

# BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF W.A.

For the Testimony and Glory of Jesus Christ

24 January 2021

## SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

### 1 The Lord Is in His Holy Temple

The Lord is in His holy temple, The Lord is in His holy temple: Let all the earth keep silence, Let all the earth keep silence before Him Keep silence, keep silence before Him. Amen.

### 2 Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

### 3 Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

### 4 The Lord Bless You and Keep You

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord lift His countenance upon you, and give you peace, and give you peace; The Lord make His face to shine upon you, And be gracious unto you, And be gracious unto you, be gracious, The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen.

Preparatory Hymn

RHC 540 We're Marching to Zion

The Lord Is in His Holy Temple 1

Call to Worship

Deacon Eugene Leong

\*Hymn

RHC 93 To God Be the Glory

\*Invocation/The Lord's Prayer & Gloria Patri 2

Responsive Reading

Psalm 15:1-5

Hymn

RHC 379 O for a Faith That Will Not Shrink

\*Doxology 3/Offertory Prayer

Scripture Reading

2 Peter 3:18

Hymn

RHC 113 It Is Glory Just to Walk with Him

Pastoral Prayer/Message

Pastor Joseph Poon

## Grow For the Glory of God

\*Hymn

RHC 414 Is Your All on the Altar?

\*Benediction/Threefold Amen

Announcements

\*The Lord Bless You and Keep You 4

\*Congregation Standing



**THEME FOR 2021: GROW IN GRACE AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST**

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen”. (2 Peter 3:18)

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# PASTORAL LETTER

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## The advantages and downsides of using electronic Bibles.

Dear BPCWA worshipper, Technology is almost an indispensable part of our life today. When once phones only sat in our homes, today handphones sit in our pockets. The convenience is undeniable – being contactable on the go, being able to search for the nearest petrol stations when your car is low on gas, paying for purchases through your handphones . . . the list goes on. The handphone has become the one device that one not only carries about when they're out, it often is the device that is carried about with you even when you're in the house too! With the convenience that it offers, it is no surprise that most Christians have a Bible application installed on their handphone too. Bible apps offer many convenient features, such as a verse of the day, searches, bookmarks, notes, underlines or highlights of verses, and even commentaries. Are the days of the printed Bible numbered? Should Christians then just switch to using handphone Bibles altogether? With electronic Bibles being prevalent on handheld devices, it is good for the Christian to be conscious of the advantages and also downsides of their usage.

**The usefulness of electronic Bibles.** We are not against technology, as we do promote its role and importance in the church and its outreach. 1) Portability. This by far is the reason why many use their handphones for reading the Bible. With how compact handphones are and how much it has become a part of their lives, it also means that we can now read the Bible almost anywhere. If we are caught in a traffic jam while on public transport, we can take out our handphones and read a Psalm or a chapter from Proverbs while waiting for the traffic to clear. This is way better than counting the number of cars that pass you, or just chatting with your friend on WhatsApp. If you are out evangelizing, or happen to be talking to a friend over lunch when the conversation turns to Christianity, you can take out your handphone and show them the verses from the Bible. This is especially useful for those times when you may not naturally be carrying a Bible with you. 2) Quick search in a short time. Almost all electronic Bibles come with a search function. There are times when you may need a verse to encourage someone with, or to show them what God's Word says about a certain subject or topic, when the search function comes in handy. 3) Different language options. I carry and use an English Bible. However, there may be times whereby I may be ministering to someone and they read Chinese.

In such cases, a Chinese Bible comes in useful if that's what they are referring to. As I teach, I also turn to the original texts, namely Hebrew and Greek. So, having these Bible versions readily available allows me to refer to the word that is used as God used it, especially if I am not at home and don't have these Bibles with me. Carrying around different language Bibles is not something that most of us do, as it can make our bags quite heavy and unmanageable. Having it on our handphones or other handheld electronic device allows us to have these tools available without increasing the weight of our bags. Indeed, we must be thankful for technology that allows us to have God's Word in our hands almost all the time and everywhere we go!

