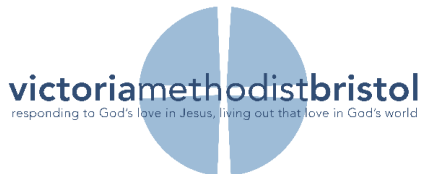

LENT KNIT-ALONG 2026

WEEK 4



Pattern by Lyn Lloyd-Jones
Reflections by Pete Honeyball

Introduction

Pete is a local Preacher in the Vale of Aylesbury Circuit. He plays in a 60's rock band and takes his guitar with him every Sunday. His heroes are Chuck Berry, Hank Marvin and Jesus. But not necessarily in that order.

On Sunday, Friday and Saturday this week, Pete mentions his recent journey with cancer. If this is something you'd prefer to avoid, we invite you just to read the Bible passage and prayer on those days.

MATTHEW 6 – DO NOT WORRY

Sunday, 08 March

Matthew 6:25

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

Remember the hot summers that we have recently enjoyed, when it was unbearably hot even in our churches, as we sweltered whilst singing our praises? I lived in shorts and found it difficult to put on a pair of trousers on a Sunday morning. I have always advocated that we should be able to come to church dressed how we feel comfortable; God wants to see us as part of His family, regardless of what we are wearing.

I got permission from my Superintendent to preach in shorts providing I wore a tie at the same time. I don't think I ever took him up on the idea, but it did remind me of the importance we attach to the clothes we wear.

I think that sometimes we get our priorities wrong.

Talking of priorities, my life suddenly got put sharply into perspective a few months ago by a doctor.

"Sorry," said the doctor. "This is probably not the news you want to hear." The sudden news that I had got cancer came like a bolt out of the blue. I don't get cancer; cancer is something that happens to other people, not to me.



The words – ‘Do not worry about your life’, took on a completely new meaning, they are all very well in theory, but! I made no secret of my illness, and it soon spread throughout the Methodist circuit, and amazingly, messages began to flood in, wishing me well and promising to hold my wife Jane and myself in prayer. As I began to contemplate the life-changing future, rounds of surgery, radiotherapy, side effects and months of recovery I slowly realised that I was no longer dreading the major surgery ahead of me. So many people were praying for me that it slowly dawned that I was content to leave the future to Jesus, confident that He would look after me, and His will would be done.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you tell us not to worry about tomorrow
Please help us to rely more fully on you
To see you in every part of this, your world
To understand your overwhelming love for everyone, even me

Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am, and understand that life is about more than food and the body. Help me to understand that you are indeed in control, that you have a plan for each one of us, a plan that is wrapped in love and aims to give the very best to each one of us. Amen!

Monday, 09 March

Matthew 6:26

Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?



To supplement our central heating (but mainly because I like it) I burn logs (from an approved woodland supplier with low moisture content) during the winter months. I remember thinking just before Christmas when I had half a ton delivered – that’s it, let the weather do what it likes I am going to be all right this winter, I am secure, I shall be nice and warm, even if the power goes off.

We pride ourselves on how full our barns are, whether it is food, money, guitars,

jewels or firewood. What was it Jesus said – “O, you foolish man”?

So often we fool ourselves into a false sense of security. How can half a ton of wood give anyone real security? We value our possessions in worldly terms, not heavenly terms and we base our judgements on unsound assumptions.

God is the only one with the authority and perception to make valid judgements on the worth of his creation.

We each have our place in life and community, as we do within our church fellowships.

The Lord has given each of us specific gifts and created us to together form a unique package for spreading the love of Christ in our corner of His wonderful creation. It is most certainly not a case of some being gifted and some not, the fact is we all have gifts. The clever bit is recognising those gifts and putting them to the use God intended. In our minds

we are very judgemental, we look at the gifts we have and, like Pete Seeger, we put them in little boxes.

We put a value on each other's worth in accordance with the perceived gift, and boy, do we consistently get it wrong.

Why does God feed the birds of the air? Because He loves them, regardless of their contribution to creation.

Why does God feed us? Because He loves us all equally, regardless of the worth we place on each other.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you tell us not to worry about tomorrow

Please help us to rely more fully on you

To see you in every part of this, your world

To understand your overwhelming love for everyone, even me

Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am; among the birds of the air, and among my fellow travellers. Help me to stop judging and putting others into those little boxes and accept that we are all part of your flock, your kingdom, your team, and together we make up your creation. Amen!

