep waters where from our perspective, the waves look very big, very scary and there appears to be no safe harbour in sight. It's in those times that the true magnitude of what it means to have God at the



centre of our lives hits home and becomes very precious. The hope that he brings when life gets difficult is beyond comprehension until we find ourselves safe in him, whatever life throws at us.

Have you ever watched the television programme, “The Dragons Den?”

The dragons are a panel of extremely successful, influential business men and women looking to invest their credentials, experience, expertise, connections and wealth into budding entrepreneurs who can successfully deliver a credible pitch, and demonstrate a sound, viable product and business that has great potential. In return for their investment, the dragon will take a percentage of their company.

It's interesting to note the different responses when an entrepreneur is made an offer by one of the dragons. Some refuse the offer, because the percentage of the business required by the dragon would give them more control than they are willing to give away, and others receive the offer, with awed amazement because they recognise the doors that can open for them because of who the dragon is, and what it will mean having their credentials at the centre of their business.

You get the picture! By allowing God to bring his credentials and investment into our lives, we are opening our lives to a much bigger story, than anything we could experience by doing life on our own. What percentage of our lives does he require? 100%. Giving Jesus 100% control of our lives actually leads us to total freedom, not minions or pawns, but as multi-faceted giants of faith!

What are the Keys to making Jesus central in all we do?

This is something that's very easy to say, but much harder to do!

Placing Jesus on the throne in our lives is a daily, ongoing discipline because it doesn't come naturally to us, and the pressures and busyness of life can take all our focus

As with all our church core values, it is Jesus that we turn to as our example and inspiration. There is no doubt that the relationship Jesus had with his Father was at the centre of his life and his ministry, so how did he keep that focus in the face of huge crowds all clamouring for his attention, constantly surrounded by suffering and human brokenness, subjected to all the same temptations that we are; without a place to call his own and often tired, where was his focus ?

Upwards - He made it a priority to spend time in God's presence, cutting off distractions and noise and finding places of solitude to refuel his spiritual tanks and physically rest in order to be resourced to deal with stuff as it came up. One time, while Jesus was busy ministering into the life of a woman whose relationships had all fallen apart, the disciples returned and urged him to eat something, " **But He told them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." So the disciples asked one another, "Could someone have brought Him food? My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me ... John 4: 32-34**

Even in a time of giving out, and physically hunger, his inner resources from his time with God were sustaining him.

God's presence = God's power!

If that is how Jesus lived, we cannot possibly settle for less and expect the joy and peace of mind that comes from Jesus being at the centre. Instead we will become frazzled and burnt out. Keeping our lives in balance in our crazy business is a constant challenge and sometimes it's really important to reassess our priorities if we want to stay on track

Inwards - Within himself, Jesus knew from his study of the scriptures exactly who he was and what his purpose was. The moment we forget who we are 'in Christ' and get side tracked into all kinds of things -even good things that are not part of what God has called us to do, then Jesus is not at the centre. I love the fact that Jesus never lost that sense of focus coming from who he was. We talked last week about being rooted in God's Word and Jesus knew exactly how his life fitted within the frame work of scripture through his study of them and his time spent in the presence of his Father.



Outwards - The result of his upwards focus and his inward realisation of who he was, was a life that was able to flow outward to others in his ministry and calling to preach the gospel, heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, bind up the broken hearted and set the captives free.

These are the keys as demonstrated by Jesus to a God-centred life. There will always be stuff fighting for that central position in our lives and so the strategy of Jesus needs to be our strategy. Wonderfully, he understands our weaknesses, and he accepts us and forgives us when he is not at the centre. He picks us up, heals our wounds and comes to restore us over and over again.

How do we make Jesus central when we meet together?

We often walk into a service not ready to worship!
We need some time to centre ourselves and focus.
We're frustrated with our kids, our spouse,
dis-illusioned with work, stressed about what's
going on or deadlines we have to meet. We're
worried or depressed, carrying anxiety or burdens;
we may be grieving or had a horrible week.



What's your focus?
CIRCUMSTANCES
or
God?

We can come just as we are to worship and those moments at the beginning of our worship together are critical. We have the opportunity to centre our hearts and release everything else demanding our attention into the hands of God whom we are about to encounter. Then as our praise begins to rise, we find our focus turning back to him, hope stirs within us as hearts return- from wherever the week has scattered them- back to Jesus, the one who has supremacy over all things.

We focus upwards, opening our hearts to the awesome presence of God with reverence and respect. We focus inwardly on what God is saying to us through his word, and emerge with a renewed outward focus on the lost, the broken hearted, those in need of healing or deliverance from bondage.

These are the keys to keeping Jesus at the centre of all we do, and with Jesus at the centre, our prayers and our worship will flow and blend together in sincerity and gratitude as the Holy Spirit within us leads us and presents our prayers and worship to God. We find ourselves taken deeper into the love of God, inspired by the greatness of who it is that we have surrendered the control of our lives to, and our ability to trust him is increased as Jesus takes centre stage in our meeting together.

Jesus is at the centre of it all, and he desires to be at the centre of our hearts and our worship as we meet together. One day, every knee will bow in his presence and we have the awesome privilege of choosing to do so now, voluntarily.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit, be with us all now, and evermore. Amen.