

Weekly Newsletter

25th August 2026



Holyrood
Church

Reflection: The Main Art of Spiritual Life

By Joe Barnard

Martin Lloyd-Jones famously said the following:

"The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself... instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God has done."

Lloyd-Jones was saying that each Christian must daily do for themselves what preachers do on Sundays, that is, preach the gospel to themselves.

I find that a lot of Christians know this as a principle; they are less familiar with it as a practice. There is a learning gap between exhortation and application. If Christians fail to fulfil the duty, it's not because they don't feel as if it's necessary, but because they are uncertain where to begin.

I can't think of a better model for what Lloyd-Jones was describing than the end of Romans 8. Paul brilliantly exemplifies what it looks like to address oneself uncompromisingly with the truth of the gospel.

To appreciate this, it's helpful to begin by considering the intended audience of Paul's letter. Undoubtedly, they were a lot like us. They were full of an awareness of their personal failings, of severe lapses into sin, of oppressive temptations, of embarrassing fearfulness and dread. They understood the gospel in the heads but struggled to fully believe the gospel in their hearts. They repeatedly slid from the attitude of beloved sons to that of neglected orphans.

How does Paul deal with such spiritual disease? In verses 31-39, his remedy is a rapid-fire Q&A session. He extracts the doubts underlying brooding insecurities and holds each starkly before the light of truth. He does this repeatedly until the mood of anxiety is fully discredited.

Now, let's see this principle worked out in practice.

Look first at vs. 31. Paul asks, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Notice the comparison Paul deliberately generates. In isolation, the objects of our fear look gargantuan. However, the perspective shifts if God becomes a point of comparison. By itself, death, for example, is a terrifying spectre. Next to God, death shrivels into a faint shadow lurking beneath the almighty radiance of the sun.

Having vanquished one fear, Paul moves on. The next worry he considers is that God's grace will run dry. What does Paul say to this? "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all..." Paul's point is to remind us of the love God has for us as indicated in the gift of his Son.





No one who paid £100,000 for a car would refuse to pay an MOT to keep it on the road. Paul would have us keep this logic in mind as we worry about God giving up on us.

And so, Paul advances. The next objection to overrule is the fear that someone on Judgment Day will stand up and bring hidden evidence of guilt to light. I'm sure most of us can identify with the concern. Who doesn't have some secret sin in his past that he hopes never reaches the headlines!

Once again Paul parries doubt with truth. He calmly asserts, "It's God who justifies." The reply is incontestable. God's knowledge is perfect; God's judgement is unassailable. If God declares us to be righteous in Christ, no accusation can stand. We have been cleared before the highest of courts. There can be no further scrutiny.

Much more could be said about the precise argument of Paul; however, the main point is that in Romans 8 we see the principle of preaching the gospel to oneself put into practice. We find an example of what it looks like to refuse to succumb to spiritual anxiety and to diligently combat groundless fear with gospel truth.

It's worth recalling the quote at the start of this reflection. Lloyd-Jones says, "The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself." That's quite a claim. Lloyd-Jones is suggesting that the practice of Romans 8 is not an extreme measure for the spiritually diseased. Rather, it's the daily exercise of healthy faith.

Let me encourage you this week not to give in to negative emotion, to spiritual despair, to self-loathing, to irrational worry. Although we do not have absolute control over our moods and emotions, we do have a lot more control than we often utilise. And the best lever we have by which to steer our hearts is the one Paul makes use of at the end of Romans: *talking to ourselves*. Rather than submitting to half-conceived fears, we need to identify the latent sources of our anxieties and see these concerns in the mirror of God's truth. Only there will we see them for what they are – not mighty dragons with iron scales, razor teeth, and fiery breath, but little serpents whose heads deserve to be stamped on as quickly as they are seen.

Annual General Meeting – this Wednesday

The church AGM will take place this **Wednesday (26th August)** at 7pm in the building and live streamed [here](#). Tea and coffee will be served from 6.45pm.

A draft copy of the church accounts has been emailed out to all church members. Please speak to Liz if you didn't get a copy or would like a hard copy.

There will be no prayer bulletin this week because of the AGM. Thank you!





Notice for Parents

Starting this Sunday morning there will be a change in how children go down to Sunday club. The plan will be for them to gather in the front so that Joe can briefly acknowledge them and pray for them before heading to the stairwell. We want them to know that they are important members of the church family, loved and prayed for. Mums and dads are welcome to carry infants forward or sit with younger children. It will take us a few weeks to get into a routine; however, soon this will feel natural. Again, the start date for this is Sunday, August 30th.

The tech team will be vigilant to make sure that the children are not filmed during the segment. If you have any questions, feel free to speak to Joe or Hannah.

Home Groups and Wednesday meals

In September our Home Groups will recommence for the new term. We will follow our usual rhythm:

- Prayer Meetings on 1st, 3rd and 5th (if there is one) Wednesdays of the month from 7-8pm
- Home Groups meeting around the city on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month

Please contact Liz@holyroodchurch.org if you're not in a Home Group and would like to be. Home Group leaders will be in touch about the arrangements for each group.

We're planning to have a meal together on the first Wednesday of each month. Come to the church from 5.45pm, food will be served at 6pm and we'll meet to pray from 7-8pm. Meals this term will be on:

- 2 September
- 7 October
- 4 November
- 2 December

Women's Discipleship at Holyrood

Just a reminder that –

- **Our Thursday Bible Studies** will restart on 3rd September and run for six weeks until 8th October. Please come along to the church on Thursday mornings at 10.30am even if you've never been before. Coffee, scones and good chat will be provided!
- **Our Bible Reading Plan** will restart on 31st August until 9th October for a six-week reading block. We will continue using Glen Scrivener's *Reading Between the Lines* and start this term with the Psalms. Please let Anna Barnard know if you would like to join one of the groups for the first time or weren't part of the last block and want to join again. Thank you!



Act Like Men – tonight



Join us at Hope Church Bingham for an evening men's conference to encourage each other to live for King Jesus in Edinburgh and beyond. This year our Act Like Men evening conferences will focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our next one is on **Tuesday (25th August)** from 7:00–8:30pm at Hope Church Bingham. Ben Castaneda will help us understand the hope of The Resurrection of Christ. For more details and to sign up go [here](#).

Induction of Will Sanders – Christ Church Edinburgh

We are warmly invited by Christ Church Edinburgh to the induction and ordination service of their new minister, Will Sanders. God willing this will be held on **Friday 4th September** at 7.30pm at Wilson Memorial Church, Moira Terrace, Edinburgh.

Ewan Clark from Christ Church writes 'This is an occasion for great rejoicing and we would be delighted if brothers and sisters in Christ from neighbouring congregations join us for this.'

Enlisted and Deployed, Cross Training Ministries Event – Saturday 12th September

Enlisted and Deployed – from disciple to disciple-maker.

Join us for a training event for men in Edinburgh who are ready to step up. **Saturday 12th September** from 9.30am – 1pm at Holyrood. Speak to Joe for more details.



Church Calendar

This week for your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Annual General Meeting from 7–8pm in the church with refreshments from 6.45pm.
- Thursday: Session meeting at 7pm in the Manse
- Sunday:
 - Morning Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (and livestreamed)
 - Evening Service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching.
- Monday: Baby and Toddlers from 10 – 11.30am