Tuesday, 10 March

Matthew 6:27

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Jane and I have a habit of getting the most out of birthday and Christmas cards that are sent to us; we leave them on display until the next celebration comes along. So, as Jane had a significant birthday last November, our lounge still shows some of the decorations, including a long line of balloons. There are still about ten balloons in various states of inflation hanging over the sofa; there are one or two that still seem quite large, having retained the air quite well since November, most are shadows of their former selves, whilst one in particular looks very sorry for him (or her) self, resembling a sad, shrivelled-up fruit that fell off the tree a long while ago.



I suppose, to be fair, the shrivelled-up specimen has outlasted the two or three balloons that have not made it this far, having exploded at some stage during the Christmas season.

It struck me that there may be a parallel here to the lives that we all lead. Some of us live long and healthy lives, still inflated (?) at a ripe old age (some more inflated than others!), whilst others have flagged a bit on the way, losing some of their air and a lot of their shiny surface. Even the shrivelled-up balloon that is beginning to look like a sad case of malnutrition has the small satisfaction of knowing that at least it has made it this far, whilst some old friends have been lost along the way.

As I look around my circle of friends, I can see the same story played out, I can identify different balloons in the faces of different people around me.

It seems to be true that no matter how much we may worry about life, we can make no impression on how long we live or, to some extent, the state or health of our bodies.

Jesus tells us not to spend time trying to add longevity to our lives but to focus on the things that matter, not measuring our lives by the number of days in our lives, but by the quality of those lives, the recognition of God's presence in those lives and the marks we leave behind.

Prayer

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Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am. That I may recognise your love shining on the faces of those around me. That I may look past the ravages of time, and the wear of the years, to appreciate the image of the God who loves totally, enough to let go of the one He loves dearly for our sake. Amen!

Wednesday, 11 March

Matthew 6:28

And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the lilies of the field grow: They do not labour or spin.

Many of us often think we always have to be busy; if we are not rushing through life then we are not making the most of it, we are missing out. The lilies of the field get away with a life not spent spinning or labouring, they just stand as testament to the glory of God's wonderful creation.

What can be the purpose of the flowers if not to testify to the beauty that surrounds us, and yet how often do we rush past them without acknowledgement, without a split second's recognition for what they represent?

But wait. We need to bear in mind that every piece of God's creation has a part to play in the whole. Without the flowers, where would the bees be? They would not be able to fulfil their vital role in nature, a small but invaluable link in the creation chain would be broken with dramatic repercussions for those further down, along, or up, the chain. We forget at our peril that you cannot take out any single part of God's creation without affecting the whole operation.

So, do not assume that you have to rush around all the time, God wants us to enjoy His creation, to stop and look, to smell the flowers, to admire them, to take pleasure from His work.

Just pause for a moment beside a wayside flower. Take a few minutes to look at the colour, the shape, the intricate craftsmanship that has gone into its creation. And then stand back and marvel, give thanks to a loving God who provides for us in every area of our lives. His handiwork is not just a living, breathing, growing, functional creation, it is also a thing of immense beauty.



God has placed us in a beautiful world, His world, and He wants us to look after it, get the very best from it, and also above all, to enjoy it.

Prayer

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Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am; among the birds of the air, the flowers of the meadow, in my wardrobe, even when I am in a hurry and too concerned with everyday life to stop and look at your wonderful gift of creation, grant that I may see your face reflected in every person I meet today. Amen!

Thursday, 12 March



Matthew 6:29-30

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Have you ever stopped and looked closely at a flower? I can see a simple red tulip in my mind's eye. It is proud, upright, so simple in its form. No pretty patterns, no frilly edges, no

attempt to attract an audience, and yet, it is gorgeous, a work of art. It is just so simple, yet so complex. I like to think that I am a handyman. I have made lots of things for around the house, yet this simple red flower, I would have no idea how to start making one, and even Google has drawn a blank on that one.

As I think about these verses, I am drawn to the images that will abound shortly of the Oscars; images of beautiful people dressed in the finest gowns and suits that money can buy, parading along a magnificent red carpet. My best posh outfit is probably a dress suit. It hangs in the wardrobe alongside a selection of different coloured bow ties; it doesn't see the light of day very often. I probably cannot get in it these days! (What was that about inflated balloons?)

We set such store by appearances. The reception we receive is so often determined by the impression we create on first appearance. YouTube has many videos portraying rich people dressed in rags in order to test reactions at certain establishments they own. The moral is always don't judge by appearances.

