

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR FEBRUARY 2024
Compiled by Rev Dr J Jack for the Congregation of Duddingston Kirk

**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.

February 1st Matthew 7:24-29

There is a story told of a couple whose lives were built on the foundation of security that money could buy. They didn't worry when their little girl fell ill – money could be trusted to buy medicine, procure the finest physician. But when the girl died, her parents were shattered. The foundation upon which they had relied had not helped them. Trusting God is the only sure foundation.

February 2nd Luke 7:11-16

If we believe that Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God, and if we believe that He died and rose again, then why should this miracle be thought too hard? The power of Christ can penetrate not only where there is sickness and disease, but also where there is death and utter darkness of loneliness and despair.

February 3rd Luke 7:18-23

It is comforting to note that even John the Baptist was a little uncertain of the true nature of Jesus. He sent 2 friends to Jesus with a direct question – but look how Jesus answers – not with words but with action. Here is a demonstration of God's Kingdom not only in truth but also in power. True spiritual happiness comes when our faith is complete without any reservations or doubts.

February 4th Luke 7:24-28

In his heyday great crowds had gone to hear John preach. Why? Always there are those who are attracted by the unusual. Many follow the crowd without really caring where the crowd is going and today many follow, and give attention to, the latest idol of popularity, excitement, fame or notoriety. Do we ever pause to ask, 'Why am I doing this? What am I looking for?'

February 5th Matthew 11:20-24

How often we hear people say, 'If only God would do something, show Himself, prove Himself, then I could believe.' They may think they would believe after such 'proof', but there is no guarantee that they would. There were many witnesses to the miracles of Jesus who still could not escape the hold sin had over them. It is not "If only God would do this or that" but "How am I to respond to what God has already done?" God has already done enough to reveal God's purpose and God's power and love. It is our response that God awaits.

February 6th Luke 7:36-48

Here two quite different individuals are contrasted; one a Pharisee, a religious leader, the other a prostitute. The former is critical of Jesus, while the latter is moved to the very depth of her soul and receives forgiveness. The Pharisee looked for a fault in Jesus, while the

woman was only aware of a fault in herself. Still today there are those who cynically hold themselves in judgement over Jesus while there are others who feel themselves to be judged by the purity of Jesus and repent. Jesus could say to the woman '*Go in peace*'. He could not say that to the Pharisee.

February 7th Luke 7:41-43

Unless they are completely lacking insensitivity and morality, men and women are deeply burdened when they are in debt. And the greater the debt, the greater their sense of burden. So it follows that when the debt is cleared, the greater the debt, the greater the sense of relief and gratitude. It is exactly the same for a spiritual debt, or sin. The greater the sin, the greater is the sense of joy and praise when it is forgiven.

February 8th Luke 11:14-23

Many unbelievers today deny the existence of demons or even of Satan. But when those who profess to be Christian also deny the existence of demons, then they run into all kinds of problems. For instance, if there are no demons then Jesus could not drive them out. There would therefore be no miracle in these verses. Can a Christian believe only a part of God's Word to be true and not all of it?

February 9th Matthew 12:25-37

Jesus says, 'Whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven'. The Holy Spirit is God's Power present among us seeking to reveal, to direct, to protect, to strengthen. To speak evil of such a power is either to deny that it exists. We are, therefore, denying that we have done anything that needs to be forgiven, and we are also denying the source from which our forgiveness must come.

February 10th Matthew 12:38-45

The Son of God was standing right in front of the teachers and Pharisees, yet they were not convinced that He was the Son of God. 'Give us a miracle', they wanted proof. Suppose Jesus had obliged what then? They would probably have said, 'That wasn't a very convincing one. Give us another... and another... and another'. Some people will never be convinced for the simple reason that they don't really want to be convinced, no matter what proof is presented to them. If we are really genuine in our search for divine truth, then God has given us as much proof as we need.

February 11th Matthew 12:46-50

It is generally assumed that by this time Joseph had died since he is not mentioned. We have no reason to believe that these 'brothers' (and 'sisters' are also mentioned in Matthew 13:56) are any other than the natural sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary. Believing that does not in any way lessen our belief that Jesus, Mary's first-born, is the Son of God 'conceived by the Holy Spirit'. Everyone who lives in obedience to the Heavenly Father is immediately in a special 'family' relationship with God's Son, a veritable brother or sister.

February 12th Luke 11:37-42

The Pharisees were basically good men who were trying to honour God according to their own rights. However, over the years they had gradually distorted the way God was to be honoured and worshipped. They had become ritualistic and more concerned with external appearances than with internal purity. This is more common in the spiritual life of our Church today than we might realize.

February 13th Luke 12:16-20

This is a well-known thought provoking passage. A rich man, who thought he was one of the luckiest men alive, is actually so self-centered, and so wrapped up in himself that he has quite forgotten that there is Another greater than himself and a future for which he is totally unprepared. He has placed so much emphasis on his wealth that he has not spent time focusing on God. There is nothing wrong with wealth as such, except that it draws a person's eyes away from heaven, where true wealth should lie.

February 14th Luke 12:22-32

Jesus encouraged His disciples to get their priorities right. There are so many things in life which are good and excellent in themselves but which can so easily become an obsession and assume unwarranted importance. Jesus pinpoints what must be of prime importance in our lives; the Kingdom of God. Put that first, and then everything else will fall into its proper place.

