

Step into

the River

River Guide #2

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)

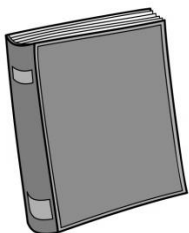
As a congregation we are entering a season of spiritual training to better prepare ourselves to be used by God in whatever He has in store for us on the path ahead. As our map on this journey we are using the imagery of the river as we all seek to move deeper in our relationship with Christ from where 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 five 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 – My Freedom: Jesus’ death on the cross freed us from sin, but God’s desire is to also free you from all the other things that attempt to hold you hostage: guilt, hate, resentment, greed, lust, anger and the list could go on & on. In your **Log Book** make a list of the things your

relationship with God has freed you from so far and a list of things you still want to be able to break free from. Share your feelings with God about both of these lists.

Monday – My Stuff: We live in a society where things of convenience feel essential. Whether it's your I-phone, your PC, your vehicle or even your house we are being subtly programmed daily to think we need a newer, faster, bigger (or smaller), nicer, better version of everything. We are so easily enslaved by these desires and the inevitable discontentment and debt that accompany them. Discuss your material cravings with God and ask for His wisdom, guidance and restraint when it comes to your quest to acquire. Also seek His assistance in digging out of any holes you currently find yourself in and His strength to make necessary sacrifices.

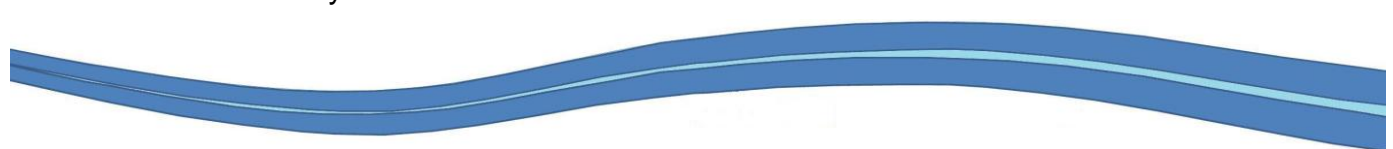
Tuesday – My Thoughts: Actions are brain byproducts. Attempting to change or control one's actions without first addressing one's mind is merely treating the symptoms without diagnosing the disease. Ask God to control, shape & transform your thought processes. Invite Him to interrupt your thoughts when your mind is lingering in places it shouldn't. Confess to Him the thoughts you have the most difficult time weeding out.

Wednesday – My Habits: Some actions are impulsive, but many others are habitual. What patterns of behavior exist in your life in such a way that they have almost become part of who you are? How do those habits hinder your relationship with God, fight against your obedience to Him or limit your ability to serve Him? Discuss these behaviors with God and ask Him to help break you of any habits that are unhealthy or do not glorify Him.

Thursday – My Relationships: Perhaps nothing weighs heavier on us than broken relationships. The sadness, guilt, shame and frustration of strained relationships can be as oppressive as the sturdiest shackles. Invite God into the heart of all your relationships: friendships, marriages, parent/child or church family. Allow Him to show you what you can do to mend & improve these relationships and to assure you of what things are not your burden to bear. Ask God to connect you with whatever people/resources you need to get your relationships back on track and to start the healing process. Also request His protection over all your other relationships as well.

Friday – My View of Me: In Philippians, Paul encourages Christians to look not only to their own needs, but the needs of others as well. No message could possibly be more counter-cultural to our modern society. Discuss with God how you can become as passionate about the welfare of others as you are about yourself. Ask Him eliminate selfishness from your spirit and eradicate apathy and indifference from your heart.

Saturday – My View of Others: Prejudice extends beyond racial differences. It's so easy to, almost subconsciously, discriminate between people based on their intellect, income or social standing. We have an ingrained tendency to shy away from those who are different than us in whatever way. Ask God to reveal to you any inappropriate attitudes or perspectives that may have crept into your heart unnoticed. Spend time asking for God's blessing specifically on people who are different than you.



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 fast from electronics. Starting Monday morning, other than work/school, avoid use of your computer TV, VCR, DVD, MP3 player, i-Anything, gaming systems (x-box, wii, DS etc) and any other electronic devices. Consider what entices you to occupy so much of your attention with these items. Use the time you would have spent 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. You will begin by identifying three people for who you will pray and with whom you will interact in specific ways over the six weeks we journey together. If you haven't already done so, 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. Make a point to have at least one conversation with each of your three people/families this week that goes beyond "Hi, how are you?" and delves into the more personal of issues work, family and life.

Psalms

63 : 1 - 8

O God, you are
my God, earnestly
I seek you; my soul
thirsts for you, my
body longs for you,
IN A DRY & WEARY
LAND WHERE THERE
IS NO WATER. I have
seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and
your glory. Because *YOUR*
LOVE IS BETTER THAN
LIFE, my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my
hands. My soul will be satisfied
as with the richest of foods; with
singing lips my mouth will praise
you. On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches
of the night. Because you are my
help, I sing in the shadow of your
wings. My soul clings to you; your
right hand upholds me.