On the one side I can see someone dressed in a beautiful long velvet dress, on the other, that simple red tulip – God wins every time.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you tell us not to worry about tomorrow
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Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am; among the birds of the air, the flowers of the meadow, in my wardrobe, in the gorgeous dresses parading along the red carpet. Help me to see and adore the simple wonder of that sole red tulip, proudly displaying God's love and creativity. Amen!

Friday, 13 March

Matthew 6:31-32

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear? For the Gentiles strive after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

During my radiotherapy I completely lost my sense of taste and found that there were many foods I could not eat. In the past, I absolutely lived on Marmite crumpets for breakfast most days, yet now, I could not bear the taste or smell of either of them.



The hospital gave me some nutritional drinks – printed in small writing on the side of each drink were the words – for those suffering from medically-induced malnutrition!

I found them difficult to consume at first, but after a month or two, as 'normal' food began to taste more and more like Playdough, they tasted really, really nice!

Many of us are blessed in that we have an amazingly wide choice of food, clothes and beautiful houses to live in. We might at some stages in our lives have had difficult times, but we have rarely had to struggle to find food or clothes.

The Gentiles had a craving for image, it was important to them that they were seen to be in the best light, the best company, amongst the highest echelons of society. They felt they deserved special treatment; the world owed them acclaim; they were the cream of society.

On the other hand, Jesus is telling us to be content with what we have, not to continually seek to be seen as important, but to be a part of and to appreciate the wonder of His creation. The Father knows well what we need and always supplies it. We don't need Michelin five-star food, or fine clothes or to be seen as special, because in His eyes we are already special.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you tell us not to worry about tomorrow
Please help us to rely more fully on you
To see you in every part of this, your world
to understand your overwhelming love for everyone, even me

Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am; among the birds of the air, the flowers of the meadow, in my wardrobe, even in my lunch box. Grant that I may be content with the amazing gifts that you pour down upon me and move my heart to share these gifts with those less fortunate. Amen!

Saturday, 14 March

Matthew 6:33-34

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.

I have always worried about how I can reconcile my faith with all the insurance policies that I have taken out on my house, my car, my drainage, even my life.

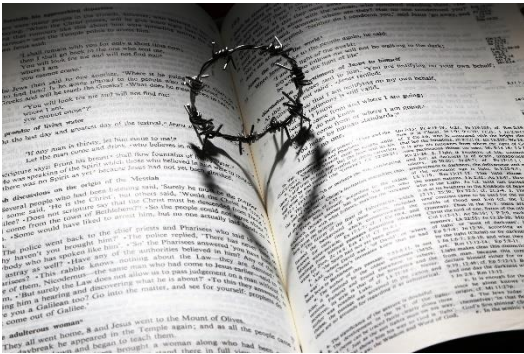
Perhaps I justify my reliance on insurance policies on the stories I hear from countries that do not benefit from a health service that is free to all at the point of delivery.

I suppose that I am like many others, I am scared and I am loathe to let go of proven security.

I want a foot in both camps; I am basically scared to let go.

I often feel frustrated that although I have been a 'churchgoer' for many years, a regular attender and (I hope) a committed Christian, I still have terrible trouble letting go of earthly safety nets. I still find it incredibly difficult to trust Jesus completely. I have dipped a toe in but I am afraid to go for the full immersion.

Yet, when I have really asked Jesus for help, when I have really trusted him, he has never let me down. Going back to my first reflection, when I was diagnosed with a very aggressive cancer, I felt the love of Christ engulf me and take all the weight from my shoulders.



Oh, what a short memory I have – please forgive me Lord and take control of my life, that I may live and breathe to your praise and glory, that those around me may see a reflection of your wonderful love. My prayer is that all who read these words may be inspired to open their lives to the love of Jesus and journey with him to that fateful hill, to be filled with love and adoration for a wonderful God who gave all for each and every one of us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you tell us not to worry about tomorrow
Please help us to rely more fully on you
To see you in every part of this, your world
to understand your overwhelming love for everyone, even me

Guide my thoughts today that I may recognise your kingdom where I am: among the birds of the air, the flowers of the meadow, and when my shoulders are weighed down with anxiety. Help me to stop and look at your wonderful gift of creation, and to let go of my earthly fears and instead rely more fully on you. Amen!

Compiled by Helen Manyiwa