

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR MAY 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.

May 1st Judges 1:27-36

Judges record the settlement of God's people in the land of promise, but now we see a change. Before, when a city or territory was captured, the inhabitants were destroyed, now treaties are made and they are enslaved. The Israelites were now more confident of their strength and relying less on God's direction!

May 2nd Judges 2:1-5

The Israelites are reminded of God's covenant, especially v.15, which warned them not to make treaties. Their slaves will become their enemies 'and you will be trapped by the worship of their gods.' To tolerate pagan idols is to imply they have some reality and so deny that God is the only God.

May 3rd Judges 2:6-10

Joshua and his generation had known at first hand ‘all the great things that the Lord had done for Israel’. Their successors lacked this experience, and so the whole nation ‘forgot the Lord and what He had done for Israel’. Spiritual leaders must have a living faith otherwise people will ‘forget about God.’

May 4th Judges 2:11-15

Note this progression: they begin to serve foreign idols; they stop worshipping God and worship the idols entirely; God becomes angry and allows the enemy to overpower them; the people are in great distress. People must worship something. If they will not worship the true God, then they must worship some idol. For a time they may think they can worship BOTH God and the idol, but this is impossible.

May 5th Judges 2:16-23

In mercy, God sends leaders to win the people back. Some of those leaders are rejected, and others are obeyed only for a time. God did not directly punish the Israelites for their disobedience, God simply withheld power to protect, but that was punishment enough! Those verses make us think of our own nation at the present time. While there are many devoted servants of God in this land there is no doubt that for the majority of people God is irrelevant and powerless. A spiritual revival is needed not only for the Church, but even more so for the nation.

May 6th Judges 3:7-13

After the death of Joshua, Israel was ruled by a succession of Judges. The pattern of events is clearly seen in those verses: the people forget about God, sin against God and worship false idols; God becomes angry and allows an enemy to rule over them; the Israelites cry out in distress and God sends a leader; this leader defeats the enemy because God's Spirit is upon

him; there is peace in the land; the leader dies and the people again sin against God; they are defeated by another enemy. And so the cycle begins all over again. This pattern is seen not only in Israel, but also in every nation and in every generation.

May 7th Judges 11:29-33

Though Jephthah was a brave soldier, he attracted ‘a group of worthless men’. He was not the kind of man God uses, but his countrymen turned to him in time but his countrymen turned to him in time of crisis. He gives little evidence of any real personal faith, though he uses the name of God and knows that God can deliver his people from the hands of the enemy. It is easy to use religious language and yet have no real contact with the living God. One can take part in worship and engage in a Christian service, yet be far from God. Christ called some religious leaders of His own time ‘Whitewashed tombs’ – clean and attractive on the outside, but full of corruption within.

May 8th Judges 11:34-40

Yesterday we read of Jephthah’s *bargain* with God. God kept His side of the ‘bargain’ and gave the victory. Imagine Jephthah’s grief when his only daughter ran from the house to meet her father. At least he did not try to be released from his vow, but what a cost it was for him. Note also the daughter’s own submission to the will of God. We may ask if it really was God’s will that an innocent girl should suffer, but we also think of God’s own Son on Calvary. The innocent often suffer – not for their own innocence but because of the sin of others. People must never ‘bargain’ with God.

May 9th Judges 13:1-14

Manoah and his wife are childless, yet God promises them a son. God takes a situation that is ‘impossible’ in human terms and uses it for His own purpose. Note that Manoah and his wife never doubt the possibility of the birth they simply ask what kind of life the boy will lead. Here we read of a man and his wife totally submissive to the will of God. God can do much with such people.

May 10th Judges 13:15-25

Manoah did not realize the true nature of the divine messenger. Note his wife’s sensible comment. Throughout she is shown to have a quiet, strong faith. God’s promise is fulfilled.

May 11th Judges 14:1-6

Manoah and his wife were totally submissive to the will of God, but their son was not! His love for a Philistine girl implied submissive to the will of God, but their son was not! His love for a Philistine girl implied a rejection of God for he was looking beyond God’s people for a future wife, but God was using this situation for God’s own purpose. God’s ways may sometimes seem strange to us, but God’s plans are always wise.

May 12th Judges 14:7-14

Samson has now rejected God’s direction entirely. He is obviously not living as one controlled by God, but as one diverted by the ways of the world.

May 13th Judges 14:15-20

The power of the Lord is with Samson but that is the only reference to God in this whole passage. We are watching a man, born according to the will of God, empowered by the strength of God, led into a particular situation by the wisdom of God – yet totally and utterly

Godless in his own nature. There are many today who have been enriched by the gifts and graces of God, yet who have no time for God in their lives.

May 14th Judges 15:1-8

Samson's downfall continues. Now he is ruled entirely by passion and a desire for vengeance. What tragedy that one with such potential should prove such a failure. In every generation there are men and women born of Godly parents and given every chance possible, yet they destroy it all in their own foolishness.

May 15th Judges 15:9-20

What began as a quarrel between one man and one family has now become a war between Israelites and Philistines. How easily personal quarrels get out of hand and lead to national crises. God's power is still with Samson and in that power he led Israel for 20 years. In spite of all that has happened, God is still willing to give him another chance. We can never measure the extent of God's mercy and love.

