

JULY 22 - 26  
DAILY READINGS



*mid winter series*

## Day 1 – Mid Winter Stories

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Genesis 1:29-31

The next three weeks of readings are for our Mid-Winter Stories series, a series that will focus on Chocolate, Coffee and Trees. We will be looking at the story of the Cadbury family and their strong commitment to the poor and marginalised in their community, and the way they used their chocolate business as a means to fight against social inequalities and injustice. How do different worldviews influence the ways companies do business and therefore affect lives and communities? Coffee is one of the most influential commodities in the world. The entire process of growing, processing, marketing and selling it encompasses the whole globe, connecting communities of vastly different wealth, status and power. Are all of these communities treated equally in the coffee making process? Can the creation of such a ubiquitous commodity be a source through which we can invest back into communities across the world in a way that transforms them and the people living in them?

The social life of trees is the third focus of this series. Trees grow in community and intertwine and connect in ways that aren't immediately apparent from the outside. They grow with interlocking root systems that share nutrients and also share warnings of danger to the entire system. One thing that we want to encourage through this series is reflection on seemingly ordinary aspects of our lives and the ways in which they can be – and should be – conduits for the power and grace of God to flow into our lives and through our lives for the benefit of others in this world.

#### Question to Consider

Trees, Coffee, Chocolate: what role do these things play in your life?

#### Prayer

Lord God, help me see my life and your world with fresh eyes. Show me more ways in which my simple everyday words and actions can serve you in ever greater ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 2 – Cadbury Compassion

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

Although more famous for chocolate today, from well before the creation of the Cadbury chocolate company, the Cadbury family was committed to using what they had to help those in need. Helping the poor and marginalised was always a central belief of the Cadbury family. John Cadbury, founder of the Cadbury chocolate business was a Quaker, and as such, at the time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was not allowed to enter university and, as a pacifist, could not enter the military, so he turned his attention to business. Prior to the founding of Cadbury, John had already spent many years campaigning against social injustice, fighting against the exploitation of child chimney sweeps, railing against animal cruelty, and other social ills of the time. Campaigning for the rights of the poor and working to alleviate the social causes of poverty was simply what he and his family did because they believed it to be right.

It seems that today, for so many companies, and even entire economies as a whole, the dollar is the bottom line, or indeed the only line. However, over the last decade in particular, more and more companies are taking greater awareness of the impact they have on the societies and communities in which they operate – both negative and positive. While many companies see “giving back to the community” or adopting good ethical and environmental practises as merely a good PR move, others, like the Cadbury family, see it as essential in order to see people treated fairly and with dignity so that we might have healthier communities and a healthier world.

#### Question to Consider

How does being God’s followers affect our decisions as economic actors?

#### Prayer

Heavenly Father, may your kingdom values penetrate even into my wallet. May I steward all I have in accordance with your will for all people. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 3 – A Clash of Values

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Matthew 16:26

“Sadly, the creation of the still-lively community at Bournville may have been the high point for [the Cadbury] brand. The first signs of its descent from its origins as a force for social good – the lowermost slopes of which it finally traversed this week – were visible as early as the late 1960s. In 1969, Cadbury merged with Schweppes. That put an end to its Quaker ideals and social underpinning. It became a business with a single, capitalist motive: selling more confectionary, making more money. [...] In 1978, a US chocolate magnate, Peter Paul, acquired a 10 per cent share. Its profits outside the UK overtook its British interests. In the late 2000s, jobs were stripped with the closure of a factory in Keynsham. Some of that production moved overseas.

After months of wrangling, in January 2010 Kraft Foods finally bought the firm for £8.40 a share. [...] When the buyout occurred, Kraft said it would stick to Cadbury’s commitment to using Fairtrade cocoa beans to produce its chocolate. Fairtrade rules mean that cocoa farmers earn a minimum of £1,600 per tonne of cocoa sold. This week, Cadbury confirmed that it was no longer working with Fairtrade, and had instead switched to a new cocoa production partnership known as Cocoa Life – which does not exert the same price rules. Cadbury is now a subsidiary of an arm of Kraft, or spin-out company, known as Mondelez International. Its chief executive is Irene Rosenfeld. Her remuneration rose by 50 per cent in 2014, to \$21m. What the cocoa farmers who work to supply her global operation will earn for their crucial part in her success is now under question.”

Excerpted from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/cadburys-chocolate-fairtrade-fair-trade-mark-farmers-kraft-american-brand-abandoned-promise-a7445826.html>

#### Question to Consider

How do we allow and account for differing values in our society?

#### Prayer

Sovereign Lord, staying true to you can be difficult. Thank you for your Spirit to guide us and empower us. May I always look to you first in everything. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 4 – Two Unhelpful Extremes

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Proverbs 30:7-9

Some people are incredibly wealthy while others live on the edge of life with nothing. We are all aware of this great imbalance in our world. The question many of us have is how are we meant to live in this world when it is so unequal? In Christian history there have been two main responses to the issue of wealth and poverty. Prosperity teaching, quite common today, says that God wants everyone to be wealthy. Material comfort is considered a sign of God's blessing, and is therefore greatly to be sought after. Perhaps it should not surprise us that the place where this teaching really took hold and prospers today is the wealthiest and most consumptive society this planet has ever seen. The opposite teaching is that wealth is bad and poverty is considered preferable by God. Many with this view see poverty as somehow a more authentic way for human beings to live.

The Bible teaches neither of these extremes. It warns that wealth is dangerous because when we have plenty we can quite easily forget both God and the poor. The Bible also teaches, repeatedly and unambiguously, that poverty traps people in dehumanising relationships, suffering and sin, and that none of this is God's plan for *anyone*. As Jesus' followers we must walk a narrow road between the dangers of seeing wealth as evil on one hand and accumulating stuff on the other. God wants us to trust him, be content, and give when people are in need. He wants us to live simply, ungraspingly and generously.

