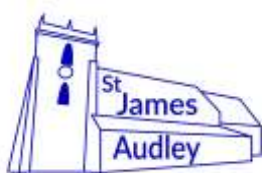




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Bible Reading Notes

August 2022 – Genesis 1-3 & Matthew 8-10



How to use these Bible Reading Notes:

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you feed on God's word a little and often and allow it to change your life. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever you left off – it doesn't matter if it's the wrong date.

Here are some tips on how to get the most out of this:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
Maybe set an alarm on your phone to remind you each day.
2. Pray. Ask God to help you understand what he says.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the Bible passage (use a good translation of the Bible like the NIV).
 - *'Read' tells you which verses to read.*
 - *'Apply' shows how it affects you.*
 - *'Pray' suggests ways to talk to God about it.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for a chance to share with someone what God has been saying to you.

*These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.
Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'Add Subject →
Biblical prayers & devotions → Real Food.'
If you have any problems, email info@prayermate.net.*

Monday 1st August

The beginning of everything

In the opening chapters of Genesis God starts to unfold his great plans for his world.

Read Genesis 1v1

Christians who trust the Bible have different views of whether or not Genesis chapter 1 aims to teach us about how long God took to create the universe, and how long ago. We'll focus here on things that are even more vital than that, which all Christians agree on.

Lots of the Bible will be about God as our *Saviour*...

- Why do we also need to know at the start that God is the *Creator* of everything?

Apply

- What are the main reasons why some people you know aren't comfortable with the idea that God created everything? How can you help them with that?
- How does it comfort a Christian to remember that God created everything?

Here is what the Father says to Jesus his Son in Hebrews 1v10-12: *"In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."*

- What extra strength does that give the follower of Jesus?

Pray

Praise God that there's nothing in the universe that he didn't make.

Tuesday 2nd August

God's wonderful creation

Looking at virtually the whole of Genesis chapter 1, we're going to see the big points it's been carefully written to make.

Read Genesis 1v2-31

- What is stressed here about *how* God creates? What does that reveal about him?
- Look at the main thing God does in each of the two blocks of days, one-two-three and four-five-six. How does each block of days deal with the earth being 'formless and void'? (v2)
- What work of the Holy Spirit (see v2) is starting to be revealed here?

Apply

Genesis was written for Israel when they were surrounded by nations who worshipped many different gods. We're also surrounded by people who worship and live for many different things.

- What impact does this chapter have on us, living in this kind of a world?
- Which aspects of God's work through Jesus Christ and the Spirit does this chapter make you most grateful for?

Pray

Thank God for those aspects of his character that he powerfully reveals to us here.

Pray for opportunities to speak about this all-creating God to people who worship some other kind of 'god'.

Wednesday 3rd August

Then we showed up...

We're revisiting the last few verses from yesterday's reading.

Read Genesis 1v20-31

- Compare the way the sixth day is described with all the other days (e.g. verses 20-23). What's different? What's that emphasising?
- How is humanity's *difference* from God stressed here?
- What is shown about humanity's *likeness* to God?

Apply

- Think about the self-image that some people you know have. How could you show them a better view of themselves from these verses?
- How does Jesus fulfil our passage, according to these verses from Colossians 1?

"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

- What effect should this have on someone who already knows Jesus?

Pray

Pray that God will give you a right view of yourself. Pray that you will rejoice more confidently in Jesus because of how he fulfils our verses.

Thursday 4th August

And God rested

Christians who trust the Bible have different views of what Christians may or may not do on the Sabbath. This study looks deeper, to what God's 'rest' is really all about.

Read Genesis 1v31-2v3

- What does God's resting on the seventh day tell us about what he thought of his creation?
- Why would God give humanity one day each week that especially marks the rest he took after his work of creating?

Read Hebrews 4:1-11

- What does this say that God's Genesis-rest is really pointing to?
- What big application is it making to believers?