**The downsides of using electronic Bibles.** But before you run out and buy more electronic gadgets to store more Bibles in them, read on. Just as with other usages of technology, electronic Bibles do come with disadvantages and even potential undesirable outcomes that we must consider. 1) It increases distractions. With the prevalence of technology, most have not merely a handheld device, but these devices are generally connected to the internet. Whether it is connection via wifi or mobile data, it is for the purpose of "staying connected", either to the world around, or to others. So, we are reachable almost anytime and anywhere, and can likewise reach others easily too, often without leaving our seats or even lifting our heads. Social media is designed to be instant and to encourage you to be instant too. That is just its nature. A message coming in pops up and may even flash across your screen even if you have no intention to read it. Those few words that you read is sufficient to tease your mind and tempt you to read it, think about it, and respond to it on the spot. That train of thought where you were meditating upon God's word is suddenly broken. After that, chances are, you cannot remember what it was about or what you were thinking of. It breaks the train of thought. If you are using it in church, it may also catch the eye of your family members sitting next to you. Hence, not just one person is distracted, but others too. In short, it makes it difficult for meditation. Have you come across how unbelievers meditate? They basically *go away and be quiet and are told to leave their electronic devices behind*. If unbelievers take their time to concentrate that seriously, that must be the case for believers when it comes to God's word too. We are to meditate upon His word in our hearts. God speaks of a prayer closet. The idea is that of making the effort to remove potential distractions. 2) It makes it too easy to be. . . Aussies have a phrase that is commonly used today - "too easy". Yes, electronic Bibles can be in a sense "too easy" too. (a) Too easy to get distracted. Last year, the Sydney Morning Herald

reported, “Major distraction: school dumps iPads, returns to paper textbooks” after 5 years of trial because digital devices actually hindered learning due to the distractions they bring alongside with it. If you had left your electronic device in your bag, chances are, you’d not have seen that blinking light, or felt that vibration that told you that you had received a message, or noticed a calendar reminder, a news flash, and hence was tempted to read it. Whether it is during worship, or Bible studies in church, or even at home during your quiet time, this distraction is all too real. (b) Too easy to pretend. Whether at home or during a Bible study, are you or your child reading the Bible or reading something on social media? Are you or your child making sermon notes or typing a message to a friend? Are you or your child looking up Bible passages or surfing the internet? Electronic Bibles significantly increase the temptations and ease of succumbing to them since you think you can hide your actions. The reality is others can often see. And it is very stumbling. I am not saying that a person using a hardcopy Bible is always concentrating and is not doodling away on a hardcopy note book. But the temptation and range of available distractions are significantly less to yourself with hardcopy Bible usage.

3) It can make you lazy. Because it’s so easy, it’s too easy to be lazy. (a) Too lazy to memorise. The Old Testament Christians only had parchments or scrolls which were read to them. Yet, the Bible instructs them in Deuteronomy 6 to always have God’s Word in their homes, their conversations, their lives. How could they do so if they had no Bible? Memorisation is often needed, if copying was not available. Today, with the ease of electronic searches, and because your handphone is always with you, we get lazy. Yes, let our children memorise their memory verses. We’ll even drill them on it. But for ourselves? There’s no need... there’s always my handphone. If so then, parents, what message are we telling our children? Child, when you grow up and get your handphone, there’s no need to memorise memory verses. You think – “I can always bookmark my favourite verses and pull them up when I want/ need to. Why go through that bother of memorisation when all these features are available?” Well, for the simple reason that the Bible tells us “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Ps 119:11) Just as the memory of a parent’s voice warning the child of danger will resound in their mind when that danger comes, God’s word hidden ie memorised their hearts (not bookmarked on their handphones) will resound in their hearts when they face temptation. (b) Too lazy to carry. Let us be honest with ourselves. Why do we turn to our handphones? Because we don’t have to carry the extra “weight” of the Bible. When we go on holidays, we are happy to pack a few pairs of shoes, our tech gadgets, heavy makeup bags . . . but no, our Bibles are too heavy. Is it because you use a large print Bible that weighs a kilogram?

