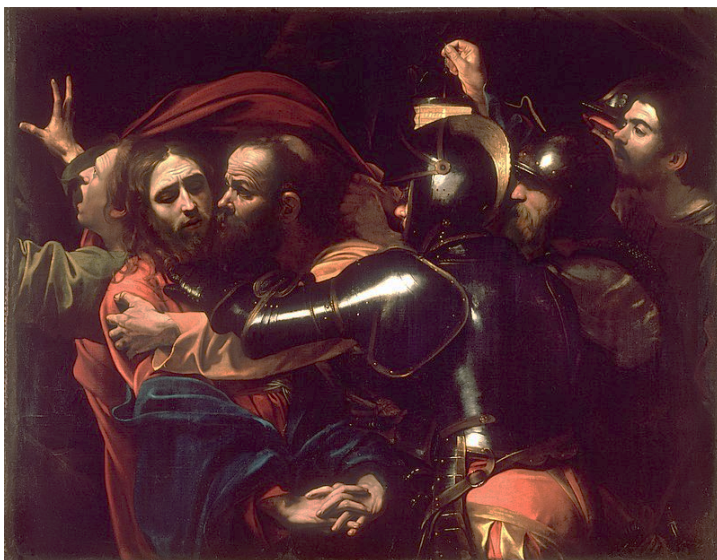


# Lest the Cross be Emptied of Its Power

*A 30-minute Meditation Booklet on MARK 14-16*

## WEEK TWO



*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach  
the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest  
the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those  
who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it  
is the power of God.*

- 1Corinthians 1:17,18 -

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## Meditation Suggestion

Christians should not view Good Friday as a day of leisure, but a day of devotion and worship. In the past years, we have gathered brothers and sisters one week before Good Friday to meditate on the passion of Christ. This has always felt too hasty to commemorate the Word Incarnate and His wondrous work on the Calvary Cross.

This year, we hope to use one entire month to do it. We will read through the passion account recorded in the Gospel of Mark, beginning with Chapter 14. This was the time when Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly "*in the name of the Lord*". It is also the final week before the Lord's crucifixion.

We have a total of four booklets, one for each week; five devotion passages per week, one for each day. Each devotion is divided into four parts: scripture reading, pastoral sharing, personal reflection and prayer. You can also find a few hymns printed at the back of the booklet.

You may set aside 30 minutes each day, meditate on the given scripture passage, sing a hymn, write down your reflection, and end off with a prayer of confession and dedication. I believe your relationship with the Lord will grow deeper.

We have also dedicated four Wednesday *Life Bible Study* sessions that lead up to Good Friday for you to share your learnings. This way we can encourage and edify one another with our spiritual blessings.

Due to this year's COVID-19 outbreak, many of us now have additional time to rest from work and from worldly leisure. Let us use this time to draw near to God to meditate on –

*this **great and mighty Saviour** whose work shook the heavens and earth,*

*this **amazing Grace** which even the angels long to look into,*

*this **Missionary** for whom Abraham willingly forsake his riches and Paul willingly gave up his honoured religious position to follow,*

*this **Word of life** for which generations of godly saints before us did not hesitate to guard with their lives.*

May the Lord wipe off the earthly dust which has settled on our souls, lift the fancy veil which has obscured the sight of our faith, remove the yeast of sin which has been fermenting in our lives, and spur us on to carry the cross once again to follow the Lord Jesus, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power over us.

## WEEK TWO: Arrest and Trial

### Day One: The Victorious Prayer

*Mark 14:32-42*

*<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."*

*<sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

*<sup>37</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

*<sup>39</sup> Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. <sup>40</sup> When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.*

*<sup>41</sup> Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"*

### Pastoral Sharing

"Gethsemane" means "oil press" in Hebrew. This is a garden located on a slope of the Mount of Olives, a place where the Lord Jesus frequented to pray, and tonight was no exception.

As each scene unfolds through the night in Gethsemane, they reveal the extraordinary humility of the Son of God. Look, all things are from him and through him and for him, yet he has to bear the sins of this world, so much so that “his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”.

“Abba” is a Hebrew term used by young children as an intimate address for their fathers. This is the only record in the gospels where Jesus the holy Son calls out to the holy Father in this way. The cup that was laid before Jesus was not filled with man’s sin, but with God’s wrath! Even the Son of God was deeply distressed and troubled. Look, we have weighed upon the Lord a heavy burden of sin!