Apply

- How does the thought of entering God's rest one day inspire you today?
- Hebrews 4:1 speaks of Christians needing to be 'careful' not to fail to enter God's rest. In which part of life do you need to be careful?

Pray

Praise God that he invites us to share eternally in his rest.

Friday 5th August

Flourishing

We have a sense that our world is not as it ought to be. So how ought it to be?

Read Genesis 2v4-17

- How does the creation of man in v7 show our dignity, and also our dependence?
- What words describe Eden?

The two trees were real, but symbolic. One was a continuous reminder that God gives life, not man. The other, a continuous reminder that God determines what is good and evil, not man.

- What would happen for man and for the world if man lived according to God's good ways? (v10-15)
- What would happen if man rebels against God? (v16-17)

Humans *have* rebelled against God. But when we trust in Jesus, he forgives us and does for us what he did for his first disciples: "*he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20v22, echoing Gen. 2v7). His Spirit enables us to live with and for God, and gives us the sure hope of a perfect world to come, even better than Eden.

Apply

- How does this scene disagree with the idea that the God of the Old Testament is nasty?
- Where are you struggling to obey God's word, because you think that a different way will be better for you?

Pray

Pray for you and your church to be convinced that life lived following Christ is the best life possible.

Saturday 6th August

God creates marriage

Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis both end with a focus on humanity. Today's passage tells us more about what 1v27 meant when it spoke about us being created male and female. Verse 24 shows that what's being created here is marriage.

Read Genesis 2v18-25

- God's verdict on his creation so far in Genesis has been 'it was good'. What's surprising about v18?
- What impression of the relationship between husband and wife does this give you?
- Some people accuse this passage of making women subservient to men. What in the passage shows that's not right?

Apply

- If you're married, what attitudes towards your spouse does this make you want to grow in?
- If you're single, what does this make you want to pray for your married friends?
- The New Testament compares Jesus' relationship with us to a marriage (e.g. Ephesians 5v31-32). How does this passage encourage you about your relationship with Jesus?

Pray

Praise God for the glory of marriage as he has created it. Pray for those with difficult marriages in your church family. Pray that you will rejoice all the more in Christ's faithful relationship with you.

Sunday 7th August

Humanity perverted

Just as Adam and Eve set the universal pattern for marriage (2v24), now they set the pattern for sin which we are all born into and follow.

Read Genesis 3v1-7

God's crucial commandment in 2:16-17 is in the background here. 'Knowing good and evil' (v5) can't mean coming to know the difference between right and wrong, since they already knew that. It probably means deciding for oneself what's right and wrong.

- What are the main steps they each take to disobey God?
- Both Adam and Eve realise that they're naked in v7. What does this symbolise? (2v25 helps with this)

Apply

- Can you think of a time when you have been led to sin by some of the steps we see Adam and Eve take in this passage?
- How can seeing the steps laid out here help you resist them next time?
- Are there any futile ways in which you too try to cover up your shame after sinning?
- Which aspect of God's work for us in Jesus does this passage make you most grateful for?

Pray

Pray that you will be more committed to the Christ whose sacrifice has fully covered over our shame.

Monday 8th August

Humanity's tempter is cursed

God wastes no time in dealing with the one who has enticed his creatures into sin.

Read Genesis 3v8-15

- Dwell for a few moments on all the ways God is wonderfully kind to Adam and Eve here (there are quite a few!).

Verse 15 is sometimes said to be the first declaration of the gospel in Scripture.

- What do we already learn from v15 about how God is going to deal with this grim situation?
- Romans 16v20 says; *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."* What extra insight does this give into how God will work v15 out?

Apply

- Pause and think of some times when you have experienced the same sort of kindness from God, in the midst of your sin.
- What is most encouraging to you about how God deals with the mess he finds?

Pray

Pray that God will give you fresh wonder over the way he has victory over Satan.

Tuesday 9th August

Our lives explained

God's reaction to the first human sin continues, and we still experience the effect.

