

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR APRIL 2024
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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.

April 1st Luke 21:34 – 22:6

This passage begins with a warning. God sees the path His children are taking, and where it will lead them, so He tries to warn them of the consequences of what they are doing. But people seldom listen to such a warning. Those who did not like what Jesus was saying were seeking a way to silence Him. This still happens today. There are those who are made uncomfortable by God's Word, and so they plan to 'improve' it, 'adapt it to the twenty first century', 'apply the light of modern scholarship' – so they say. What they really mean is that they are trying to remove that which makes them aware of their own sinfulness.

April 2nd Luke 22:7-23

The sacrament of Holy Communion has become so vested with all kinds of pomp and ritual that we forget that it was first of all a meal shared under the shadow of a cross. For the disciples gathered that night there was the significance of what the Passover had originally meant it was deeply imagined into the whole way of life and of thinking of their people. Still today past, present and future are bound in one unity around the Lord's Table.

April 3rd Luke 23:32-49

Jesus did not die in the comfort of His bed; He died in a way deliberately designed to inflict the greatest possible agony before merciful death intervened. He died after a night of torture at the hands of those commissioned to keep peace and dispense justice; He died in the company of criminals; He died amongst those who gambled for His clothes; He died amidst the jeering of foreign soldiers and the mocking of His own people. Darkness truly covered the whole country.

April 4th Luke 23:50-56

After death the body of Jesus at least got a decent burial. Joseph of Arimathea was a good and devout man, but he had never stood up for Christ before. John's Gospel tells us that Nicodemus also assisted at the burial was the one who came to Jesus under cover of darkness. Here were two influential men who were secret followers of Christ One cannot but wonder what might have happened if only they had declared their allegiance to Christ sooner. They waited until it was too late. Still today many decisions in the Church are made by unspiritual men and women, while those who have some grasp of the divine truth remain silent – until it is too late.

April 5th Colossians 1:1-8

Today we begin a series on Paul's letter to the Christians at Colossae. We will only be looking at some of his more significant sayings, and today we look at the latter half of v.5 – 'So your faith and love are based on what you hope for, which is kept safe for you in heaven'. Paul's use of the word 'hope' causes difficulties. It is not a hope that is full of 'maybes' and

‘perhaps’, ‘keep your fingers crossed just in case’. It is ‘hope’ in the sense of a confident expectation of something that will certainly be fulfilled.

April 6th Colossians 1:1-8

Our Christian faith and love are based on what will surely come to pass, something that is kept safe in heaven for us. Note also the growth of the Christian Gospel. It not only grows in the sense of spreading across the world, but it also spreads in the sense of a deepening faith within the individual.

April 7th Colossians 1:9-14

The first half of v.10 is a perfect summing up of the objective of Christian living is to live as God wants us to live and to do what pleases God. But how can we live in such a manner? By being filled with the knowledge of God’s will, and possessing the wisdom and understanding that God’s Spirit gives. This can only come through asking God in prayer.

April 8th Colossians 1:15-20

All else that we say about Christ stems from this profound truth. Christ is only Saviour, Redeemer, Lord etc. because He is the visible likeness of the invisible God. See also v.18 – ‘He (Christ) is the head of His body, the Church; He is the source of the body’s life.’ How often reference is made to the authority of the Church! The Church has neither power nor authority save that which is given it by its King and Head.

April 9th Colossians 1:21-23

v21 reminds us of how people have been separated from God by their own sinfulness; v22 tells of how ‘God has made you His friends in order to bring you, holy, pure and faultless into His presence’. This was done ‘by means of the physical death of His Son’. We cannot begin to appreciate what the Christian Gospel is about until we have understood that verse. Look also at the verse which follows – ‘You must continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation’. The Christian life is not the decision of a moment, but an ongoing process, and it must be founded on the truth not on the opinion of some well-meaning teacher, however sincere.

April 10th Colossians 1:24-29

In v.28 we see the duty and responsibility of every preacher, elder, Sunday School teacher, Bible Class leader, every office-bearer within the Church whatever his or her particular title, ‘to bring each one into God’s presence as a mature individual in union with Christ.’ Our task is not to bring people into the Church, but to bring them into union with Christ. To achieve this great goal of winning all men and women for Christ Paul ‘toils and struggles, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies’. Those of us who would seek to be servants of Christ, in whatever capacity, must likewise be prepared to toil and struggle.

April 11th Colossians 2:1-5

From the very beginning of the Christian Church there have existed, side by side, those who proclaim the true Gospel of Christ, and those who present their own version of that Gospel. Very often such false gospels are extremely attractive, and many Christians are led astray by false teachers. It is the duty of every Christian to ensure that he or she is not deceived, because false teachers abound to this very day In order to avoid such deception it is necessary for every Christian to make every effort to study the Scriptures for him- or herself.

April 12th Colossians 2:6-10

Read v.7 again and again until its very essence saturates your whole being and ask God in prayer to open your heart to grasp the meaning of v.9 and 10 in all its fullness.

April 13th Colossians 2:11-19

Every generation of Christians has been plagued by those who believe that in order to be a 'proper' Christian it is necessary to undergo certain ceremonies or adopt certain practices. Paul himself was followed by those who tried to persuade his converts that they must be circumcised. To be a Christian only one thing is necessary and that is union with Christ. Our spiritual life is not based on spiritual acts but on faith in Christ. Nothing else.