No, you will not even pack your regular Bible that weighs ½ kg or less. Yet, you may pack school books, magazines, and other non-essentials. (c) Too lazy to memorise the books of the Bible. Adults, is this why you use your electronic device? Would you be as adept in flipping to the lesser-known books of the Bible as your children are required to do during their Sunday School classes? (d) Too easy to lose context of a passage. A very important learning aspect you gain from hardcopy Bibles is the preciseness of being able to see the context and overall thrust easily from opened pages. Scrolling back and forth on an electronic Bible typically results in a hazy “general idea” of that passage at best. Over time, you can lose the important benefit of reading the Bible with a good overview of the passage in the entire chapter due to limited screen size. Even abc10 news reported last year on the “disruptive effect that scrolling has on comprehension” (e) Too easy for your child and others to follow suit. Since you use electronic Bibles at worship and Bible, what moral authority do you carry when you need to tell your child or encourage someone that he should use hardcopies when you know that they are not just reading the Bible but doing other things while sitting under a sermon being preached?

Brethren, we are not against electronic Bibles especially in particular situations, namely for doing quick checks on something and quick searches. But I hope that you are now acquainted with some pitfalls as well. They are the common and real issues that arise from using electronic Bibles, especially during worship and Bible studies, and even during your personal studies (more next week). Let us embrace the principle of choosing what is most excellent, especially when we are in situations where the cons outweigh the pros, so “that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Php 1:10)

Yours in our Lord’s service,

Pastor

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAISE & PETITION**

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- 1. Adelphe and Adelphe Bible Study (Today, 3:30 pm):** Pastor will continue to teach the Christian man and woman to help them understand the correct biblical principles regarding the roles of men and women in the church. All worshippers are encouraged to attend. Please arrive only after 3:15 pm to allow sufficient time for the earlier Worship Service to conclude.

- 2. Australia Day Personal Follow-up and Evangelism (This Tuesday, 26 January):** As an alternative to our usual Australia Day outreach, all worshippers are encouraged to catch up with a friend or family member to share the Gospel with them on that day.
- 3. Church Extension Project Briefing (Sunday, 31 January, immediately after Worship):** There will be an update on the progress and next steps of the project. All members and regular worshippers are invited to attend. Please note that Teens Q&A scheduled on that day will be cancelled.
- 4. Children Sunday School Promotion (Sunday, 7 February, 9 am):** Pastor will give a short exhortation and the Sunday School children will receive their certificates. As we will begin at 9 am, please bring your children to church on time.
- 5. Offertory Box (Sunday, 7 February):** In order to enable the elderlies and children who are unable to do bank transfers to continue returning to the Lord their offerings, we will place an offertory box on top of the hymn shelves in the main sanctuary during the worship services. Due to the need to minimise the handling and counting of offerings during this COVID-19 period, this box will be placed there only on the first Sunday of every month. This box is not intended for those who are able to do bank transfers, as they should help by continuing to use online means for tithes and offerings during this period.
- 6. Thanksgiving and Prayer Items:**
  - Thank God for the various services, Bible studies, and fellowships in BPCWA whereby we may grow in His knowledge.
  - Thank God for those He has brought and those who have returned to worship with us.
  - Pray that every worshipper in BPCWA will grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and live for His glory alone.
  - Pray that we will all be engaged in personal evangelism and use Australia Day as an opportunity for outreach to our family and friends here.
  - Pray for the church extension to proceed according to God's plan and that the briefing will help worshippers to support and pray for it.

**APPOINTMENTS FOR TODAY AND THE WEEK**

Sunday	24/1	3:30 pm	Adelphos and Adelphe Bible Study
Tuesday	26/1		Australia Day Personal Follow-up and Evangelism
		7:30 pm	Prayer Meeting
Friday	29/1	7:30 pm	Fellowships Meeting: Regen/Youth 180°
Sunday	31/1	8:30 am	Pre-Service Prayer Meeting
		9:00 am	Basic Bible Knowledge Class
			Children Sunday School
		10:00 am	Sunday Worship Service

**LAST WEEK'S ATTENDANCES & OFFERINGS**

**Attendances** – Sunday Worship: 151; Prayer Meeting: 95

**Tithes and Offerings** – Sunday Worship: \$8,195.00

**Building Fund** – Last Week: \$912.00; To Date: \$559,290.63; Gap: \$740,709.37

Worshippers can continue to return to the Lord by making bank transfers to the following accounts:

a) Tithes and Offerings    BSB: 016-268, Account: 4784-38319

b) Building Fund            BSB: 016-268, Account: 5313-03414

**WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH – CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: OF THE CHURCH**

2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