Read Genesis 3v16-19

God's words to Eve at the end of v16 probably mean: 'You will desire to rule over your husband, but you'll find that he rules over you' (the same word 'desire' appears in 4v7 with that meaning).

- Why does the Lord afflict these particular areas of life?
- What marks of kindness from the Lord are still evident here (there are some!)?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

- What does this say about Jesus that's especially relevant to our passage?

Apply

- Reflect for a moment - how well do these few verses explain the struggles of your life?
- How can the hope in Christ given in 1 Corinthians 15v45-49 give you joy, even though you have sinned and will return to the dust like Adam?

Pray

Pray for a deeper sense of how God in Christ has rescued you.

Wednesday 10th August

God banishes humanity

Read Genesis 3v21-24

'Knowing good and evil' probably means deciding for oneself what's right and wrong.

- In light of Genesis so far, why are v23-24 especially devastating?
- In what ways is God still being kind, even if it's a severe mercy?
- What does Revelation 22v14 say about how this banishment ends? *'Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.'*

Apply

- Consider whether you may be relying on anything other than Jesus' death (on the tree!) in order to come back to God.
- Is there someone you would love to talk to about both the depths of our human predicament, and the wonder of God's mercy in bringing us back to him?

Pray

Pray for an opportunity to speak to the person you just thought about. Praise God that he himself provided the way back for us.

Thursday 11th August

Clean before God

We're moving from Genesis to Matthew for the rest of this month. Jesus is a king who expects us to be totally devoted to him. For that to happen we need to see what he is like. This part of Matthew's Gospel shows us the kind of king Jesus is.

Read Matthew 8v1-4

- What has the leprous man understood about Jesus?
- Why do you think that the man's need is put in terms of being *clean* rather than in terms of being *cured*?
- What does Jesus do for him?

God in the Old Testament says that skin diseases like leprosy are a picture of being unclean before him, which is what we all are by nature. Wonderfully, King Jesus has come to deal with our sin – our uncleanness before God.

Apply

- What is true about your state before God, if your trust is in Jesus?
- How does Jesus' words and action here help you when you doubt your state before God?
- What kind of a king is Jesus?

Pray

Thank Jesus for making you clean. Ask that you would believe that it's true today.

Friday 12th August

Amazing faith

Many people in Matthew's Gospel believed that Jesus could heal them, but only one person in these chapters had a faith that 'amazed' Jesus. We all need the faith that he had.

Read Matthew 8v5-13

- What has the centurion grasped about Jesus?
- How is his faith demonstrated?
- What lesson does Jesus give off the back of the centurion's response?

Jesus' amazement is because of who the centurion was: a commanding officer of the occupying pagan army. The centurion demonstrates that the kingdom of God is not limited by social and ethnic boundaries. Entry is determined by faith in Jesus as God's gracious King. (v8)

Apply

- If you're living with Jesus as your gracious King then what is true about you?
- Who can you think of today who might be like many in Israel: thinking that they are in God's kingdom, when in fact the opposite is true? Why are they not in God's kingdom?
- What kind of a king is Jesus?

Pray

- Thank God for your place at God's feast because of Jesus.
- Pray that you would have the conviction that absolutely *anyone* can be saved through faith in Jesus.

Saturday 13th August

Dealing with every bit of us

Lots of miraculous healings! But there's more to them than meets the eye.

Read Matthew 8v14-17

Jewish law said that fever makes a person ritually unclean, and that anyone touching a feverish person becomes unclean.

- How does Jesus turn that on its head?
- Why does Jesus heal? (v17)

Jesus has a pattern of reaching out to unlikely people: a leper, a Roman centurion's servant, and here, a woman with a fever. His grace is not limited to a certain type of person.

Jesus then heals many physically and mentally sick people. Can we expect him to do this kind of thing today? He can and he might, but the lesson here is better than that: in v17 Matthew links Jesus' healing with Isaiah 53, which talks about the Messiah healing people of their *sin*. Whether directly or indirectly, all suffering in the world is the result of humanity's sin. Jesus' healing miracles are a sign that Jesus can heal us of our sin and of all its consequences, including sickness and suffering, which he will do fully and finally at his second coming.

