

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR OCTOBER 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.

October 1st Exodus 11:1-10

Moses was respected by the majority of the Egyptians. Only the stubbornness of the king prevented the Israelites from leaving. How often one man can be the cause of a nation's greatness, or the cause of its ruin. The king petulantly asks, 'Who is the Lord? Why should I listen to Him? I do not know the Lord.' But God has mercy on those who repent.

October 2nd Exodus 12:1-14

Just as Moses had to be prepared for the great task to which he was called, so also the people had to be prepared for the long ordeal before them. The Feast of Passover may seem strange to us but it is full of symbolism to the Jews who observe it even to this day. It speaks to them now of their deliverance from slavery. But that night it was a final test of obedience and consecration before the great journey began.

October 3rd Exodus 12:21-36

What did a land of promise mean to men and women who had been born into a land of slavery? In one sense anything would be better than the present, yet in another sense a land of freedom seemed to them impossibility. Could it possibly be true? There are times when God calls His people to live by faith and not by reason or logic.

October 4th Exodus 13:17-22

Notice that God did not lead them by the direct route but by a seemingly roundabout way. The quick easy way is not always God's way. Instead, God's way, though longer, was to prove the best way in the long run. The life dedicated to God is almost inevitably hard and sacrificial. Note also that God made provisions for their guidance. God always provides a guide for His people.

October 5th Exodus 14:5-31

Many try to 'explain' the mystery away by suggesting that a landslide upstream dammed the water, thus allowing the Israelites to cross. The building up of pressure behind the dam finally broke through and the resulting wall of water overwhelmed the Egyptians as they tried to cross. Perhaps that is really what happened, but such an 'explanation' does not explain away the fact that God's hand was behind it all.

October 6th Exodus 15:22-27

The travelers quickly learned what travelling through the desert would be like. First no water, and then water which was undrinkable. It is little wonder that the people complained, but note v.25 and 26. God is testing them – giving them a taste of what is still in front of them. It is still possible, for those who wish, to turn back to Egypt.

October 7th Exodus 16:1-21

The excitement of the great adventure is wearing off, and the harsh reality of desert life is being discovered by those who had grown up in the comparative plenty of Egypt. They had been slaves, but they had had enough to eat. God can be trusted to provide – quails and manna, a sweet resinous secretion, are sufficient for their needs. ‘Give us each day our daily bread’.

October 8th Exodus 16:22-36

Even in the desert the commandments are observed. In our modern society we tend to pay scant attention to them. Is it possible that these ancient commandments are so interwoven into the very fabric of human existence that they are basic to every society and every generation? Are they possible to keep in our modern society? What difference would they make if each of us observed them fully?

October 9th Exodus 17:1-7

More complaints, but notice Moses’ answer – ‘Why are you putting the Lord to the test?’ We may not realize it, but very often when we complain we are complaining against God. We ask God to lead us and to be with us. When we complain we are, therefore, complaining against what may very well be God’s actions and God’s decisions.

THE MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

October 10th Deuteronomy 6:1-9

There is so much we can learn from these verses. Please read them several times because there is so much in them. Our relationship with God must principally be one of love. It is possible to obey grudgingly and trust reluctantly, but when the basis of the relationship is love, then obedience and trust follow naturally. Love implies wonder and adoration. There can be no true worship without a sense of wonder at the glory of God, and adoration. Notice also that this love must be offered with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength.

October 11th Psalm 119:1-8

If we truly love God, then obedience becomes a natural and inevitable expression of that love. It is possible to obey through fear and not through love, but it is not possible to love without then obeying. Count how often the idea of obedience is mentioned in these eight verses.

October 12th Proverbs 3:1-13

Perhaps there may not be a great deal of difference between trusting and obeying, but trust implies confidence in the thing or person trusted. He is a wise man who has

discovered that human wisdom is very fallible, and should not really be relied upon implicitly. Only God may be trusted at all times and in all circumstances. Such must be our trust in God that, when life's circumstances lead us through the valley of dark shadows (Psalm 23) then, even then, we shall not be afraid.

October 13th Jeremiah 29:1-14

It is virtually impossible for us to grasp the situation in which Jeremiah wrote his letter. Is it possible that out of the wreckage of their personal and national life there can still come a time of prosperity and devotion? Such a dream must have seemed impossible to fulfil, yet history shows that it was fulfilled. So today there are many, who see their lives in similar ruin and God's promise is for them also.

October 14th Matthew 22:23-40

We have already seen in Deuteronomy that we are to love God with all our heart, soul and strength. Jesus calls this the 'greatest commandment in the Law'. Notice how he places another law alongside it; *'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'*. Love, obedience, trust and prayer – these are all essential elements in the devotional life, but the spiritual life cannot be lived in isolation – we are in the same world as our neighbours, and so we have a certain responsibility for them.

October 15th Acts 8:26-37

There are many features in this passage which may seem strange and unusual to us, but notice the Ethiopian's willingness to learn. He was reading in his carriage; he had difficulty in understanding what he was reading; he was not too proud to invite a stranger to help him; he made an attempt himself to understand what he read – all this points to his willingness to learn. So many learn a little and then assume that they have learned all. There is no greater hindrance to Christian maturity than a closed mind.