February 15th Luke 12:35-40

Some jobs require people to be 'on' or 'off' duty. However, a nurse who comes across a traffic accident will still tend to the injured, despite being off duty. As Christians we cannot switch off our faith, but must live by it continually, just as the nurse continues to act as a nurse whether officially off duty or on. The Christian lives by hope and looks forward to the future when the Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour. For this we must all be continually 'on duty' ready and prepared.

February 16th Luke 12:41-48

The servant has certain duties to perform and he will be held responsible if he fails to do them. In the same way the Christian has certain responsibilities, for which, if not carried out, he or she will be held accountable to his or her Master, when He returns. Being a Christian is not a pastime. It involves undertaking serious and important responsibilities.

February 17th Luke 13:6-9

The responsibility of a fig tree is to produce figs. If it does not produce fruit, then it is judged to be needlessly taking up room in the vineyard and should therefore be cast out. A plea is made that it should be given one more chance. It is given extra manure and the soil is loosened and aerated but on the clear understanding that, if there is no fruit next year, then the tree goes. The implications here for the nonproductive Christian are clear!

February 18th Mark 4:1-20

Some people are so given to evil influences that God makes no impact on them whatsoever. Others are so shallow that, although enthusiastic at the beginning of the Christian life, they lack staying power and quickly fall away. Others mean well, but their lives are already so full of other kinds of interests that there is really no room for Christ. Others not only hear the Word, but encourage it to grow within them and ultimately produce fruit. We must ask ourselves, *'Into which category do I fall?'*

February 19th Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

There is God, our loving Heavenly Father, whose great desire is that through faith and obedience we might become God's children. And there is Satan, the Devil, whose burning desire is that the whole world should come under his control. God seeks control by love and truth, while the Devil seeks control by lies and deceitfulness. In the picture of wheat and weeds described by Jesus both wheat and weeds may seem equally healthy, but at the harvest

the weeds are burnt and destroyed forever, while the wheat is safely stored in the heavenly barns.

February 20th Matthew 13:31-33

Jesus compares the growth of the mustard seed with the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven in the life of a Christian. It may begin as a tiny seed but grows into something incomparably greater than its original size. So the rule of God within my life starts with my devotional life, then spreads to my relationship with other people, my attitude to work, my use of my possessions until the point of total commitment.

February 21st Matthew 13:44-46

How valuable is the Kingdom of Heaven to us? Is it a cheap bargain that we can pick up without too much bother? Or is it of such value that we are willing to give every ounce of our strength and every moment of our time to get it? Do we really want it so much that we would be prepared to give up everything else for it, including our very lives?

February 22nd Matthew 13:47-51

Jesus depicts the Kingdom of Heaven as a net in which every kind of fish is caught, whether good or bad. God knows those who are truly of the Kingdom and those who are not and God is the ultimate Judge and our loving and merciful Father.

February 23rd Mark 4:35-41

Here is one of the great controversial miracles how can someone simply stand up and tell a storm to be quiet? Well, it all depends on who we think that 'someone' is. If Jesus is just a wandering preacher then, obviously, He could not still a storm. On the other hand, if Jesus is in fact the Son of God, then who are we to say what He can or cannot do?

February 24th Mark 5:1-20

The most interesting aspect of this passage is the reaction of the people after the healing. They were terrified by the outpouring of divine power which Jesus had displayed and afraid of the change Jesus brought to their unchanging existence. Instead of praise, Jesus got rejection. The people did not want to answer Jesus' challenge to believe and act. Do we really want Christ to come into our lives, our homes, our churches, and our nation? With such neighbours no wonder the poor man wanted to go with Jesus. But Jesus was insistent that the man must stay among his own people *'telling what God had done for him'*.

February 25th Matthew 9:9-13

Tax collectors worked for the Roman occupying authorities and were therefore regarded as traitors, and many were dishonest, lining their pockets with taxpayers' money. No wonder the Pharisees wondered why Jesus took up with such people. Jesus, however, accepted these people and befriended them, yet He was in no doubt that they were like sick people who needed a doctor. Jesus called Matthew to be His disciple as he sat in his tax collector's office, but in order to follow Jesus, Matthew had to leave that office. There are many who would try to stay in the 'office' and be a disciple at the same time.

February 26th Mark 5:25-34

Even today there are many that suffer in secret because they have some condition which embarrasses them. Some even put their lives at risk because they are too embarrassed, or ashamed, or afraid to go to the doctor. Is it possible for us, in our much freer society, to understand the distress of this poor woman? Not only did she suffer physically, but also

because of her condition she was debarred from worship as she was ritually 'unclean'. Moreover, she had impoverished herself in her search for healing. What desperation must have driven her to join the crowd thronging around Jesus, and with what fear she furtively touched His cloak. Contrast that with the love, understanding and compassion with which Jesus dealt with her.

February 27th Mark 5:22-24

This parent was still to suffer more, he was to suffer not only the agony of his daughter's illness but also the agony of her death. How could the man continue to believe now that it was already too late or so it seemed?

February 28th Mark 5:35-43

God does not always answer our prayers immediately. Sometimes God gently leads us into even greater trials of suffering. We have to learn that even death is not beyond the healing power of Christ.

February 29th Matthew 9:27-33

The two men come boldly to Jesus looking for their sight. Jesus asks them if they believe. Their faith was an integral part of their healing. This man is brought to Jesus and he is not able to speak. This helpless soul is healed out of love. The faith in this story belongs to the community that surrounded the man.