

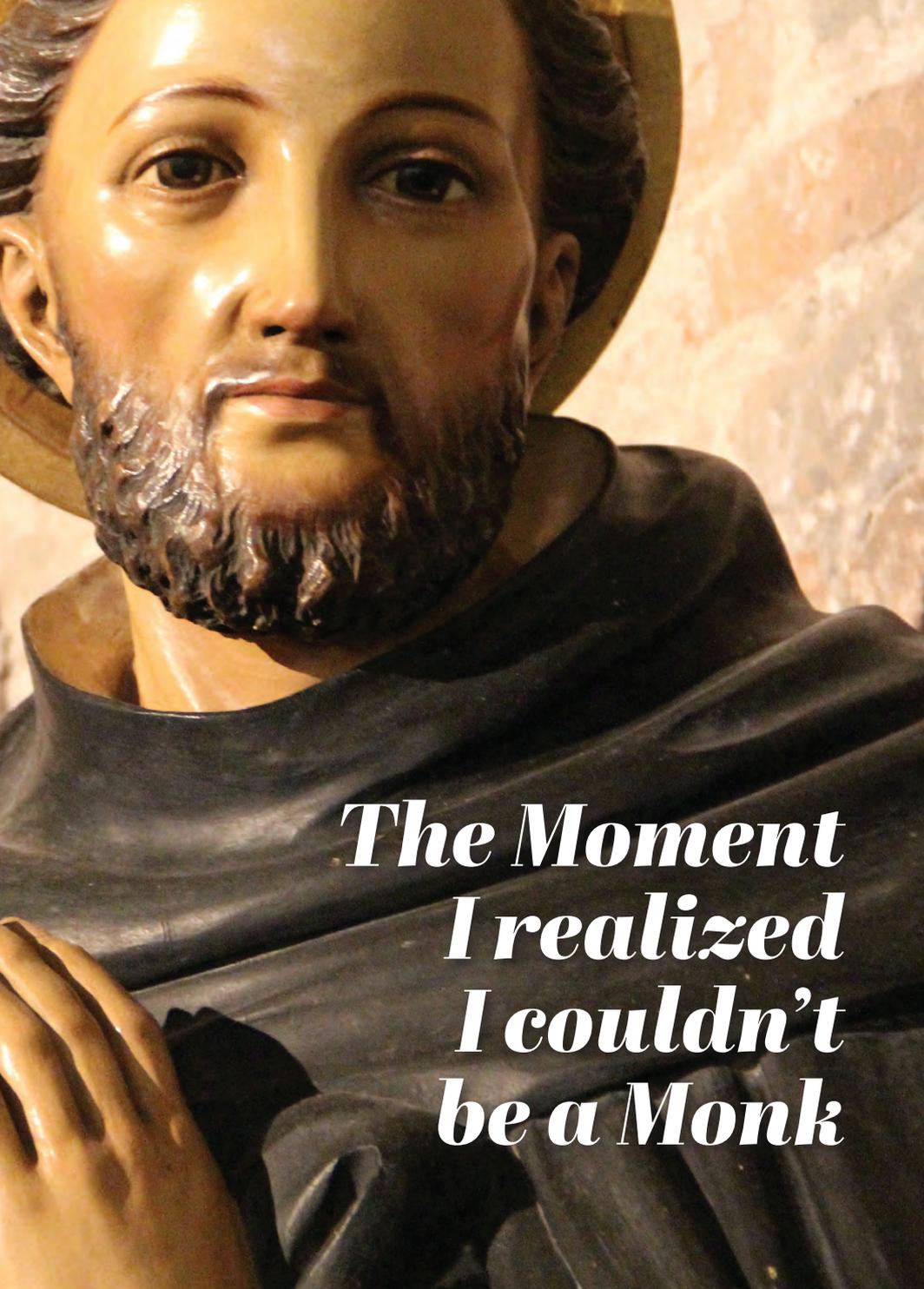
Intermission

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We're all Called to Pray



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***The Moment
I realized
I couldn't
be a Monk***



By Rev Joshua Taylor (Vicar at St John's in Timaru)

Just over four years ago my life took a dramatic turn. My wife Jo and I entered the unknown territory of parenthood. We now have two lovely girls, Phoebe (4) and Esther (1).

