

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR NOVEMBER 2023
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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.

November 1st Ephesians 1:1-14

Paul is writing to the Church in Ephesus, but notice how he addresses the Christians there – God's people. The actual word he uses in the Greek is *hagiois*, which literally means 'saints'. In v4 he says that God has chosen us 'so that we would be holy' and again it is the same word *hagious*. In v13 he refers to the Holy Spirit, and again it is the word *hagio*. In other words, everyone who acknowledges Jesus Christ as the Son of God – and obeys him – is a saint! Today is All Saints Day!

November 2nd Isaiah 49:8-16

In this passage God is speaking to the people of Jerusalem and note how they are addressed: v8 *His people*; v11 & 12 *My people*; v13 *The Lord will comfort His people*. Again we see that those who trust in God are, in a very special way, God's people.

November 3rd Genesis 6:5-22

We are reading of a time when the whole earth was filled with sin and wickedness, yet God was not blind to the man who walked in God's ways. God was pleased with Noah; v10 Noah lived in fellowship with God; v22 Noah did everything that God commanded. God never forgets the saints.

November 4th Psalm 98

The key verse is v3. Notice that a) God keeps promises to God's people; b) God is loyal to God's people; c) God constantly loves God's people. No wonder the rest of the psalm is a song of joyous praise for such a God.

November 5th Romans 5:1-11

This week we are thinking of the special relationship that exists between God and God's people. No wonder v11 speaks of our rejoicing because of what God has done. It is beyond us to understand just what God has done for God's people, God's saints.

November 6th Hebrews 10:19-25

In the Temple in Jerusalem there was a series of courts and different kinds of people were strictly banned from going beyond a particular area. For instance, foreigners could not go beyond the court of the Gentiles, and women could go no further than the court of the Women. In the very center there was the Holy of Holies, a curtained area into which only the High Priest could enter on one special day every year. It is against the background of

this knowledge that today's passage must be read. By the death of Christ, it is now possible for all of God's people, whatever their race or rank, to enter into the closest possible relationship with the Almighty.

November 7th Revelation 7:1-17

John of Patmos is privileged to see into the very presence of God, and he sees an enormous crowd. They are those who have endured *the terrible persecution*. Read again v15-17 and see how God rewards His saints who remain faithful to God in this earthly life.

November 8th Nehemiah 4:1-23

War may be a great sin, but it is unfortunately one of the facts of life. Even when God's people are rebuilding subjected to threat and attack. That is why Nehemiah and his men had to be constantly on guard. God's people will know God's protective power. That does not mean that we can be careless and sit at our ease. God's people have both a right and a duty to protect and defend the weak and the helpless.

REMEMBRANCE

November 9th Psalm 63

God has blessed us with memories, but what are we to remember? Are we to allow these memories to influence our whole life? It is wrong to totally disregard the past, but it is equally wrong to totally disregard the present. We do not honour God by living in a dream world of memories and dreams. The Psalmist doesn't use memory to recall the *good old days*, nor morbidly dwell on past disasters. He uses his memory to recall the constant love and eternal power of God.

November 10th Zechariah 10:6-12

Zechariah is writing at a time when the people of Israel have been scattered abroad by the superior power of foreign armies. To many of them it must have seemed as though God has forgotten all about them, but God never forgets God's people. We may think that our God forgets, but in fact God remembers God's people all the time.

November 11th Deuteronomy 4:1-10

Moses urges his people to remember forever all the great things they have seen God do. More than that, they must also pass on what they have witnessed to the following generations. What a sin if we were to forget what God has done.

November 12th Deuteronomy 6:1-15

'Israel, remember this! The Lord – and the Lord alone – is our God'. Note how often Moses hammers home this central truth – listen to the laws, obey them, love the Lord your God, never forget, teach them, tie them, wear them, write them. It may seem strange to us that people should write the laws of God on their door posts, or wear them in special boxes tied to their arms and foreheads, but Moses knew the dire consequences that would follow if God's people were ever to forget God's laws.

November 13th Isaiah 51:9-16

There are so many people, even today, who live in constant fear. They may have other names for it – nervous tension, overwork, nerves, depression, over-worry or stress. Whatever the name, the given result is always the same – a lack of peace and a sense that their lives are threatened in one way or another. Why should you live in constant fear? Have you forgotten the Lord who made you?

November 14th Isaiah 17:1-11

What a picture of disaster is depicted in these verses, and the reason is given quite simply in v10, 'Israel, you have forgotten the Lord who rescues you and who protects you like a mighty rock'. Memory is a wonderful gift from God, but how disastrous are the consequences of its misuse.

THE STORY OF JONAH

November 15th Jonah 1:1-6

Jonah is commanded by God to go to Nineveh. Instead he embarks on a ship going in the opposite direction! How tragic when God's people disregard God's commands and do the opposite. We think that we know better than God. Today there are so many who blatantly break the laws of God. Poor Jonah tried to get away from God, but God reached out after him in the storm. As the sailors struggled to keep control of the stricken vessel, Jonah was sound asleep, quite oblivious to the consequences of his disobedience.

