

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR APRIL 2023

You will find reading the Bible rewarding and encouraging,
but reading the Bible is not always easy!

These guidelines may help you.

Before you read each passage, ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Set aside a special time each day to read the Bible, and stick to it!

Make use of your Bible index to find readings – every Bible has a contents page.

Pray that what you have read will help you live according to God's wishes.

April 1st **2 Samuel 5:17-25**

The description of the battles in the Old Testament helps us to grasp some of the political turmoil in the Middle East today. For as the present day Jews claim their ancestry back to the Israelites so the present day Palestinians can claim their origins back to the Philistines. And both of these peoples claim descent way back to Abraham. In a kind of family feud that has been raging for as long as anyone cares to remember it is Christ who is an answer to bring these feuding groups together through his teaching.

April 2nd 2 Samuel 6:1-15

In the context of dancing and singing the Israelites were getting a bit carried away with themselves and it was Uzzah who became too familiar with the Covenant Box (the box holding the ten commandments and symbolising the presence of God). Uzzah's sudden death was a warning to them that God requires respect and is not to be treated disrespectfully.

April 3rd 2 Samuel 7:1-17

God inspires the prophet Nathan to tell King David that his dynasty will never end. We discover in the lineage of Jesus that through Mary and Joseph, Jesus was descended from King David and that Nathan's prophecy was fulfilled to this very day. But Nathan had another message. It was to say that one of David's sons was to build a temple where God would be worshipped.

April 4th 2 Samuel 7:18-28

In this prayer of David we see what made David such a great leader. His political skills are unquestioned. But it is David's faith in God that made him truly a worthy leader of his people. His priorities are seen in this prayer together with his humbleness and love for God and his people.

April 5th 2 Samuel 19:24-30

Another example of the way David deals with individuals is seen in this story of Mephibosheth, the grandson of David's predecessor. David takes pity on this unfortunate soul and grants him a royal pardon. David's mercy was widely recognised as his fairness.

April 6th 2 Samuel 19:31-39

Barzillai is described as a very old man. He was eighty years old. He had supported David's military campaigns. David never forgot this and wants to show his appreciation by inviting Barzillai to live in the royal palace in Jerusalem. David again shows us his compassion in this example of dealing with the elderly. He gives them respect and whilst recognising that they are not as fit as they once were the aged require our respect.

April 7th 2 Samuel 22:1-7

David is credited with being a harp player and great composer and singer of songs. Throughout the story of David we encounter his musical ability which he used in the main to glorify God. He is credited with writing most of the Psalms and here is a song of victory.

April 8th 2 Samuel 22: 36-51

The notion of a sense of 'justice' is dealing with people fairly. It is not just for God to love those who do wrong. We say today that we must love the sinner but hate the sin. But if the sinner goes on sinning and flaunting the love of God then we must expect the wrath of God to be also present, if God is just. David's prayer reflects God's justice in that we see a balance between those who follow the ways of God contrasted with those who obstruct the ways of God.

April 9th 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Until his death, David was faithful unto God. David recognized God's promises and he believed them to be true. David sought to worship God in the way that he lived his life. Even although he did make mistakes God still was able to use his faithfulness to bring the kingdom of God ever closer to the people of God. Happy Easter!

April 10th I Timothy 1:1-11

At the start of this letter we see the customary way in which the letter was addressed. The young Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Paul writes to Timothy to encourage him in his ministry but also to warn him of those who held false views. Timothy was being urged to get the believers to focus on the issues that really mattered in the faith.

April 11th I Timothy 1:12-20

Paul calls himself 'the worst of the sinners'. All of us are lost to sin in need of redemption. Those who do not think so are lost in themselves and lost to God. For God can only redeem those who recognized that they need to be forgiven. And so Paul can say 'God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his patience in dealing with me'.

April 12th I Timothy 2:1-15

Paul sets out to show Timothy what he should be praying for and how order should be maintained in worship. We know from the beginning of the letter that Timothy was in Ephesus. Ephesus was at the heart of the Greek world and was one of the major ports. It had this in common with Corinth. We know that the women at Corinth caused problems

in worship by calling out during prayer. Paul did not allow worship to disintegrate into a rabble so here he instructs Timothy in how to keep order.

April 13th I Timothy 3:1-7

Today we have before us Paul's list of qualities that a church leader should have. They are very plain in their meaning and understanding. The tragedy today is that instead of using this list as minimum requirements we have turned it into something that we should try to strive to attain!

April 14th I Timothy 3:8-13

Helpers in the church are expected to be of good character. Paul's letters are an amazing mixture of theology on one hand, mixed with good practical advice on the other. Both are required as advice that is not grounded in God is worthless and theology spoken with no action is useless.