Apply

- What suffering are you most looking forward to being rid of, when Jesus returns?
- Why is it important that Jesus' priority is to deal with our sin?
- What kind of a king is Jesus?

Pray

Praise Jesus for his commitment to dealing with everything that's wrong with us.

Sunday 14th August

A so-called follower

Jesus is God's gracious King. Those who follow him will feast with him in eternity. But before then, following him is no walk in the park.

Read Matthew 8v18-20

- What kind of a life do you imagine a teacher of the Jewish law had in that Jewish society?
- What does the title he uses for Jesus indicate about what he wanted to get out of following Jesus?
- What kind of a life did Jesus have?

Jesus was all about the will of God, which ultimately led him to suffer on the cross. Walking that path meant not having a permanent home, nor collecting any kind of wealth. We ought to share this man's enthusiasm to follow Jesus. But we need to notice Jesus' poverty while on earth. We take our lead from the one we follow.

Apply

- What is it like to follow King Jesus? Is that what you're finding?
- How does this perhaps make you reassess your expectations for your life?
- If you find following Jesus uncomfortable and costly, why should you be comforted?

Pray

Pray for the willingness to follow Jesus wherever he leads, no matter how tough.

Monday 15th August

Another so-called follower

God's King Jesus encounters a second man who fancies following him.

Read Matthew 8v21-22

- Why does Jesus sound unreasonable?

The phrase "bury my father" had a particular meaning. It was about the son's duty in that culture to stay at home and care for his parents until they are laid to rest. The man is saying, "Jesus someday, after my father has died, I will follow you". He's postponing his commitment to Jesus, perhaps for some years.

"The dead" is a stark description of people who do not trust in Jesus, who have different priorities to Jesus.

- In what sense is this man a disciple (v21), and in what sense is he not a disciple?

Apply

- Though it is costly to follow Jesus, why is it wrong to delay or compromise in following Jesus?
- Why is it important for us to remember all the evidence that Jesus is a *gracious* King?
- Where have you put Jesus on hold in order to follow your own agenda?

Pray

Pray, repenting of half-hearted "following".

Tuesday 16th August

Lord of the storm

It's hard to follow King Jesus. So why bother? Because Jesus is Lord of the storm.

Read Matthew 8v23-27

- What is the contrast in v24?
- Why does Jesus rebuke them?
- What difference do Jesus' words make?

This is a strange story. The experienced yet desperate sailors plead for help from...a carpenter. Then the wind and the waves answer to the carpenter. It's no wonder the men respond as they do.

Apply

- What kind of man *is* this?
- How does it help us in the storms of life to remember that our gracious King is Lord of the storm?
- One day, what will Jesus' kingdom be like?

Pray

Pray for trust in King Jesus no matter what you face.

Wednesday 17th August

Destroyer of evil

It's hard to follow Jesus, but here's another reason why we should bother: King Jesus is the destroyer of evil.

Read Matthew 8v28-34

- What are we told about the two men?
- What do the demons know will one day happen? (v29)
- What does Jesus do that no one else could?

In our world, just as there is a supernatural force for good (God), so there are supernatural forces for bad (the devil and demons). In Jesus' death and resurrection, he broke the back of evil. When he comes again, he will wipe out all evil for good.

Apply

- To what extent is evil a problem in our world and our lives?
- How do we see attempts to defeat evil defeated?
- Why can Jesus' people take comfort?
- Why is Jesus' eradication of evil something people can find hard? (v34)

Pray

Pray that you wouldn't despair at evil, but trust Jesus and look forward to his return. Pray for the courage to point friends to Jesus as the only solution to the world's evil.

Thursday 18th August

Authority to forgive sins

Jesus has taught, healed, exorcised demons, and controlled nature. Yet he came to do one thing in particular.

