



STAY ALERT TO THE SPIRIT

SEEKING GOD'S PATH IN TROUBLED TIMES

A seven-week JSP programme for Churches asking, 'what is the Spirit saying to the Church through the new normal?'

We want to know:

- Where is it happening?
- Who is being affected?
- How can we get rid of it?
- When will it end?
- How is it going to affect my future?

But there is another question:

- What is God saying to us in these strange days?



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Suddenly the world is different, no one saw this coming. Control no longer a given, vulnerability and bewilderment abounds. As Covid19 unleashes multiple loss, unwelcome change, and death in its wake, we are anxious for the short term; our mental health tested, and our fears for the future shape of national and global civilisation real.

Christians have something to bring and discover amidst this disaster. We bring a prayer and a question: 'Your Kingdom come' and 'how are we to live through this season in ways that keep us alert to the Holy Spirit?'

The scriptures and the story of the Church remind us seasons of suffering and uncertainty capture our attention, a condition more conducive for alertness to the Spirit. Perhaps, when stripped of things we usually rely on an opportunity for alertness to the Spirit of God beckons. The aim of this programme is help create heightened alertness.

We offer the Five Priorities JSP identifies with the ministry of Jesus in a contextualised light and a means to hear the Spirit of God speaking to us in a lasting way. Jesus cites special significance from the prophetic imagination of Isaiah and the Psalmist; we've readings from both, plus Mark's gospel.

Here is a summary of the seven-week programme, usable online or in buildings.

Stay Alert to the Spirit: Weekly Summary

Week One: Setting the Scene

Is this a 'Kairos moment', akin to the prophetic ministry of Isaiah during exile or in the way John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus?

Psalm 137.1–6 'By the waters of Babylon'—spiritual hunger & thirst in a time of exile.
Isaiah 57.14–21 'Build the highway'—but include broken and humble people
Mark 1.1–12 John the Baptist—a 'Kairos' moment of responding to God's call

Week Two: People Matter

Rethinking the value of people through growth of relationships and sacrificial service, especially the low-paid and marginalised. 'The last have become first?'

Psalm 116.1–19 Personal response to God's liberation from death and sorrow
Isaiah 58.5–12 Proper 'religion' requires commitment to injustice and inequality
Mark 5.21–43 2 Healings; one vulnerable and poor, the other secure and prosperous

Week Three: Time to Listen

What are we discovering about consumer lifestyles through the Pandemic? Will we also learn to tread more softly to protect God's creation?

- Psalm 90.1–17 The Lord's manifold perspective, and our place in it.
- Isaiah 61.1–6 The Spirit's work to proclaim, rescue, comfort, clothe and release.
- Mark 10.17–31 The alternative Kingdom life and the illusion of prosperity.

Week Four: Team Matters

What is being discovered about community and interdependence right now? Is a new vision to reshape church and world possible with common purpose and others in this adventure?

- Psalm 133.1–3 The joy of unity and the promise of blessing.
- Isaiah 65.17–25 God's extraordinary plan and peace-filled vision.
- Mark 9.30–50 Team matters to Jesus as he seizes a teaching moment ahead of the cross.

Week Five: Watch and Pray

With heightened interest in spirituality, prayer and appreciation of God's creation, how has being locked out of our buildings impacted how we think of them, can they be reimagined?

- Psalm 100.1–5 The vitality of praise and prayer.
- Isaiah 55.1–12 Toward joy and peace. Come; seek the Lord, his ways are so different!
- Mark 14.32–52 Gethsemane's prayer struggle, for Jesus and his disciples.

Week Six: Time to Speak

How will we rediscover the ministry of prophecy in our churches for a watching world? Is it a priority for us?

- Psalm 91.1–16 The promise of God to protect in times of pestilence and pandemics
- Isaiah 49.1–6 The Servant who will be the Prophet—bringing light to the nations.
- Mark 13.1–13 Pain can herald a new Age—but be on your guard.

Week Seven: Pressing On

Looking back over the past six weeks what did we gain from our focus and how are we more equipped to 'Stay Alert to the Spirit' for what lies ahead?

- Psalm 46.1–11 The ultimate promise of God, and his protection in all things.
- Isaiah 42.1–9 The promise of God to do a 'new thing' through 'my servant'.
- Mark 6.1–6 Return to Nazareth—welcoming Jesus 'the prophet'.