May 16th Judges 16:1-3

Samson's old weakness reasserted itself. There is no doubt where his weakness lay, but equally there is no sign that he tried to control it. Each of us has a particular weakness in our nature, which if uncontrolled, can cause moral and spiritual ruin. Samson relied on his great physical strength but such strength does not last forever.

May 17th Judges 16:4-22

Again Samson's weakness leads him into trouble, and again he relies on his strength but it is no match for Delilah's wiles. However we may condemn his foolishness, we cannot but feel sorry for this poor man, not only enslaved but blinded as well. How different his life could have been if only he had been obedient to God!

May 18th Judges 16:23-31

He who gloried in his strength is completely humiliated, yet he is given grace to pray, "Lord, please remember me; please God, give me my strength just once more." God answered his prayer, and for the final time Samson used his great strength, though he destroyed himself in the process. Here was a man born by the will of God and empowered by God, yet did not live to the glory of God.

May 19th Judges 17:1-6

Here is a man who stole from his own mother yet she says, "May the Lord bless you, my son!" *May the Lord forgive you, my son* would have been more suitable. We must be careful how we use a phrase such as "God bless you!" The mother had the silver made into an idol. No doubt she was genuine in wanting to dedicate it to God, but her method of doing it was entirely wrong. Her intention was right, but the outcome was wrong. Just because an action is well intentioned is no guarantee that it is wise or acceptable to God.

May 20th Judges 17:7-13

Micah must have been pleased to have as his personal priest a genuine Levite! The Levite was no doubt just as pleased. The Levite was no doubt just as pleased to have a secure appointment! The bond between man and God is personal, and no intermediary, priest or idol, must be allowed to intervene.

May 21st Judges 18:1-10

Note the words “God has given it to you”. They had no reason for such a conclusion. All that happened was that they discovered a people enjoying a peace and prosperity, which they envied, and for that reason alone they decided to attack. We must be very careful never to ascribe to God motives that have no foundation other than our own greed or envy.

May 22nd Judges 18:11-31

The men of God capture the town of “peaceful, quiet people”. Notice how they exhibit the same kind of violence in spiritual matters. They had no qualms about stealing an idol, or a priest! There are always those who think that spiritual matters can be bought and sold like common utensils. Note also the attitude of the priest. He obviously regarded it a ‘good move’ to be ‘promoted’ from family to national priest. How great is the sin of using spiritual resources and privileges as opportunities for personal advancement.

May 23rd Judges 19:1-30

This chapter is gruesome, yet it has a message. Here are men who live according to the flesh. The chapter begins with a domestic squabble. The event described in is almost unbelievable, but a society which rejects God very quickly degenerates into a moral abyss and a cesspool of corruption. The only redeeming feature is the sense of horror in the closing verses. In time the godless society becomes so corrupt that even the godless are filled with shame.

May 24th Judges 20:1-17

The news of the murder shocked the whole nation with the exception of those in whose territory it occurred, the people of Benjamin. Although evil can reach a level that shocks reasonable people, yet there will always be some who remain unmoved their consciences are so hardened that no human pity remains.

May 25th Judges 20:18-36a

The Benjamites were finally defeated, but at dreadful cost to the people of Israel. We are given the numbers killed, but how many others were maimed in body or in mind? Men, women, children & animals were destroyed – all because of lust and immorality. We can never calculate the full effect of sin upon the life of an individual, and of a nation.

May 26th Judges 21:1-25

It seems incredible that such a chapter should appear in a book we accept as the inspired Word of God, but the clue to its significance comes in the last verse. Many see lawful authority as a restriction upon human freedom, but history shows that where lawful authority does not exist, there is a total breakdown of moral standards. The book of Judges may not tell us much about God, but it tells about what happens when we try to live a godless life!

ELIJAH THE PROPHET

May 27th 1Kings 17:1-7

In Judges we read of what happens in a society that is godless. Yet God never leaves Himself without a witness. Even in a corrupt nation there were those who remained faithful. One such was the prophet Elijah. He and the king could not have been more different. Elijah predicted a drought and then was called by God to a desert place. There he relied solely on God for the necessary food and drink. Faith is not believing in God, but depending on God.

May 28th 1Kings 17:8-12

Elijah moves further east to Sidon. We are not told why he moved so far from his homeland, but there are times when a nation is so evil that God’s servants are driven from it. Note also

the extreme poverty of this widow because of the are driven from it. Note also the extreme poverty of this widow because of the drought. She was down to her last bite – then there was nothing but to await death.

May 29th 1Kings 17:13-16

There is no logical explanation of this miracle. One can only recall the experience of God's people down through the ages. Those who trust God fully find that God supplies sufficient for their needs. God's own Son taught us to pray "Give us each day our daily bread".

May 30th 1Kings 17:17-24

In spite of the daily food provided, the widow grumbled when her son died. This happens to us all – we are surrounded by every evidence of God's goodness, yet when something happens which is devastatingly contrary to our expectations, we bitterly complain. It is hard to learn to trust completely. Notice Elijah's prayer of faith. There was no doubt in his mind that God could restore the boy to life.

May 31st 1Kings 18:1-6

Elijah is now told to return to his homeland. God always does things in the right and proper time. Obadiah, one of the king's officers, was a 'devout worshipper of the Lord'. Note that there had been a persecution of prophets, but some had been saved. Religious persecution is to be expected in a godless society.