On that night, the holy Son who descended to this world, cried out to his holy Father in heaven. “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” If it is the Father’s will to drink this cup, he shall not refuse. By his divinity, Jesus the holy Son, having the same honour, glory and power with the holy Father, has every authority to deny this cup. But by his humanity, he humbled himself and prayed to the Father in tears. Ah, how can man in our fallen state understand the spiritual struggle behind this cup with our limited intellect and emotions?

*<sup>11</sup>And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup>The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

*Romans 13:11-12*

Two pictures of stark contrast were unveiled in the garden of Gethsemane: one of the Lord Jesus praying fervently in his spiritual suffering, the other of his disciples falling asleep in weariness. Do not look upon the three disciples with disappointment, for didn’t we also fall asleep in our spirit when

we do not pray enough in times of temptation? Aren't we always willing to do many things for the Lord, but end up weak in the flesh? How do we overcome this? Just as what the Lord Jesus told his disciples: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

On that night, there were two battles in the garden of Gethsemane, one fought by the Lord Jesus, another by the disciples. The Lord Jesus triumphed, and was no longer distressed or troubled, because he submitted his will to the will of the Father. Though it is very difficult to give up our own will, we will have true peace and victory when we submit to the will of God.

On the other hand, the disciples lost the fight, because they succumbed to the weakness of the flesh. When they did not pray, they fell into temptation and fell asleep. Oh what a treasure is the power of prayer, and only those who belong to God have access to this privilege! But they have to pray in spirit and in truth. In the same way, Jesus has commanded us to pray for the church and for the gospel in this spiritual war. Yet don't we also fall asleep while Christ intercedes for us? The Lord is not angry with us, but says "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?" O Lord, how great is your patience towards us!

*"Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"* The Lord did not run away from the soldiers who were coming to arrest him, instead he went towards the one who betrayed him. The prayer that was offered with sweat that fell like drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane is a prayer of victory!

Rise, let us go and be courageous to respond to God's calling. Be watchful and pray, for we shall surely have victory over sin!



## Personal Reflection

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## Confession and dedication





## Day Two: They fled and deserted Him

*Mark 14:43-52*

*<sup>43</sup> Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.*

*<sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>46</sup> The men seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.*

*<sup>48</sup> "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? <sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." <sup>50</sup> Then everyone deserted him and fled.*

*<sup>51</sup> A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, <sup>52</sup> he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.*

## Pastoral Sharing

It was dark in the night at the garden of Gethsemane, and it was difficult to see who was there. The Lord Jesus brought his disciples to meet his betrayer Judas (John 18:4).

To “kiss” as a greeting is a sign of respect and affability. Before Judas kissed Jesus, he even honoured him by calling him “Rabbi”. This intimate address was like a brutal dagger, signalling to the guards that this man was Jesus, and they should “arrest him and lead him away under guard.”

Clearly, the religious leaders were afraid of the people, so they waited till it was night. They arrested Jesus forcefully as if they were capturing a violent criminal, but Jesus was unarmed and helpless. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet, “Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” (Zachariah 13:7)

Look, the people in the garden of Gethsemane fled in all direction out of fear. The sound of swords being drawn out of sheaths and the raging shouts of the soldiers tore through the once quiet garden. The breath of danger filled the atmosphere, signalling an imminent blood-stained battle that was about to commence.

Jesus’ disciples scattered in fear, and a young man even fled naked, leaving his costly linen garment behind. Traditional commentary believes that this young man was Mark. From a spiritual perspective, this could be you or me in reality, because:

*<sup>8</sup> In the whole land,” declares the Lord,  
“two-thirds will be struck down and perish;  
yet one-third will be left in it.  
<sup>9</sup> This third I will put into the fire;  
I will refine them like silver  
and test them like gold.  
They will call on my name  
and I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are my people,’*

*and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'*  
*Zechariah 13:8-9*

*"If you are looking for me, then let these men go." -John 18:8-*  
*When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*  
*-John 18:6-*

*Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the*  
*cup the Father has given me?"*  
*- John 18:11-*

The Lord Jesus was not intimidated, we can see his courage, his righteousness, his love for his disciples, and his determination to accomplish the will of the Father. Because of his righteousness, mercy and wisdom, a blood-stained battle was averted in the garden of Gethsemane.

Our Lord Jesus placed himself into the hands of sinners. From that moment, he surrendered himself to them to decide his life and death; in fact, the one who had true authority was God.



## Personal Reflection

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### Confession and dedication



Day Three: But their statements did not agree

*Mark 14:53-59*

*53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at a*

*distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.*

*<sup>55</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. <sup>56</sup> Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.*

*<sup>57</sup> Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: <sup>58</sup> "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'" <sup>59</sup> Yet even then their testimony did not agree.*

## **Pastoral Sharing**

What followed was six trials against the Lord Jesus, and these demonstrated the greatest hypocrisy and mockery in the history of mankind.