April 15th I Timothy 3:14-4:5

The Gnostics (from the Greek meaning 'knowledge') held a belief that Jesus was only a spiritual being and therefore the world and all that it contained was to be rejected as we waited to join God in an afterlife on a spiritual level. Such a belief led to thinking that to engage in this world was wrong. Paul rejects Gnostic teaching and reminds Timothy that it is not wrong to marry or eat food created by God.

April 16th I Timothy 4:6-16

Paul who recognized that some might reject him on account of his youth, encouraged Timothy. Paul urges him that age has nothing to do with preaching and sharing of the Gospel it is the level of faith that matters.

April 17th I Timothy 5:1-16

Paul spells out the relationships that God expects to be found among those who call themselves followers of Christ. The model Paul uses is that of the family. We are to look upon each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, and treating others in the Church as members of our own family.

April 18th I Timothy 5:17-6:2

Timothy is encouraged to receive from the believers his wages for carrying out God's work. The ox that is threshing corn must not be muzzled because it is allowed to eat while it is working. We see that Paul views the relationships between Christians to be able to bridge across the barriers that exist in society. Those things that divide us in the world, such as race, social class or wealth can be united through the Gospel.

April 19th I Timothy 6:2-10

It is the love of money that is the source of all kinds of evil, not money itself. Resources (in the form of our wealth) can be used greatly to the glory of God. Like most worldly things, it is how we view them that count. All great discoveries and inventions can inspire us but the sinfulness of the human condition can always be so inventive as to find a way to divert our worship of God into more sinister things.

April 20th I Timothy 6:11-21

Paul's conclusion to his letter to Timothy is uplifting and challenging. These words are liberating for the spirit for they contain the sentiment of the Gospel. Discipline and obedience are necessary and essential ingredients in the Christian life. Leaves may scatter as the wind blows, but the man or woman of God is under divine control.

FAITH

April 21st Mark 5:25-34

The desperation of faith! All other hopes of a cure had been tried and they had failed. Notice that the woman had no doubt that Jesus could heal. Her only doubt concerned her ability to get near enough to touch Him. Notice the certainty. What justification did she have for this certainty? None- but there is never any justification for faith. Faith is stepping out into the dark unknown, confident only in God.

April 22nd Mark 11:20-26

This is without doubt one of the most difficult of passages in the New Testament. v24 reminds us that prayer must always be the prayer of faith for God is able to accomplish that which we ask. If God does not grant what we ask, it is not because God is unable to, but because God has something else for us in mind. Our prayers must be offered with the qualification, not "*if You can do it*", but "*if it be Your Will.*"

April 23rd Romans 4:1-12

Abraham was always seen as the great example of a man of faith. It was from such faith that God accepted him as righteous. How wrong to think that we will earn God's favour by our generosity or our busyness.

April 24th 1Peter 1:3-12

Often we can be tempted to give up and take an easier way. But hold on! God has something better for you. Keep the faith!

JOY and PEACE

April 25th John 16:16-24

It is a strange paradox but gladness, true gladness, always springs from sadness. True joy always springs from a sense of fulfilment. Something has to be overcome, darkness has given way to light. Such joy has a depth and endurance that happiness from an easy life cannot possess.

April 26th Romans 5:1-11

"We have peace with God"- there can be no greater joy than that of a man or a woman who is at peace with God. This is not the joy of the music hall hilarity but a sense of serene contentment that reaches the very depths of a person's being- peace with God through Christ. What bliss!

April 27th Hebrews 12:12-17

It is not given for someone to experience such bliss for the rest of his or her life. More often such a foretaste is to convince us of its reality and then we can return to our daily life with a new vigour. The tired hands and trembling knees are strengthened. The danger is that temptation is ever present like a weed in the garden trying to choke out the flowers of beauty. True joy and peace come from God alone.

April 28th Nehemiah 8:9-12

After a long time in exile the people of God return back to Jerusalem. Their pent up emotions give way to a torrent of tears. But these are tears of joy from a sense of being in the holiness of God. True joy and holiness are not far apart. Notice that Nehemiah invites them to share their joy with others. This is true evangelism- the sharing with others that which is our dearest possession, the joy of God.

April 29th John 20:19-23

Is it possible to know the terror, the anguish, the sense of total loss that lay behind those closed doors? Then the risen Christ appeared and there was joy and there was peace. What a transformation! That is always the transformation that takes place when the risen Christ comes into a person's life.

April 30th Philippians 4:4-9

Again joy and peace- the peace which is far beyond our human understanding. We are encouraged to fill our minds with things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable. How can we ever again be satisfied with the tawdry baubles that the world offers us as an alternative?