Read Matthew 9v1-8

- Why were the teachers of the law upset?
- Both acts in v5 are impossible for a mere human. What does Jesus demonstrate about himself?
- When did Jesus demonstrate most clearly that he came to forgive sins?

Apply

- Unless Jesus forgives sin, why is any physical healing ultimately meaningless?
- If you have your trust in Jesus, what has happened to your sin?
- Why should you too be filled with awe?

Pray

Praise God for giving such authority to Jesus.

Friday 19th August

Only sinners need apply

Jesus has forgiven and welcomed lots of different types of people. Yet they all had one thing in common.

Read Matthew 9v9-13

- How does Jesus show that there's no one too bad for him?
- In what sense are some people too good for Jesus?
- What is the state of their relationship with Jesus?

In his own eyes, Matthew is a sinner. In their own eyes, the religious Pharisees are righteous. The truth is that everyone is a sinner, but Jesus will not forgive the sin of anyone who stubbornly thinks they don't need it.

Apply

- If you are a sinner following Jesus, what does the passage show about Jesus' relationship with you?
- What stops you from doing thinking of yourself as a sinner?
- What do our non-Christian friends need to grasp about Jesus?

Pray

Pray for a deep conviction that Jesus calls sinners – but *only* sinners – to follow him. Confess your sin to him, knowing that he wants you to follow him.

Saturday 20th August

Rejoice!

Question: Just who does Jesus think he is? Answer: Better than you think!

Read Matthew 9v14-15

Old Testament law stated that every Jew should fast once a year. Other than that, an individual might fast in times of sorrow.

- What problem do John's disciples have with Jesus?
- What haven't they understood about Jesus?
- Why was this a time for rejoicing, yet a time for fasting was coming?

Apply

- How would it affect your relationship with Jesus if one of the pictures you had of him was as your bridegroom?
- In what sense do God's people have a wedding day to look forwards to?
- What did that wedding cost?

Pray

Praise Jesus that today he is our bridegroom and that he will one day come for us.

Sunday 21st August

Out with the old, in with the new

Jesus' coming is the start of a whole new era of history.

Read Matthew 9v16-17

Both illustrations show that treating something new and different like something old is a disaster. The 'old' refers to Old Testament patterns and structures.

- What do John's disciples assume that Jesus had come to do?
- What has Jesus come to do with the structures of Jewish religion?

Apply

- How should we interpret the religious structures given for Israel in the Old Testament?
- Why should we be thankful that Jesus has come?

Jesus and his kingdom are the fulfilment of Old Testament expectations. To know him as your bridegroom is a wonderful situation which replaces all the Old Testament religious structures.

Pray

Pray that you would appreciate more and more who Jesus is and how good it is to be in relationship with him.

Monday 22nd August

Backing up big claims

As Jesus makes the huge claim to be the long-awaited bridegroom of God's people, a man calls upon him to back it up.

Read Matthew 9v18-34

- What do the sad situations of these people have in common?
- What does Jesus do for them?

Pipe players were part of the mourning ritual, but Jesus sends them away (v24). Jesus is the bridegroom who turns a funeral into a wedding! He can reverse the very worst effects of sin – and one day he will.

Apply

- How is King Jesus unlike any other king or leader on earth?
- What will life be like in his eternal kingdom?
- How might this future hope make up part of the good news we can share with friends?

Pray

Pray that you too would be amazed by Jesus (v33). Pray that news of King Jesus would spread through the region you live in (v26) – even through you.

Tuesday 23rd August

Praying to the Lord of the harvest

King Jesus kindly wants us to partner with him in his kingdom work.

Read Matthew 9v35-38

Verse 35 shows Jesus' commitment to demonstrating that he is God's King, and to telling sinners about how they can be in God's kingdom. But this good news needs to reach more and more people.

- What did Jesus see when he saw the crowds?
- What are the two facts of life Jesus states?
- What, then, is Jesus' instruction to his followers?