First, he was tried under Jewish law, then under Roman law. The former included the initial trial by the ex-high priest Annas and the overnight trial by the Sanhedrin. The latter included the trial by the Roman governor Pilate, the trial by the Roman-appointed Jewish king Herod Antipas and the final judgment from Pilate. This scripture passage records the overnight trial by the Sanhedrin. This Jewish council was the highest order of the Jewish courts at that time, with seventy members consisting of the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and elders, led by the high priest Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin had great authority, but they were not able to issue the death sentence. Thus, they had to first convict Jesus with a charge and then have the Roman governor pronounce the death sentence.

The council was to conduct public hearings at the market hall near the synagogue. However, on that night, they conducted a

closed-door interrogation and examination in the house of Caiaphas the high priest. It was late in the night, but they were not willing to wait till morning, for they had already prepared the charge against Jesus and all the false witnesses were ready with their testimony. They must send Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate by early dawn before the people could react and riot, and they have Jesus executed on the same day. They were like vicious wolves ensnaring a helpless prey.

They wanted to accuse Jesus of plotting to destroy the temple. The problem was: the testimony of all the witnesses did not agree, thus he could not be convicted according to the law. Alas, these experts in the law did not bother to judge those who are bearing false testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15-20), instead they searched for another charge to hang on the Innocent!

*<sup>7</sup> "Hear me, you who know what is right,  
you people who have taken my instruction to heart:  
Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals  
or be terrified by their insults.*

*<sup>8</sup> For the moth will eat them up like a garment;  
the worm will devour them like wool.  
But my righteousness will last forever,  
my salvation through all generations."*

*Isaiah 51:7,8*

These teachers of the law were called by God to teach and practise the law, but on God's very own Son they completely defied the righteousness and grace of the law! How evil is man's heart towards God!

It is a grave sin to suppress justice as justice is what God is. To falsely accuse God's children is to accuse God (Acts 9:4). Dear saints, when the time arises for you to act in righteousness, it is vital to first rid yourself of even the slightest hint of personal interest, and then fill your heart with the love of Calvary.



## Personal Reflection

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## Confession and dedication



## Day Four: “Are you the Son of the Blessed One?”

*Mark 14: 60-65*

*60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.*

*Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”*

*62 “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

*63 The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. 64 “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”*

*They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him.*



## Pastoral Sharing

They found no legal basis to charge Jesus, because the law of God is righteous. Through this all, the Lord Jesus remained silent, because the lies exposed themselves without any need of defence. They were agitated by the Lord's silence, for they were eager to find evidence against Jesus by his own words. Though they were not able to convict Jesus, they were not willing to release him either. The entire trial by the Sanhedrin came to a standstill.

*<sup>8</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent  
so he did not open his mouth.  
- Isaiah 53:7*

The high priest had a trump card in his hands. He stood up and asked Jesus,

"Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

All creatures in the physical and spiritual realms of the whole universe held their breath, awaiting the Lord's reply. This question led the focus of the trial to the most essential truth in heavens and on earth, and the reply of the Lord Jesus is the apex of Christology. "I am the Messiah, Son of the living God. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The Lord Jesus used the prophecy of the end times from the prophet Daniel. This was also a stern warning to those who resisted him: You are resisting the Messiah of God! Today they judge the Son of God on the judgment seat on earth; on the Day of the Lord, the Son of God shall judge them on the judgment seat in heaven. Alas, in order to accomplish our

salvation, our Lord had to yield himself to the corrupted religious authority for a little while. In fact, he already had the absolute victory.

At this moment, if the members of the Sanhedrin had stilled themselves, pondered in silence and asked themselves, "What if he truly is the Son of God, what will become of me?" they would have heard the alarm of their conscience sounding and put an end to the trial. Unfortunately, power and pride had consumed their souls. "They all condemned him as worthy of death". They volunteered to be witnesses of a false accusation, and eventually they will be held responsible for crucifying the Son of God.

Among them, some spat on his face, some struck him with their fists, beat him, and mocked him. Woe be unto them!

*<sup>7</sup> "Look, he is coming with the clouds,"  
and "every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him";  
and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him."  
So shall it be! Amen.*

*Revelation 1:7*

"You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven to judge sinners, and his kingdom shall rule over all." May this heavenly scene that shall surely come to pass be deeply engraved on our hearts, as we tread cautiously through the briars in this world.



