



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Ephesians 6:13-18 'The Belt of Truth'

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

I have a weakness for belts, in the same way that some have for shoes, or handbags, or whatever. A good leather belt is something to be prized. But what about the 'belt of truth'? My own interpretation of this rather Bunyanesque passage is connected with the First Commandment, which speaks about loving God with all our minds. But this isn't about 'having ink in our veins', as it were! It's about wisdom, knowing and loving God and seeking to understand his purposes. The Greeks used different words for this quality:



There was '*sophia*' – from which we get our English word 'sophisticated' – which is basically an understanding of that which is eternal and unchanging, as exemplified in Wesley's hymn (StF 500)

*Happy are they who wisdom gain, thrice happy who that guest retain;
they own, and shall for ever own, wisdom, and Christ, and heaven are one.*

We must all be theologians and grapple with the questions that the Bible and living out our faith put to us. We must all, in other words, 'enlarge our scanty thought' as another hymn puts it.

But there is second kind of wisdom with which we as Christians need to be equipped – that of a more practical kind. In the New Testament this was expressed as 'prudence' ('*phronesis*') and 'judgment' ('*synesis*'), which help us to distinguish between different courses of action, and get our priorities right.

Perhaps a more contemporary picture than 'the belt of truth' which the author Ephesians might have chosen had he been writing today, would be that of bi-focal glasses. As our churches learn to deal with the pandemic and eventually emerge from it in due course, we need both kinds of wisdom. We need to maintain our vision of how to further God's Kingdom in our locality ('*sophia*') yet our wisdom must be near-sighted, to make the often-difficult day-to-day decisions that will face us ('*phronesis*' and '*synesis*'). How do we do this? The author of Ephesians is surely right when he tells us to: "pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication". In other words, loving God with all our mind. Good advice for days like these!

Prayer: Gracious God, we pray that your Spirit will lead us into all truth.
Give us wisdom, give us courage, so that we make the difficult decisions that are before us according to your will, and face the future with confidence, knowing that you are our Guide and Helper. Amen.