I think it would be fair to say that I underestimated the impact having kids would have on my prayer life. It's not like I was undertaking great vigils of prayer or had an amazing set of disciplined rhythms in the first place. Yet when we had kids, any rhythms that I did have in place took the backseat in the hustle and bustle of family life. I've heard all the romantic claptrap about wonderful times of prayerful cuddles and encountering God in the midst of changing nappies, but frankly it just seemed more like sleepless nights and a juggling act just to keep the balance of life at home and work.

I remember a friend of mine with teenage children who had just left home saying to me that he finally felt as if he was reconnecting with the passion he had for his faith in his early adulthood. He admitted he hadn't prayed much or engaged in any kind of mission while his kids were at home and he described parenthood as like 'being on a treadmill.' I did the math and thought, if we had 3 kids and they left home at 18 (unlikely) with a couple of years between each, that would be around 22 years of my life on that treadmill. So, when I found myself staring down the barrel of nappies, kindy runs, teenage hormones and all of the responsibilities of parenting, I wondered if God really intended for us to get on the treadmill and largely ignore prayer and mission at home for two decades.

So I did my best to set up some personal rhythms of prayer, committing to taking time to read my Bible, spend time in silence, and morning and evening prayer. I treated prayer as a private exercise and added it to my

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long list of things to do on top of our busy home and work life. As a Pastor this was simpler for me than most, since the flexibility of my working day gave me ample time to do this.

A year down the track I realized I my family and I were more stressed and stretched than ever. What was my problem? I had somehow decided it was a good idea to compartmentalise my life and go on my own heroic journey of prayer. It doesn't help that most of the so-called heroes of prayer seem to have been single and celibate. It should have been obvious, but living like a monk isn't feasible when you have a family. Something had to change.

IT BEGINS WITH BABY STEPS

For the past two years, I've served as the Vicar at St John's in Timaru. My family and I moved to Timaru from Christchurch and it meant a personal cost for all of us. We left family and friends behind to go out on a mission, Jo left her job teaching, and we left our support networks to venture out. This was the moment God chose to shake me out of my individualistic complacency. We had to do this together or we wouldn't last.

First, it started with some honest conversations with Jo. How could we keep the fires of a vibrant prayer life burning in our household? What would it look like? What would it mean to do ministry together and involve our kids? We started talking over coffee together, then we committed to rhythms that we could sustain in our little household.

To begin with we carved out space for evening prayer together once the kids were in bed and before we crashed. We introduced times of eating together and prayer with our family around the table, lighting a candle over dinner, saying grace and having meaningful conversation about our day. We introduced a rhythm of reading devotions with our kids before bed and we created space where each of us could take quiet time aside to read the Bible daily.

What we've discovered as we've done this is that God has drawn us closer together as a family through prayer. We have a growing sense of shared mission and ministry and have begun to invite other families with young children into our home to share our lives and work out how to cultivate a culture of shared prayer and ministry as families. Prayer together is helping form us as a family-on-mission and is creating an extended family of other parents and children on the journey!

Being a Mum or Dad is busy, having a young family is hectic. Too often we can separate our family life from our vocation to be disciples of Jesus. During this busy stage of life many of us might struggle just make it to church, let alone a Bible study or to volunteer our time for a ministry programme of some kind. We often feel guilty as a result. But what if instead we simply looked for the small opportunities to pray, play and do mission together in the complexities of everyday life as a family?

For discussion

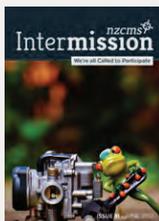
What does prayer look like for you in this stage of life? How is it different to previous stages?

Do you relate to Joshua's experience of seeing prayer as a private exercise?

Are there baby steps you can be taking to grow as a prayerful (extended) family-on-mission?

Intermission Catalogue

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#31 WE'RE ALL CALLED TO PARTICIPATE

Mission isn't just for the 'professional Christians.'



#30 WE'RE ALL CALLED TO BELONG

No more lone rangers – mission only happens together.



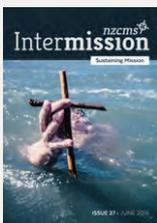
#29 MAKING MISSION THE CENTRE

Five missional postures we're all called to live out.



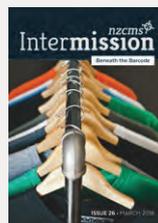
#28 THE PARADOX OF SHORT-TERM MISSION

Short-term teams can be a blessing or a curse, it's up to you.



#27 SUSTAINING MISSION

Does caring for creation distract from our main focus or not?



#26 BENEATH THE BARCODE

Modern-day slavery: are your contributing or challenging?

Since NZCMS is a charity, we appreciate (though don't require) donations for back issues.