April 14th Colossians 2:20-3:4

Every Christian longs for some kind of 'proof' that he or she has now 'made the grade', become a 'bona fide' Christian. Such 'proof' is often sought for in patterns of behaviour, dress, hairstyle, abstention from certain foods, pilgrimages to holy places and the list is almost endless. Yet all of these are nothing more than human inventions. To be a Christian, faith in Christ is all that is necessary.

April 15th Colossians 3:5-11

A certain style of life does not make one a Christian, but once one has become a Christian through faith in Christ, then a certain style of life becomes the visible expression of the invisible faith. Having become Christians we become Christ-like in our behaviour, and there are certain practices which are, quite simply, incompatible with Christian life.

April 16th Colossians 3:12-17

Today we read of those practices which are a natural expression of Christian faith; compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, love. Notice that these qualities are not actions but attitudes. If Christ's message really does live in our hearts then our attitudes will be right, and our actions can be no other than right also.

April 17th Colossians 3:18-4:1

Here is a code of conduct for home and industry. How sad that one part of that code has been taken out of context and therefore, misunderstood. Whether we be husbands or wives, parents or children, employers or employees we have, each of us, a responsibility towards the others. Whether at home or at work, so many relationships are soured because of an unchristian emphasis on our 'rights'. The Christian must ever be more concerned with his responsibilities towards others than the rights he thinks are his.

April 18th Colossians 4:2-6

If there is one area of the spiritual life which is woefully neglected it is the area of prayer. Prayer ought to be the very atmosphere we breathe. It is impossible to pray too much. We have also to be careful in our attitude to those who are not Christian. It is so easy to become impatient with them because they cannot grasp what seems so obvious to us. Our constant desire must be to seek by every means available to win them for Christ. But we must also remember that it is possible for us to drive them further from Christ by our tactless or crude behaviour.

April 19th Colossians 4:7-18

The Christian life is not only the development of Christ-like attitudes. It is also a fellowship between real flesh and blood people – Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus and the others were real people known to Paul and loved by him as brothers in Christ. Look at Epaphras in v.12.

Who can measure the value of saints such as Epaphras? Is it possible that someone, somewhere, is praying for you like that? Is it possible that you are praying for others in that fashion?

CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANITY

April 20th John 3:1-12

The Christian life is characterized by a new beginning. This is not simply an improved version of the old life but a radical change in direction that is not based on human planning but upon spiritual principles.

April 21st 2Peter 3:10-18

A baby does not remain a baby but grows into an adult. The Christian life not only is a new life but has to grow and mature. Sadly so many lose sight of what, by the grace of Christ, they could be.

April 22nd Isaiah 61:5-11

It is always easy to pick out a bride at a wedding. Her air of supreme happiness distinguishes her from the guest. In the same way the radiance of the Christian life distinguishes it from the non-Christian life. As the bride's happiness comes from a knowledge of her husband's love for her so we are radiant of our knowledge of God's love of us.

April 23rd Matthew 5:3-16

Christian radiance should never draw attention to the Christian, but to Christ. Nor should such radiance be hidden as embarrassment. It should be held forth to glorify God as an eagerness to testify for Christ should be another characteristic of the Christian life.

April 24th Matthew 7:21-29

Moral strength is another characteristic of the Christian life. The Christian may from time to time be in the minority; they may be unpopular, even criticized, but they stand firm because they know that it is their faith that is built on a solid foundation – Christ.

April 25th Luke 12:49-53

These verses which seem to go right against all that we take the Gospel to stand for. Normally we think of Christ bringing peace, reconciliation, harmony, but here is talk of division, even within families, because of Him. Every follower of Christ knows of times when they must decide whether they are to stand for Christ, or stand by loved ones who have no discernment for spiritual values.

April 26th Luke 20:27-47

Jesus must have watched with sadness the religious leaders of His time. They were basically good men, and they really were trying their best, but they had lost their spiritual direction so that, in fact, they were leading their followers in ways that would bring no peace. How do you think Christ will view the direction in which many of His people are being led today?

April 27th Matthew 28:16-20

As with the women, when Jesus meets with his disciples he reassures them and then commands them with what is described as the 'great commission'. Each of the followers is

given a task and that is to share with others the love of God through the teachings of Jesus and by incorporating them into the Body of Christ through baptism.

April 28th Luke 24:13-35

This is the wonderful story of two followers of Jesus who did not recognize him in his risen state. Perhaps they were too grief stricken to even contemplate what was seemingly impossible. But the seemingly impossible becomes possible for our God, through the simple action of the breaking of bread at a meal.

April 29th Luke 24:36-49

Jesus' resurrection had been foretold many hundreds of years before through the teachings of the prophets in the Old Testament. When it happened many still found it hard to believe. Many today, when they receive good news, still sometimes find it difficult to take in and need time to reflect and to be sure that the good news is real. It is no wonder then that the disciples needed time to reflect. But in addition Jesus promises them a helper, the Holy Spirit.

April 30th Luke 24:50-53

The response from the followers of Jesus to all that had happened was to get back into Jerusalem, filled with great joy and to spend their time at worship giving thanks to God.