Apply

- Consider where you work or live. Why should you have compassion on the people there?
- Why must compassion lead us to pray?
- What expectations can we have as we keep on doing that?
- The Lord loves to act in response to his people being committed to his purposes. How, then, can you get into the *habit* of praying for workers?

Pray

Pray that you would grow in compassion and persistent prayer for others.

Wednesday 24th August

The importance of our mission

Jesus' own disciples are an answer to the prayer he's just told them to pray.

Read Matthew 10v1-8 (and 9v35)

- Why are verses 1 and 7 stunning, especially in the light of ch9v35?
- How does Jesus demonstrate his seriousness about getting his message out?

This moment is the very beginning of the mission of Jesus' followers. It was a unique moment, so some details here aren't for us today – such as v5-6 (his compassion is such that he sends the twelve first of all to his own people Israel) and the miracles of v8. But it's a mission Jesus wants all his followers to be on.

Apply

- What difference should it make to us, that the one we follow is so serious about getting his message out? Who are the missionaries in your church?
- Many believe that Jesus was little more than a good man and his message to the world is that we should be nicer. How does Jesus show that his mission was rather different to that?

Pray

Pray for any missionaries in your church is partnering with. Repent of where you lack concern to get Jesus' message out and ask for opportunities to speak for him today.

Thursday 25th August

Messengers who embody the message

Jesus is instructing his followers about the important mission he has given them – and us.

Read Matthew 10v8b-11

- In what sense was there nothing special about the people Jesus chose to for his mission? (v8b)
- The message they were to spread was not, “God will give you what you think he owes you”, but rather, “God offers you what you don’t deserve and could never pay for”. How was their lifestyle to back up their message? (v9-11)

(Note: a “worthy person” is simply someone who is open to Jesus’ people.)

Apply

- What kind of a lifestyle today would contradict the message Jesus calls us to spread? Be specific.
- What, for you, would a lifestyle look like that backs up the message Jesus calls us to spread?

Pray

Pray about anything in your lifestyle that needs to change, so that non-Christians will more readily listen to the Christian message when you share it.

Friday 26th August

Messengers that matter

The importance of us messengers cannot be overstated.

Read Matthew 10:12-15

The “greeting” is given by one of Jesus’ people to someone who is allegedly interested in his cause. A “deserving” home is one where the householders welcome Jesus and his people.

- When the disciples tell the people they visit about God’s King Jesus, what would happen?
- What is wonderfully true about people who listen to Jesus’ messengers?
- What is the desperately sad truth that Jesus’ messengers are to make clear to those who reject them?

Apply

- How does Jesus show here how significant you are as you share the message about him?
- What does Jesus’ teaching here say to the person who thinks, “I’m not a believer; Jesus and the Bible are just not my thing”?
- Why should we risk the embarrassment of speaking to a friend about Jesus, or inviting them to somewhere they can hear about him?

Pray

Pray that you and your church would appreciate how significant you are as you do the work of ambassadors for Christ in our lost world.

Pray that you would have the courage to share the message of Christ with friends and family, including the hard truth of what will happen if they reject him.

Saturday 27th August

Sheep among wolves

The church's mission is to get the great news of King Jesus out to the world. But the world will sometimes hate the message, and the messengers. Jesus manages our expectations.

Read Matthew 10v16-20

- What are sheep among wolves like?
- When believers are in that situation, what would it look like to be "as shrewd as snakes"? What's the alternative?
- Why would there be pressure to not be "as innocent as doves"?
- Who should we expect persecution from?
- What comforts does Jesus give?

The situation Jesus pictures in v19-20 is extreme. Yet countless Christians have experienced it and can testify that the Spirit gave them words they could never imagine saying.

Apply

- When we get backlash for sharing the good news of Jesus, how do we know that's not a sign that we're doing it wrong?

Pray

Thank Jesus for these warnings and comforts. Pray they would give you courage to share his message – and keep sharing it – even when it leads to persecution by people in power.

Pray for Christians who are currently being persecuted by authorities for sharing the good news, that they would respond well.