## Personal Reflection

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**Confession and dedication**



## Day Five: Triple Denial

*Mark 14: 66-72*

*<sup>66</sup> While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup> When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.*

*“You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.*

*<sup>68</sup> But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway.*

*<sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it.*

*After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”*

*<sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”*

*<sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.*

### Pastoral Sharing

There stood Jesus in the house, fearlessly confessing his identity under trial. And here stood Peter at the courtyard outside

the house, nervously / timidly denying Jesus as his Lord three times.

*<sup>32</sup> Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 10:32, 33*

Actually, the fact that Peter followed the crowd into the courtyard and stayed waiting for the verdict of the trial proved that his courage and love for the Lord surpassed that of the others. He was indeed a worthy leader of the disciples. But his failure to understand that Jesus must suffer death and would resurrect caused him to stumble over fear and panic. It is no wonder the Lord commands us to “be watchful and pray”.

The Holy Spirit inspired all four gospel writers to record Peter’s denial in the Bible as a forewarning to the church. Even the great apostle could deny his beloved Lord three times while under oppression, how then can we be sure we will stand firm? It is therefore imperative that we never cease gathering for the church prayer meeting, notwithstanding the virus outbreak. Are you there?

Though Peter denied the Lord three times, the Lord forgave him, restored him, and kept his apostleship. The Lord also used him greatly to build up the early church and to preach the gospel beyond Jerusalem. O the amazing grace of God! Throughout the ages, the triple denial accounts in the Bible has encouraged and restored many saints! May we remember the words of Jesus at the first wake-up crow of the rooster and immediately “break down and weep” and be restored!



## Personal Reflection



## Just as I Am

by Charlotte Elliot 1789-1871

1. *Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*
2. *Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot;  
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*
3. *Just as I am, though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt;  
Fighting within, and fears without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*
4. *Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;  
Yes, all I need, in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*
5. *Just as I am, thou will receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*
6. *Just as I am, Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down;  
Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*

## I Surrender All

by Judson W. Van de Venter 1855-1939

1. *All to Jesus I surrender  
All to Him I freely give  
I will ever love and trust Him  
In His presence daily live  
  
I surrender all  
I surrender all  
All to Thee my blessed Saviour  
I surrender all*
2. *All to Jesus I surrender  
Humbly at His feet I bow  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken  
Take me Jesus take me now*
3. *All to Jesus I surrender  
Make me Saviour wholly Thine  
Let me feel the Holy Spirit  
Truly know that Thou art mine*
4. *All to Jesus I surrender  
Lord I give myself to Thee  
Fill me with Thy love and power  
Let Thy blessings fall on me*
5. *All to Jesus I surrender  
Now I feel the sacred flame  
Oh the joy of full salvation  
Glory glory to His name*



## Amazing Grace

by John Newton 1779

1. *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.*
2. *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.*
3. *Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.*
4. *The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.*
5. *Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.*
6. *The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.*
7. *When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.*

## Under an Eastern Sky

*Lyrics by Albert Benjamin Simpson 1843-1919*

1. *Under an eastern sky,  
Amid a rabble's cry,  
A Man went forth to die,  
For me! for me!*
2. *Thorn-crowned His blessed head,  
Blood-stained His every tread;  
Cross-laden He was led,  
For me! for me!*
3. *Pierced His hands and feet,  
Three hours o'er Him beat  
Fierce rays of noon-tide heat,  
For me! for me!*
4. *Thus wert Thou made all mine;  
Lord, make me wholly Thine;  
Grant grace and strength divine  
To me! to me!*
5. *In thought and word and deed,  
Thy will to do, O lead  
My soul, e'en though it bleed,  
To Thee, to Thee.*

## Lord I was Blind; I Could Not See

by William Tidd Matson, 1833-1899

1. *Lord, I was blind; I could not see  
In Thy marred visage any grace,  
But now the beauty of Thy face  
In radiant vision dawns on me.*
2. *Lord, I was deaf; I could not hear  
The thrilling music of Thy voice;  
But now I hear Thee and rejoice,  
And all Thine uttered words are dear!*
3. *Lord, I was dumb; I could not speak  
The grace and glory of Thy name;  
But now, as touched with living flame,  
My lips Thine eager praises wake.*
4. *Lord, I was dead; I could not stir  
My lifeless soul to come to Thee;  
But now, since Thou hast quickened me,  
I rise from sin's dark sepulcher.*
5. *For Thou hast made the blind to see,  
The deaf to hear, the dumb to speak,  
The dead to live; and, lo, I break  
The chains of my captivity.*

