

Big Questions

for our world

14 · 21 · 28 January 2024



Wk 2

Sunday 21 January 2024

Our 9:45am service is live streamed to our YouTube and Facebook Channels. If you don't wish to feature on our stream, please occupy the pews towards the back.

TODAY'S 9:45AM SERVICE

- Welcome
- Songs
- Confession & Assurance
- Spotlight
- Bible Reading:
Mark 7:1-23
(p. 1009)
- Sermon
- Prayers
- Announcements
- Song
- Conclusion

Welcome to St Stephen's. We're glad you can join us this morning. We would like to hear how you found church and how we can encourage you. Would you take a moment to fill in the Connect Card. You can access an electronic version using the QR Code.



This week we continue our short series exploring the Big Questions of our time. Everyone has questions which go beyond the daily practical needs. These questions shape our way of thinking, living, choosing and even how we prepare for dying. We think Jesus's life, death and resurrection has huge implications for these questions.

As you explore the question: "Are we smarter?", perhaps you can consider what impact your answers have not just on today's decisions but on your long-term future. If you would like to continue the discussion after church – reach out to our staff or the person you came with.

Most St Stephen's collection is received electronically.
BSB: 062 272
Account Number:
00490436

If you are a visitor please don't feel obliged to contribute financially.

Next Steps

Are you new? We would love to meet you. Hear a brief intro on the life of our church at our next [Newish Morning Tea](#) on Sunday 25 February. It runs for ½ an hour straight after the service.

Been regularly coming? If you are a regular member of our church, we encourage you to attend our next [Belonging Course](#) which runs on the 10th of March from 12-3pm. Belonging is the gateway to our GaP Groups, serving and deeper connection with the community.

Got a question? Fill out a [connect card](#) to chat with a staff member.

Prayers for the Service

These prayers are used during the service. Prayer is a privilege we are given because Christ died for us. His death & resurrection means we can confidently approach God seeking forgiveness (Hebrews 10:22). If you believe that Christ died to deal with your failings then you should be confident to pray with us. If you are still exploring who Christ is then feel free to listen in.

A Prayer of Confession

Our Father in heaven,
You are big and we are small.
Thank you that you are the King over everything.
We are sorry for not loving or listening to you.
We are sorry that we choose our way instead of yours.
Please help us live as friends with you
through Jesus Christ.
Help us to listen and love you by your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."

Exodus 34:6-7a

The Lord's Prayer

This is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray (Matthew 6:5-14).

Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever
Amen.

Sermon Notes

Are we getting smarter? What Jesus says about tradition and being authentic | Mark 7:1-23

Preacher: Gordon Luk

1. Are we getting smarter?
2. Are we getting smarter about ourselves? The battleground around understanding who we are
3. Jesus on who we are (Mark 7:1-23)
 - i. Jesus affirms being authentic and challenges human traditions (v. 1-13)
 - ii. Jesus's challenging view on the authentic human self (v. 14-23)
4. Are we smarter than Jesus?

Some content to discuss over a coffee:

1. What did you find interesting from the talk on Sunday? What did you disagree with or find unconvincing?
2. Do you think we are getting smarter as a human race? Why or why not?
3. How much do you think it matters to you whether we are progressing as a human race or not?
4. Do you think IQ and intelligence is the best way to measure 'smartness'? Are there better words to describe human progress? (ie. Growing in wisdom, understanding, social/emotional responsibility/competence)
5. Are there ways of understanding the world from the past that you think would be helpful to (or even better than) how we understand the world now?

Some content to discuss over a coffee:

1. What do you think about the following quote?



“[People today believe that] when you are figuring out how to lead your life, the most important answers are found deep inside yourself.”

- David Brooks, writer of New York Times, The Road to Character

2. How might this be a different way of looking for the big questions of life in the past?

3. Have you ever felt the pressure of something outside yourself (ie. Family traditions, social/cultural traditions etc.) telling you who you are and have to be? Do you think that was helpful or unhelpful to you?

Gordon (the speaker on Sunday) showed that Jesus affirms our desire for being authentic (He cared about our ‘hearts’) and challenged religious traditions for missing the point. But Jesus also said this about our inner, authentic self:

“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come...” (Mark 7:20-21a).

4. What strikes you about what Jesus says here? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.”

C.S. Lewis, author of Narnia

5. What do you think about the Christian message’s claim that humanity is fallen? What questions do you have about this and about what Christianity offers?

Notices

Report from Night Church Relaunch

Our Night Church community re-launched our service for 2024 last Sunday. Thanks to those who helped by cooking, serving in the service, setting up and cleaning up. We were able to host 60 people, including 12 guests. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the 1st year of that new service, the people God has brought us into relationship with, the central message of grace that binds us together and the privilege of serving Jesus.



If you are looking for a way to help the Night Church community then chat with Prash. We hope to see our regular community grow to 50 in the 1st half of this year, including high school students.



Report from Dessert & Prayer Night

Our Prayer Nights are an important time where we come together as all three services/congregations before God as a church family in prayerful dependence. It's crucial that we do this before our regular ministries (outreach, kids & youth, GaP Groups) begin—we commit all we do to our God who works powerfully through us by His Spirit. It was great to see so many come along last Wednesday night to pray together and enjoy dessert together too.

Notices

Crafternoon

As a church we want young people to develop biblically shaped active faith. One of the ways this happens is by kids doing crafts that reinforce the Bible lesson. We would love your help in preparing these craft activities. Preparing the craft is helpful as it frees up the kid's leaders to spend more time preparing the biblical content of the lesson. We would really appreciate your help! You don't need any particular craft skills. If you can cut, glue or stick we can put you to good use!

When: Monday 29th January

Time: 1-3pm

Where: Hainsworth Hall

Kids & Youth Leader's commissioning 28th January

On the 28th of January, we are commissioning our kids and youth leaders for 2024. As a church, we believe growing the young in their devotion to God's word is a key characteristic of a church that is **beautiful, diverse and large**. Our kids and youth leaders play a vital role in discipling our young people.

They volunteer their time to teach the bible and model the Christian life faithfully. This is a moment for them to publicly confirm their commitment to this task. It is also a chance for us as a church to give thanks and pray for them.



Vision Sunday

On Sunday 4 February we will kick start our church life together for 2024 with Vision Sunday. It's a great opportunity to share a meal with each other after our 9:45am and 6pm Service. Its also a day to remind ourselves of the opportunities God is presenting us. We long to be a church made **beautiful, diverse & large by the gracious work of Christ**. Vision Sunday is our chance to recommit to this task for 2024 as a community.

If you are newer to our church it will give you an opportunity to take further steps into our community and find God's place for you here.

What's Coming Up

24-28 January	LIT Youth Camp
29 January	Crafternoon
4 February	Vision Sunday
5-9 February	Week of Prayer
6 February	SRE Conference

For more on what's happening this summer at St Stephen's, visit st-stephens.com.au/summer

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