#### Question to Consider

How can you live more generously through this next week?

#### Prayer

Almighty Father, help me live simply – when so much clamours for my attention; ungraspingly – when so much distracts me from chasing after you; and generously – when there are so many in need. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 5 – Rival Kingdoms

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Matthew 6:19-34

We live in a world of great inequality, and that inequality is growing every day. A small portion of the world's population (including most of us in this country) possesses most of the world's wealth, gained by exploiting and consuming the great majority of the world's resources, and doing so at huge environmental cost. Workers are exploited, people are enslaved, ecologies are destroyed and all for the sake of more money for those who already have more than enough. Jesus calls us to reject this cycle of personal enrichment built on social impoverishment, and instead to share life in solidarity with the poor, and to work with them to make a fairer, more equitable world for all.

Any brand of Christianity that actively or passively acquiesces in the exploitation of people and places, or that labels it – and its consequences – the will of a God who has ordained the earth and its resources as free to be used by humanity in any way it chooses, regardless of the consequences, has completely detached itself from the saviour it claims to follow. The communications and technology revolution now means we talk of the global village. But so many of us do not live like we care for our fellow villagers, or even believe that we should care. But Jesus came for all, and his call is for all who follow him to take the message of his kingdom to all people and all places, and to work – and live – to bring his kingdom everywhere, but especially to the people and places that are furthest from experiencing the love, freedom and transformation that his sacrifice brought to the world.

#### Question to Consider

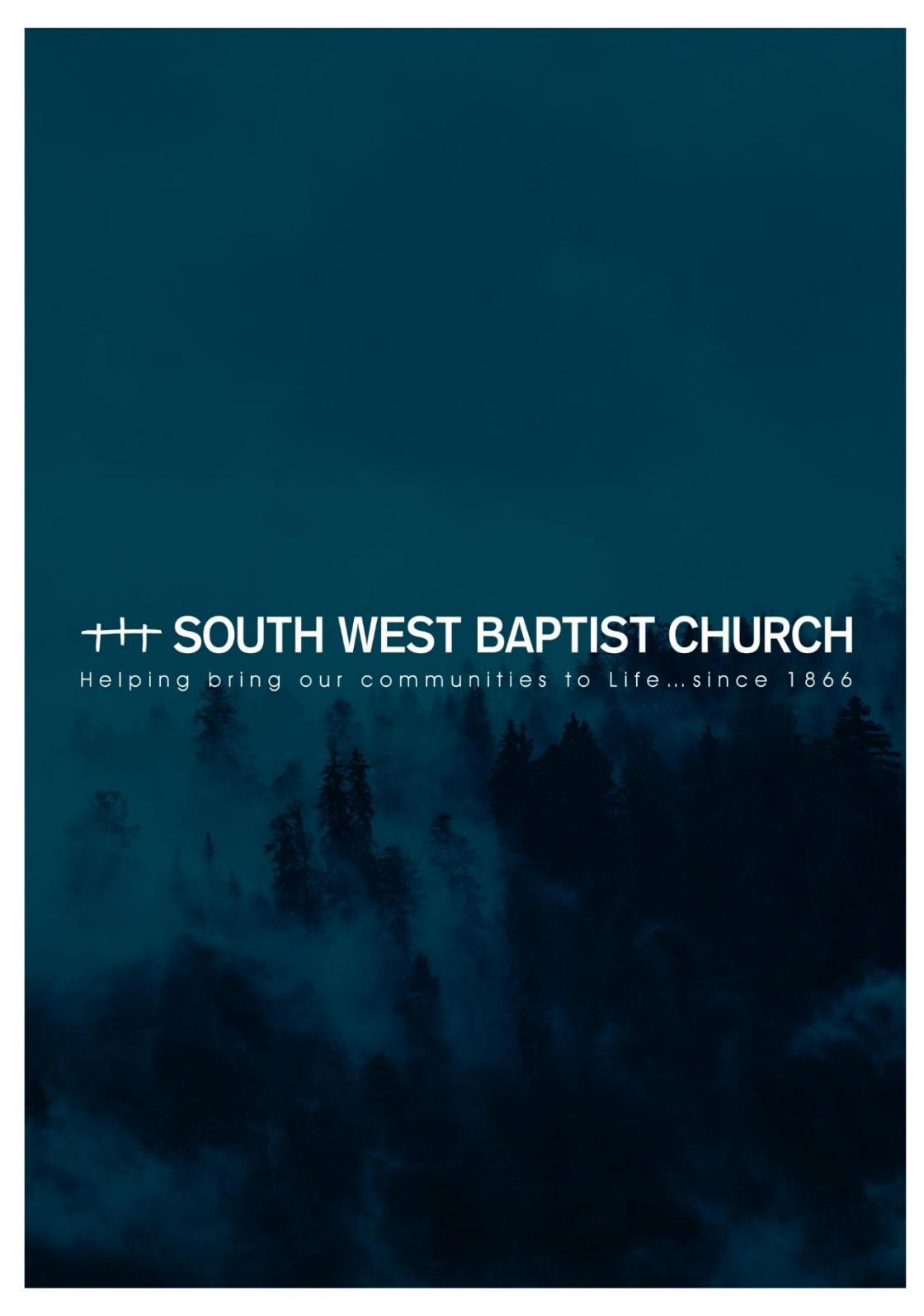
How do rival kingdoms try and claim your allegiance?

#### Prayer

Loving Father, injustice, inequality and exploitation have no place in your coming kingdom. May nothing in my life support them. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Saturday/Sunday Notes



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