

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR JULY 2023

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.

July 1st

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 recognized as his fairness.

July 2nd

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 recognizing that they are not as fit as they once were the aged require our respect.

July 3^r

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.

July 4th

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.

July 5th

Until his death, David was faithful to God. David recognised 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.

GROWING IN GRACE

July 6th **1 Samuel 2:18-26**

We begin a series on *spiritual growth*. In v26 we hear of Samuel growing to gain favor with God and men. There is physical growth; infancy, childhood, youth and adult. But God intends us to grow also spiritually. Eli's sons had grown into men but their spiritual growth had halted. In spite of their father's pleading, they had become a by-word in the whole land for ungodliness.

July 7th **1Corinthians 13:8-13**

Growth involves leaving behind what we have outgrown. The clothes we wore as children are no longer any use to us as adults, the book and toys that once gave us so much pleasure no longer satisfy. In the spiritual life we become aware of development in our knowledge, prayer and service. Paul realize that to be fully grown he had to discard speech, feelings ands thinking which belonged to a child.

July 8th **1Kings 11:1-13**

Solomon began his reign with real faithfulness. Now we see him turning from God in disobedience (V10). The reason was that for political reasons he married many foreign princesses. They brought with them their own customs and led Solomon away from God. At Solomon's end only a small part of the kingdom remained under his son. We see a link between national prosperity and spiritual fidelity. TO THINK ABOUT- Is spiritual 'broad-mindedness' a mark of grace, or of disloyalty to God?

July 9th **2Chronicles 25:1-16**

Again we see the link between faith and the peace of a nation. When God sends the prophet to challenge the king, the prophet is threatened with death. TO THINK ABOUT- drug abuse, unruly behaviour, a lack of respect for other people, overcrowded prisons- are these in any way related to our half empty churches?

July 10th **John 6:53-70**

Here are some people turning away from Jesus because they do not understand him. To have faith means still to trust even when I cannot understand. We must not put our own intellect before Christ's trustworthiness.

July 11th **Ephesians 4:12-16**

We have been thinking of some of the attitudes that destroy faith. Now we begin to think of where faith leads us. The goal of spiritual growth is surely to 'become a mature people, reaching the very height of Christ's full stature' (verse 13). Within the church we strengthen, encourage and support one another- but we must never loose sight of the objective that is to grow to the height of Christ's full stature.

July 12th **1Thessalonians 3:6-13**

Today we see a link between spiritual growth of the individual and the degree of fellowship within a congregation. Our love of one another is also for "all people". "In this way," Paul says, "He will strengthen you and you will be perfect and holy". Our spiritual growth can be advanced if we are part of a fellowship of faith and love, and this, is what every congregation ought to be.

July 13th 2Peter 1:3-11

If we are failing to live a 'truly religious life' then the fault is with us and not God as God has provided all that is needed. Spiritual maturity therefore is something that we can and must develop ourselves. TO THINK ABOUT- How much effort do I really put in to being a Christian?

July 14th Psalm 84:1-7

Here are some of the characteristics of righteousness. First, there is a sense of joy to be in God's House and engage in God's worship. Worship becomes an experience to be desired and enjoyed. Allied to this is an increased spiritual strength. Life is not a bed of roses for the spiritual pilgrim – we still have to pass through the dry valley of Baca; there will still be family bereavements and personal pains but as our spiritual strength increases these become less trying and easier to bear.

July 15th Psalm 92

As we look around we cannot but notice that many openly reject God nevertheless appear to prosper in life. The Psalmist is clear that they will be destroyed. The Psalmist also claims that the righteous will flourish like palm trees. But how do we measure such prosperity? Is prosperity a matter of long life, luxury, business success or public recognition? Or is the ultimate objective of the righteous person different from these?

July 16th Proverbs 4:1-27

The spiritual life is described by two metaphors; a journey and a dawn. In the spiritual life there is this sense of movement, of moving along and of new light as a growing awareness of the love and purpose of God is more clearly understood.

