

THE CHRISTIAN'S TOP PRIORITY Banning Liebscher

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?
- Have you memorised any Psalms or other Bible passages?

Know the truth!

John 10v10 are the job descriptions of Jesus and Satan - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* Connecting with the truth sets us free (Jn 8v32). 2 Cor 10 is full of "being in Christ" so that *Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (v11).*

1 Kings 19v1-9 - Elijah is the spiritual leader, the prophet, the one who claims a great victory over the prophets of Baal but he leaves depressed, discouraged and feeling hopeless. He wrestled with 3 lies: hope had been lost, God was not with/for him, and he was on journey alone.

This prophet knew God, trusted God and had profound victory then believed lies. He was worn out! The king was against him, he was fed by a widow, the nation was in drought because of him and all blamed him!

He was worn out and dropped his guard. The enemy finds a foothold. Boxers are told to keep their guard up. Dropping your guard leads to exposure. **Don't forget to guard your heart.** Prov 4v23 *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

Combat medics are trained to assess what matters for the injured on battle field - are they breathing? Are they bleeding out? (Don't worry about the sprained ankle, deal with the priority). Sometimes life gets us down. It can be like "a cat in a U-Haul" moment (Banning related a story about taking a feral cat home in his removal van). Our top priority is to guard our heart. A change of season in life may cause us to drop our guard. Ps 91 is about God protecting us - truth is like a shield. Don't let it drop.

How do we keep up our guard?

1. Note that when we're worn out we can drop our guard. Don't underestimate a meal and a nap. God fed Elijah and caused him to sleep. Our physical, spiritual and emotional life are all interconnected. Getting up to pray and fast can be counterproductive - we get more tired and more hungry. Get physically refreshed.
2. Always keep "one foot in the water." US Navy Seals thrive in water and have the advantage when facing the enemy. Likewise, we are to stay connected to God - to his presence, his word and his people.

We get ourselves into troubled situations when we disconnect ourselves from God. Church is more than Sundays - need to reconnect with worship, hearing God's word and engaging in Christian community. It is easier to believe the lies of the enemy when we try to go it alone. Elijah left the scene of victory and then complained to God that he was lonely. God put Moses with Joshua, Mordecai with Esther, Barnabas with Paul, Paul with Timothy, David with Jonathan, etc Paul writes in Romans 1v11-12 *I long to see you...that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.* We need to be with others for encouragement.

Above all else: Guard your heart. Stay connected. Know the truth. Be aware of satan's schemes. Let God release abundant life.

For Reflection in Collective:

- How is life with each of those in your collective? Do any feel worn out? What risks are there for folk dropping their guard?
- How can we as a collective best encourage each other?
- In what ways can we build community within our collective bearing mind that some prefer to recharge their energy from being alone. How do we balance time alone with time in community?