

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR JULY 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.

July 1st

James 4:1-6

Our lives become like a battlefield on which the grace of God is opposed by our own selfish motives. We all know what God wants us to do, but we resent it because it is different from what we want to do, and so conflict arises. Our selfish desires may be strong, 'but the grace that God gives is even stronger'. The final victory belongs to God.

July 2nd

James 4:7-10

There is only one way in which we may share in that final victory – submit to God! We pray today for a peaceful demonstration in Edinburgh to really end world poverty.

July 3rd

James 4:11-17

Remember that James is writing to ‘God’s people scattered over the world’. To be in the fellowship of the Church is no guarantee that one’s life is perfect. Only total and continual submission to the will of God can save us from the frailties to which we are so prone.

July 4th

James 5:1-6

Lying behind these verses is the knowledge that one day all our lives will be judged by Almighty God. Those who have abused their privileges in this life will discover the justice of God, together with God's impartiality.

July 5th

James 5:7-8

‘Until the Lord comes’. These words hold a truth some Christians over emphasize and others ignore. The Bible teaches quite clearly that just as there was a moment of creation, a beginning, so also there will be a moment of ending, and that ‘ending’ will be creation, a beginning, so also there will be a moment of ending, and that ‘ending’ will be associated with the return of Christ. It is not helpful to calculate or predict the precise moment of that return. It is far better so to live that we are prepared for that moment, whenever it might be.

July 6th

James 5:9-12

In this life we are always tempted to grumble and feel we are being unfairly treated. Perhaps we are justified in feeling like that, or it may be only a figment of the imagination, but it is like a cancer eating away at our faith. If we study the lives of God's saints in every generation, it is their 'patient endurance under suffering' which wins our admiration. They are our example in Godly living.

July 7th

James 5:13-18

Every Christian knows times of weariness, doubt, fear, and ill health. At such times he or she may seek help and advice from non-Christian counselors. They give the best help they can, but if we really see ourselves as a family or household of faith, ought we not to find support

and strength from one another? Does not our reliance on non-Christian help imply a lack of confidence in the power of Christ to heal? Ought there not to be in every congregation a small group of devout men and women of faith who can exercise this very special ministry?

July 8th James 5:19-20

The most serious ‘illness’ any Christian can develop is not cancer or any other such disease, but loss of faith. It is spiritually fatal. A man may suffer from some physical disease and yet know spiritual salvation; but if he loses his faith, he loses such salvation also. We ought to be more ready to detect loss of faith in ourselves, and in others, and be able to receive and to give the necessary help. This is not interference in the private faith of another, it is Christian love of the highest order.

July 9th 1John 1:1-4

In the letter of James we saw that Christian faith must be expressed in practical action and concern. We must not make the mistake of thinking that such action can be a substitute for faith. To be of real help to others we must ensure that our faith is genuine and real. John, in his letters, seeks to describe, and encourage in others, this life of faith.

July 10th 1John 1:5-10

John saw the world as being like a room that was in total darkness, except for a strong beam of light coming from God, so that part of the room was in darkness and part in light. Anyone in that room must stand either in an area of total light, there is no twilight zone of grey. So in the spiritual life one either lives in fellowship with God (living in the light), or in sin (darkness) it is not possible to live in the darkness of sin and claim to be in fellowship with God.

July 11th 1John 2:1-6

John is writing that we might know a sin-free life. Such a life must be lived in total obedience to the commands of God. Christ is our great example in such a life. However, our human frailty is such that we are bound to ‘trip’ on the pathway of faith from time to time. Such a fall does not mean that we have lost all hope of salvation for we have One who ‘pleads with the Father on our behalf’ and who has provided the ‘means by which our sins are forgiven’.

July 12th 1John 2:7-11

John seems almost to be contradicting himself in writing of a commandment, which is old, yet is new. It is old in the sense that it existed at the very beginning. It is literally ‘as old as the hills’, yet when the child of faith first becomes aware of it, it has all the power of an exciting discovery! The command is ‘to love one another’. That is why it is impossible for one who hates his brother to be in fellowship with Christ.

July 13th 1John 2:12-14

Whatever our natural age, some of us have only just become Christian, and so we are children in the faith; others of us have been Christians for a long time and have grown wise in spiritual matters; and others are no longer children, but not yet fathers – occupying that middle stage of strength and vitality.

July 14th 1John 2:15-17

Every Christian is caught in a dilemma. We see the purity and holiness of God and, by contrast, see the evil and corruption of this earthly life. Yet we have been placed in this

earthly life and cannot avoid its evil and corruption. We are like an alien in a foreign land ever looking heavenwards, yet destined to live his life of faith in what is a hostile environment. When we grasp this truth then we begin to understand the death of Christ.

July 15th 1John 2:18-25

Unfortunately there are many such people in every generation who claim to be Christian, they attend worship, they may even have some position of responsibility or are leaders within the congregation, but they have not yet grasped the fundamentals of the faith. For them Jesus is not really the Messiah. Such people are a very real danger to the spiritually immature and even to mature Christians! Our own personal devotional life is so important. Notice in what is promised to those who stand firm in the faith – eternal life!!