July 17th 1Timothy 4:6-16

Paul is writing to a young Christian and friend. Here we find Paul encouraging Timothy to grow spiritually through his effort to 'feed yourself' (v6); 'keep away from godless legends' (v7); 'struggle and hard work' (v10); 'be an example' (v12); 'give your time and effort' (v13). This does not happen by itself we need to take time to grow in faith.

July 18th John 10:7-21

Jesus claimed to have come "that you may have life in all its fullness" (v10). The implication is that life without Christ is lacking in some respect, and that only with Christ can life reach its full potential. We must decide if Christ's claim is true or false!

July 19th Ephesians 3:14-21

Today we read of this 'fullness of Christ'. The qualities mentioned in this passage cannot be experienced other than by faith. To the unspiritual person they simply do not exist. Note how Paul desperately wants his friends in Ephesus to have these qualities (v14).

July 20th Romans 8:1-8

‘Fullness in Christ’ is NOT merely a desirable extra to life, but is absolutely essential if we are to avoid spiritual death and enjoy spiritual life. TO THINK ABOUT- is spiritual life in heaven real or is it just a nice thought or notion?

July 21^s 1Corinthians 2:10-16

Over the past days we have seen it is possible to be physically alive but spiritually dead, and physically dead yet spiritually alive. To those who rely on human intelligence such a statement is non-sensical. Our awareness of spiritual truth is not the result of human reasoning but of God's Holy Spirit revealing such truth to us.

July 22nd **Philippians 2:1-12**

The basic requirement for the Christian life is to be Christ-like (see v4). People who are in fellowship with Christ cannot but be in fellowship with each other. Here is a truth many fail to understand. We therefore can only be reconciled to one another when each is reconciled to God through Christ. TO THINK ABOUT- what is the real role of the Church in politics and international affairs?

July 23rd **Psalm 48**

The Psalms deal with the real issues of life. Psalm 48 reveals something of the supremacy of spiritual trust and faith. The Holy City (Jerusalem) is seen bringing joy to the whole world. The greatest power for the world to realize is not of the physical military power of hatred but the power of God.

July 24th **Psalm 119:57-64**

We like to excise our own freedom and so we turn away from God. But this is why the history of humanity is littered with disaster and suffering. The Psalmist has seen the error of his ways and turns to follow God's way.

July 25th **Romans 11:33-12:3**

It is possible to know about the love of God and the desirability of living a Christ-like life. But God does not just want us to know about this, God wants us to live it as well. It is therefore necessary for us to make a decision, as Paul, to “try to be like Christ”.

July 26th **Philippians 4:1-9**

Paul is encouraging the Church to be living examples of the faith. Note he is not saying, “*try to* fill your minds” but he states “Fill you minds”. These virtues are not optional extras, they are the ingredients of the life of faith.

July 27th **Galatians 6:1-6**

Helping to carry one another's burdens is surely one obvious mark of the Christian fellowship. TO THINK ABOUT- Why should I bother carrying other folks burdens when I have enough of my own?

July 28th **Galatians 6:7-10**

We reap what we sow. Our fellowship is what we make of it. If our love is cold and unwelcoming then it is up to us to get God back into our heart. We can do that by bringing that which we ourselves have been given to offer it to others also.

July 29th

John 15:1-4

Any gardener will need to prune the dead branches in order that new life may come. We are encouraged to remain in the vine that is Jesus that we may bear fruit as part of God's vine and that we should be prepared for pruning as well. It is good to ask what parts of my life need pruning in order that my spiritual life may go on to produce even more fruit?

July 30th

John 15:5-10

"For you can do nothing without me", says Jesus. Everything we do in our spiritual lives must be in Christ. For we can do nothing that is of God without Jesus. "If I have no love", says Paul, "then I am nothing".

July 31st

John 15:11-17

We are encouraged to enrich life through love. This is not a human love but a love inspired by God and seen in Christ. That is a sacrificial love that is prepared to die for the love of another. It is this deep and rich love that enables our lives to be fulfilled and complete.