October 16th Romans 11:33-12:2

'How great are God's riches! How deep are His wisdom and knowledge!' This is the climax of the foregoing section. Ch 12 begins a section dealing with our response to such divine riches, wisdom and knowledge, *'offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God'*. God is never in our debt. Even if we give a whole lifetime of utter devotion and service, that is no more than a meager response to what God has already done for us.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

October 17th 2Kings 4:1-7

Notice that the oil continued to flow so long as there were empty jars available. The oil stopped flowing the moment the last jar was full. Would the oil have stopped sooner had there been fewer jars, or continued longer had there been more jars? Surely the lesson of this miracle is that the 'measure' of grace poured out upon us depends upon the measure of our willingness to receive it. If we want only a little grace, then that is all we shall receive. But if our hearts genuinely cry out for the fullness of God's presence in our lives, then *that* is what we shall receive.

October 18th 2Kings 5:1-14

Before Naaman could be healed he had to be cleansed – cleansed not only of the dust and dirt that lay on his skin, but cleansed also of the pride and haughtiness which filled his heart. What a truth lies there! The Church in Bethlehem has a very low doorway. It is impossible to enter it with one's head held high – everyone must stoop to enter and, of course, the tallest must stoop and bend down most of all! To enter the Christian life, one must stoop – acknowledge one's uncleanness, and cast away all pride.

October 19th Isaiah 40:1-11

Before a king or emperor traveled long ago, messengers were sent out to make sure the rough roads were made as smooth as possible so that the great man might have a reasonably smooth journey. Isaiah sees that, one-day in the future, a great king will come from God, and so he calls on his countrymen to prepare the way for Him. This preparation can be by prayer, by study, by service – but always there is preparation.

October 20th Hosea 10:9-15

How many people are willing to serve God, but only on their own terms! That is the meaning behind v.11 – Israel is likened to a young work animal all ready for one particular job, but God had something else in mind for her – something harder. God was calling her to a life of righteousness. This is described as a plant that a farmer grows and from which he will later gather a crop, plant righteousness and reap the blessings. Instead, Israel planted evil and so reaped the consequent harvest. Their fault was to trust in military might instead of God, and so it was a harvest of violence they reaped.

October 21st Joel 2:12-20

These verses can be divided into three sections, the meaning and progression of that are so clear, logical and obvious. a) v.12-14, a call to repent and to come back to God; b) v.15-17, the people gather in a great act of confession and pray that God will have pity on them; c) v.18-20, God hears their prayer and shows concern for them, answers their prayer and removes everything which causes sorrow and distress in their nation. The simple truth in those verses is that, before there can be peace with God, there must be the acknowledgement of sin and regret for it.

October 22nd John 9:1-11

Jesus told the blind man to do something, and after he did it he was able to see. Suppose the man had refused. We are not told that he was so anxious to see that he would try anything. There are many reasons why he might have refused. Had he refused, then he undoubtedly would have remained in his blindness. But he obeyed and his eyes were opened. Obedience led to vision.

October 23rd John 11:38-44

Jesus is asking for something which was quite unreasonable. In v.39 the dead man's sister gives one perfectly good reason why Jesus' request should not be granted. Nevertheless, there were some who did that which was contrary to all reason, and the dead man, Lazarus, walked out of the tomb to be reunited with his grieving sisters. Thus far we have studied several passages which had this theme; vessels ready before oil poured; cleansing

before healing; preparation before the King comes; cultivation before harvest; repentance before reconciliation; obedience before vision; and now obedience before resurrection.

GIVING THANKS

October 24th Deuteronomy 8:1-10

The people of Israel are nearing their long and arduous journey through the wilderness. Moses reminds them of their hardships during the last 40 years and prepares them for the new lush land into which they are about to settle. For ex-slaves this means unimaginable wealth. Giving thanks to God is something many omit, yet what a truth there is in that old chorus – *‘Count your blessings, name them one by one; it will surprise you what the Lord has done’*.

October 25th Psalm 100

How easy to imagine a band of happy pilgrims making their way to the Holy City, singing as they go. There is a natural exuberance about this psalm.

October 26th Psalm 107:1-22

Read these verses carefully and you will find almost every kind of suffering and deprivation known. Yet there is also in the psalm a sense of God who answers prayer and delivers these same folk from all their various plights. That is why there is also here the theme of thanksgiving to a gracious God who is able to deliver.

October 27th Colossians 1:1-1

Again the theme of thanksgiving. Paul gives thanks for the Congregation at Colossae. Would anyone give thanks for our congregation? Paul also encourages them to give thanks that they have been called by God to be a part of the Christian Church. Do we ever give thanks to God for our faith, and also for the privilege of being a member of God's Church?

October 28th Colossians 3:12-17

This whole passage is a point by point description of the Christian life in one's personality; one's relationship with others; and in one's worship. Note how often there is mention of thanksgiving and gratitude.

October 29th 1Thessalonians 5:12-28

We can all think of many circumstances where it would seem impossible and inappropriate to 'be thankful'. The Bible says, *‘be thankful in all circumstances’*. Is this an example of the Bible being out of touch with reality? Or is it possible even then to be conscious of *‘the peace of God which passes all understanding?’*

October 30th I Timothy 1:12-20

We have been seeing how thanksgiving is central to the Christian life. No matter how Paul considered his life he could not escape this deep sense of gratitude to a God who had had mercy on him.

October 31st Psalm 150

It is a real joy to give thanks to the Lord our God!