November 16th Jonah 1:7-17

Jonah acknowledges his fault and is thrown overboard. Notice how calm returns to the ship when the source of the trouble is removed. Whatever is the source of our sin it must be ruthlessly cast away.

November 17th Jonah 2:1-10

Many reject this passage as being utterly impossible. But is not that the very same fault that Jonah displayed when he sailed in the opposite direction? We know better than God! Jonah acknowledges his sin, and that it is God who has saved him from destruction. In v9 he promises 'to do what I have promised.'

November 18th Jonah 3:1-10

God again ordered Jonah to go to Nineveh, and this time the prophet did as he was told. To his amazement, the people of Nineveh not only listened but responded to his message. How often we refuse to do something because, in our opinion, it won't work, or it is impossible. Yet God in great wisdom knows that it will work.

November 19th Jonah 4:1-4

What an astonishing reaction from Jonah when he saw the people of Nineveh repent! One might have expected him to be overjoyed because of the success of his mission. Instead he behaves like a spoilt child and wants to die in order to get away from it all. 'What right have you to be angry?', God asks him. You and I have no right whatever to pass judgement on God's actions. How presumptuous for us to think that we are greater and mightier and wiser than the Almighty.

November 20th Jonah 4:5-11

Here is a man whose ways, attitudes and interests are running counter to the ways of God. When this happens, there is always disquiet of the soul. We only know true peace when God's ways are our ways also. Jonah, even after his adventure in the great fish, still hasn't learned his lesson. He still cannot believe that foreigners in Nineveh can possibly come within the loving care and concern of a compassionate God.

November 21st Psalm 139:1-12

The psalmist discovered that the whole world is God's world, and so it is impossible to escape from God. North, south, east, west, no matter where we go we are always in God's sight, always within the reach of God's love.

THE STORY OF RUTH

November 22nd Ruth 1:1-5

Ruth was a foreigner and who had suffered much in her short life, yet what a difference there is between Jonah and Ruth. Today's reading outlines the tragedy, which afflicted Naomi. Driven from her own country because of famine, she goes through the harrowing experience of losing not only her husband, but also her sons. She is left alone with only her daughters-in-law for company. It is hard for us to grasp the sheer sense of despair that must have gripped her heart so far from home.

November 23rd Ruth 1:6-22

It was only natural that, in her desolation, Naomi should seek to return to her own people. To her surprise, one daughter-in-law elected to go back with her. Ruth was prepared to give up everything for her mother-in-law; her home, her family, her nation, even her own national religion, 'Your God will be my God'.

November 24th Ruth 2:1-13

The story of Ruth is told with such beauty and charm that we tend to overlook the desperate plight of these two women. Naomi is now back home amongst her own folk, but to survive they are dependent on the few wisps of grain Ruth can gather in the harvest field. Even today, in many countries, there are millions of refugees who survive only on what they can pick up along the way. It may be that the greatest sin in our generation is our total inability to realize how fortunate we are.

November 25th Ruth 2:14-23

Boaz shows great kindness to Ruth, but perhaps his greatest kindness is that he respects her independence. It would have been relatively easy for him to provide a cartload of grain to keep Naomi and Ruth throughout the winter. Instead, he honours their own desire to provide for themselves. Christians are under an obligation to assist those who need help, but it must be given in a way that respects the dignity of the one being helped.

November 26th Ruth 3:1-18

These verses reveal local customs which may now seem strange to us, but underlying the whole chapter is the change that is coming over the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. No longer is it a matter of rich farmer helping poor foreign girl, but Boaz is becoming

aware of Ruth as a person. Our giving to various charitable organisations should not be done in a cold impersonal way, but there should be a genuine attempt to understand the needs of those requiring help, and to see them, not as the poor, but as fellow brothers and sisters on God's earth.

November 27th Ruth 4:1-12

Boaz even gives another relative the opportunity to care for the distressed family. We do not honour God by doing things again in a slipshod or careless way, or even by allowing our actions to be governed by our emotions.

November 28th Ruth 4:13-22

Boaz takes Ruth as his wife, and we rejoice that this young woman who had experienced more than her fair share of misfortune came to know real happiness. The real significance of this whole book is, however, reserved for the very last verse. Ruth bore a son who, in due time, was to become the grandfather of David, the greatest king Israel was ever to know. In a time of racial tension it was good for the people of Israel to be reminded that even the great David had a foreign ancestor. Then we turn to the Gospel of Matthew, and read there the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and there again we find mention of this young woman.

St ANDREW

November 29th John 1:35-42

For Scots men and women Andrew is perhaps the most loveable disciple. In this passage we learn that he was already a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of Jesus. He was not afraid to make a change if it meant getting closer to the truth! We also know that he brought his brother to Jesus. In later life Peter was to dominate the disciple band and Andrew was less noticeable. We must never forget that God also needs, and uses, those who are content to work quietly in the background.

November 30th Matthew 4:18-22

Andrew and Peter would have been known to Jesus for some little time before He issued His challenge to them to follow Him. Notice that they left their nets 'at once'. They were simple fishing men, but also men who were seeking for the truth. Would that our response to the call of God in Christ was as immediate and as unconditional.