Sunday 28th August

Persecution as standard

Even those closest to us will persecute us for spreading the message of Jesus.

Read Matthew 10v21-25

- What makes the persecution of v21 shocking?
- What comforts does Jesus give?

If v21-22 is not currently our experience, we can thank God, but it is not an unusual experience for many Christians in the world, and we can expect it if we keep speaking of Jesus.

It's hard to know what event Jesus is talking about in v23, but the point is clear: Jesus will come in some way to rescue his people, at a time when they will still be going with the hard mission. So: keep at it till the end!

Apply

- Why will a devotion to ease and comfort stop you from obeying Jesus and being used by him to spread the message about him?
- Are you ready to be *hated* by those closest to you because of your dedication to sharing the message of Jesus?
- If you are not seriously planning on ceasing to talk about Jesus with non-Christians, what are the comforts for you here?

Pray

Pray that you would faithfully share with people the good news of Jesus, and when you are persecuted for doing so, you would remember his promises here.

Monday 29th August

Do not be afraid

Jesus knows that telling people about him can be a daunting business, so he kindly gives us some big motivations to keep at it.

Read Matthew 10v26-33

- What commands does our King give us?
- What three reasons are there in v26-31 not to be afraid when we are persecuted for living and speaking for Jesus?

Verses 26-27 are about all Jesus' disciples taking the message that Jesus gave to those disciples privately (that they've written down for us in the New Testament) and getting it out into the world. Then, when Jesus returns, everyone will see the truth of Christ.

- What is the encouragement and the warning in v32-33?

“Acknowledge” means publicly saying that Jesus is the one King. The warning is not about our occasions of cowardice, but disowning Jesus for good.

Apply

- Who are you afraid to speak to about Jesus?
- When people are big and God is small, why will we keep quiet about Jesus?
- When we fix our eyes on God, what difference does it make to how we view (1) others, and (2) ourselves?

Pray

Pray that you would fear God and not people, and so “speak” (v27) – even today.

Tuesday 30th August

Persecution even from our nearest and dearest

Persecution from those we love is inevitable, but it's so tough that Jesus needs to address it directly.

Read Matthew 10v34-39

This "sword" is not one that Jesus wields himself, nor one that he puts in the hands of his followers. It is taken up by those who oppose Christians.

- Calling sinners to himself is Jesus' primary objective (see 9v13 and 20v28). Why does that inevitably result in such clashes, even within families? (v34-36)
- Why is it comforting that even this is not outside of Jesus' plan?
- What is the warning to churchgoers who give their ultimate loyalty to anyone or anything other than Jesus? What is the promise if we don't? (v37-39)

Why is King Jesus so much more worthy to have our highest love and allegiance than anyone?

Apply

- Imagine you have family members who together say, "renounce your faith, or we no longer want anything to do with you". What would you do?
- If someone claims to follow Jesus but does not obey him when it's hard, what do they need to hear?

Pray

Pray that you would walk the hard path of following Jesus wholeheartedly, and so find life. (v39) Pray in the light of this passage for Christians in your church who have unbelievers in their family.

Wednesday 31st August

Welcoming you = welcoming Jesus

Living and speaking for Jesus may well lead to serious persecution, but Jesus reassures us that it's well worth it.

Read Matthew 10v40-42

- What is the main point, repeated several times?
- What happens when someone receives us and our message about Jesus?
- What happens when we receive others who are dedicated to making Jesus known?

If help and support are extended to Jesus' people *because they are Jesus' people*, those who extend it must share in their commitment to Jesus and will share their rewards from Jesus.

Apply

- If serious persecution is coming our way when we live and speak for Jesus, why don't we just keep our heads down and let God convert whoever he wants to?
- Scan verses 16-42 and list all the reasons to press on in sharing Christ despite the hits you'll take.

Pray

Pray that you would be committed to Jesus' cause, and Jesus' people. Pray that King Jesus would use your evangelism to lead many non-Christians to welcome him.