July 16th 1John 2:26-29

Christ has given us his Spirit, but many of us do not realize it. We think that the Holy Spirit has still to come, and so pray that God will ‘send the Holy Spirit upon us’. The Holy Spirit has already come upon us when we became Christian! We must learn to ‘obey the Spirit’s teaching’. This chapter ends with another reference to the coming of Christ. How sad that some will need to ‘hide in shame from Him on the day He comes.’

July 17th 1John 3:1-3

These verses are so full of spiritual comfort. It is almost impossible for us to grasp the full significance of these statements, but if they mean anything to us at all this is expressed in our desire to be like Christ.

July 18th 1John 3:4-6

We must distinguish between ‘sin’ and ‘continuing to sin’. It is impossible for a Christian to avoid sin altogether. Every day, almost every minute, we fall short of the standard expected of Christians, but such sin can be forgiven when we repent. Continuing to sin is not the momentary lapse from Christian standards, but a way of life which is not governed by such standards.

July 19th 1John 3:7-10

Bible is quite definite that ‘there is a clear difference between God’s children and the Devil’s children’, and ‘Whoever is a child of God does not continue to sin’. Can anything be clearer than that?

July 20th 1John 3:19-24

We must never forget that these letters were written to Christians. Of course non-Christians may read them, but the truths contained in them apply only to men and women of faith. An unbeliever may say ‘My conscience tells me that it is alright to do such a thing’ but his conscience is not directed by the Holy Spirit. Only those who live in union with Christ can rely on the directions of their consciences.

July 21st 1John 4:1-6

There are those who emphasize the humanity of Jesus but reject His spirituality. They say that He was the best man who lived – but nothing more. Others emphasize His spirituality but reject His humanity – He came from heaven but did not really experience the pains and sorrows of this earthly life; his humanity was only a sham. We must see Jesus as fully divine AND fully human. Anything less leads to a false faith.

July 22nd

1John 4:7-12

Jesus was once asked which was the great commandment, and He gave His answer in two parts; 'Love the Lord your God' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. But these two parts are related to one another. It is because God loves us that we love one another. God's love is offered to all.

July 23rd

1John 4:13-21

Note the ring of confidence in those verses; *we are sure, we have seen, we ourselves know, we may have courage, there is no fear in love*. There comes a point in the development of the spiritual life when we move on from saying 'I think' or 'I believe' to 'I know'. There comes a point when faith becomes certainty. But we must distinguish between spiritual confidence and spiritual arrogance. The latter is tinged with pride whereas the former is tinged with humility.

July 24th

1John 5:1-5

Even the saint must live his life of saintliness in this world of violence, temptation and corruption. And from time to time the saint succumbs to the pressures of evil. But in spite of their passing failures, they still knew that the power of God was greater than all the evil that was in the world. Our great proof of this lies in the resurrection of Christ – whatever evil men did to Him, God did something still greater – He raised Him from the dead. Each of us may share in this Divine victory.

July 25th

1John 5:6-9

God and Christ either exist, or they don't exist, independent of our believing or not believing. But there are three 'witnesses' the Spirit, the water and the blood. There was the reality of the power of the Holy Spirit within them; there was the historic event of the baptism in the River Jordan (the water); and there was the indisputable event of the crucifixion and the resurrection (the blood). These 'witnesses' testify to the reality of Christ, and also of God.

July 26th

1John 5:10-12

The previous verses have shown that God and Christ are real and exist whether we believe in them or not. It follows, therefore, that anyone who does not believe in God and His Son is really saying that God is a liar and a fraud. That is a serious charge, and the consequences are clearly spelt out. The source of the eternal life God gives is Christ His Son. If I say that the Son is a fraud and does not exist, I cannot have eternal life. Many today think that all will go automatically to heaven irrespective of their life and faith here on earth. That may be an attractive theory, but it has no basis in the teaching of God's Word.

July 27th

1John 5:13-17

Confidence in God leads to confidence in our prayer life. We are no longer fearful suppliants before an aloof King, but children before a loving Father and we can pray with confidence for whatever is in accordance with His holy will. We can even pray others into a new life through the forgiveness of their sins

July 28th

1John 5:18-21

It seems strange that a passage which speaks so confidently on union with Christ should end with a warning to keep away from false gods. The spiritual life is more than just becoming a Christian – we must remain Christians. There is a false view that once a person becomes a Christian then he or she is safe forever. It is possible for a person to be a Christian for many years and yet, through his or her own carelessness, fall from grace.

July 29th

2John 1-3

This short letter begins with a problem! Who is the 'Elder' who wrote it? We do not know, but the best suggestion is that it was written by the same author as 1John. Secondly, who is the 'dear lady and her children'? Was this a private letter to a particular lady, or is the 'lady' a congregation, and her children its members? This seems the more likely, since the letter ends with the message that the children of 'your dear sister' send their greetings. Here is a letter conveying greeting from one congregation to another.

July 30th

2John 4-8

These verses confirm what we have already learnt from 1John: the mutual love which believers ought to have for one another; this is no new command but is the Father's intention from the beginning; obedience to God's commands; and a warning against deceivers.

July 31st

2John 9-11

In every generation there are those who try to 'improve' the Christian Gospel in one way or another. No doubt they are sincere and genuine in their intention, but the Gospel of Christ is sufficient in itself – it cannot be 'improved'. Even in those days they had people visiting homes with their false gospels. John is quite definite in how they should be received!