



Step into

the River

River Guide #5

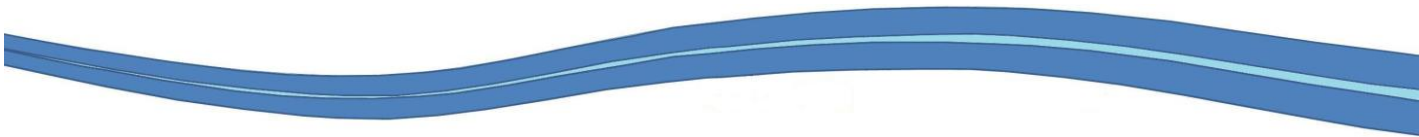
Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert 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)

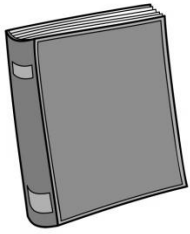
As a congregation we are in the midst of a season of spiritual training to better prepare ourselves to be used by God in whatever He has in store for us on the path ahead. As our map on this journey we are using the imagery of the river as we all seek to move deeper in our relationship with Christ from 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 two 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 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 – Kids & Teens: Lift up our kids and teens (individually and by name if possible). Ask for God's protection and presence in their lives as they learn about Him and build their relationship with Him. Ask Him to care for them as they strive to live Christ-like lives in a world that pushes them to do otherwise. Ask a special blessing on parents and those who teach our Sunday School classes and lead our youth activities.

Monday – Worship: Ask for God's presence to be felt among us when we gather to worship. Ask for His blessing and leading be upon those who lead our times of praise. Talk with God about the need for our hearts and minds to be overflowing with adoration of Him. Discuss with God how we can express our worship with both heartfelt exuberance and genuine reverence.

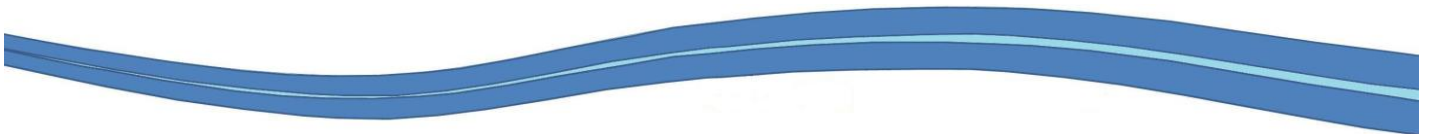
Tuesday – Fellowship: Ask God to 'bind us together with bonds that cannot be broken'. Request that the Spirit work among us to mend broken fences and rebuild burnt bridges. Ask God to nurture in each one of us a love for each other that mirrors His love for each one of us. Consider how our church family can become a close-knit, loving and caring place but at the same time remain open, accepting and inviting to all new-comers.

Wednesday – Discipleship: Jesus instructed us to go into all the world and make disciples, not merely pew fillers or even financial contributors. Discuss with God what we need to be doing to follow this instruction. Ask Him to reveal how we can engage people and help them journey to becoming disciples of Jesus. Spend time pondering who He may be calling you to walk alongside in this process.

Thursday – Service: Consider how much of Jesus ministry was spent caring for the needs of others. Discuss with God how that compares to the amount of time and energy we dedicate to caring for the needs of those around us. If you find a disparity talk to God about what needs to change (whether in heart or in practice) to narrow that gap. Ask Him to give us the desire to prioritize the needs of others as He does, eyes to see the needs of those around us and the courage and humility required to take action.

Friday – Outreach: Sharing the message of Jesus is often a challenging and sometimes intimidating thing. Search your heart and write in your **Log Book** all the things that steer you away from sharing the Good News with those around you. Discuss each item on your list with God and ask Him to reveal to you what must change to eliminate those obstacles. Ask God to instill in us as a group a passion for the lost that refuses to let us opt out of sharing His message. Ask Him to give us opportunities to reach out to people with His message and love and to give us the will to make the most of each of those opportunities when they come.

Saturday – Moving Deeper: Spend time today talking with God about those who are seeking Him. Ask Him to move in their lives even before they know it is Him they are looking for. Mention specifically people in your life who are at this stage of their journey and ask God to be working in their hearts. Also spend time discussing with God those who have been a part of our group for some time but have been hanging in the shallows. Ask the Spirit to move them to explore deeper waters in their relationship with Jesus and their commitment to following Him. Thank God for the people in both these groups and the steps they have taken thus far and ask His blessing on the steps they have ahead as they continue to journey.



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 you are challenged to forgo all forms of recreation, hobbies and past times. These things are most likely not inherently bad, (in fact re-creation is a very godly idea), but contemplate how they may be distracting you from your spiritual walk, and for just this one week focus on turning to God for renewal and regeneration. 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. 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. Bake or buy three dozen cookies (or the equivalent in pies, donuts, brownies or whatever works for you) and put one dozen on each of three plates. Deliver one plate to each of your three people/families. On the plates being delivered to the two people/families from our congregation, attach a note wishing them a good week. Attach the invitation included with this week's **River Guide** to the plate delivered to your third person/family.

Overflow

Let the *RIVER*
run wild and
free. The *RIVER*
of Your love for
me. Fill my heart
and my soul, till it
overflows. I've got
a story to tell and I
am learning you've
got a story as well;
flowing through us,
making us who we are.
And just like a *RIVER*
that runs the story of Jesus
comes into our hearts so
that we can know a love so
great it will overflow! Let the
RIVER run wild and free. The
RIVER of Your love for me. Fill
my heart and my soul, till it over-
flows. This is the time to be real.
This is the time to for courage. Time
for going deeper still. For letting go
into His will. Let the *RIVER* run wild
and free. The *RIVER* of Your love for me.
Fill my heart and my soul, till it overflows.
Let the *RIVER* run wild and free. The *RIVER*
of Your love for me. Fill my heart and my soul,
till it overflows. Overflow, let me overflow.
Fill my heart and my soul, till it over f lows.