

## 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 10 am MOT: My Bible Reading

Service led by Michelle Harris, talks by Penny Bryans and Michelle Harris,  
Readings by Isaac Harris and Jessica Harris, Intercessions by Ruma and David

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### Welcome

[Michelle Harris:] Good morning.

[Penny Bryans:] Good morning.

[Michelle:] Morning, Penny.

[Penny:] How are you, Michelle?

[Michelle:] I was going to say, "introduce yourself," but I've just said "Good morning," and you did to me! How are you this morning?

[Penny:] I'm very well, thank you, yes, and you?

[Michelle:] Yeah, I'm well thank you. I was just looking at the weather. It's a bit chilly, isn't it, I'm not sure that we've got the 'Beast from the East' this weekend. It was really windy on my run this morning. I felt like I was running into proper headwinds.

So yes, a quick run through what we're doing in the service this morning: so Penny is going to be speaking to us later and doing a couple of bits within the service. And then I will also be in service, doing a little mini-talk as well. And we're. Yeah, we're kind of trying to have a bit more of a family feel to this morning's service, aren't we Penny, we're going to have a bit of fun, where my kids are gonna come and do a Bible race in a bit. And then, what else have we got on? Oh, I've got some cool videos as well. And so, yeah, Penny if you want to come back in a bit, and then we'll see you in a little while. Cool!

### Notices

So, notices:

- Denise has very kindly sent out the weekly update. And there's loads of things on there to keep you up to date with.
- We've got a youth event that's going to happen. I'll speak to the youth about it later, but parents, if you want your young people to come to that, it's another 'together at home' one that Tom Millington's organised. So yeah, we're going to join with some other youth groups, and have a cool evening of worship, and some other fun and games as well.
- There is Pat Briffa's memorial service that happened last week. If you want to see the link for that, if you weren't able to join in, then get in contact with Denise, and when it's all ready to go, she will send that out to you.
- What else have we got? Oh, Lent resources - it's going to be Lent! Oh my goodness it's, I can't believe that Lent's here already, or will be here very, very soon. That means pancakes, which is cool - we love pancakes. 😊 But yeah, if you've got some really good Lent resources that you want to

share, Denise has got a load anyway, but if you've come across something and you think this is really good, that other people might like to engage with, then, let us know about it.

- Thy Kingdom Come has started things that we put in the rolling notices today, about the Thy Kingdom Come prayer resource, where everyone is joining together across the country at six o'clock every day to pray for our nation. So that could be something that you could join in with as well

And things that you need for today's service (I probably should have said this before I started the notices, but then I guess the bonus of YouTube means that you can press pause and go and get them). And so, things you're going to need:

- You need a physical Bible, not your phone. (Andrew: I know you're one for that!) Get a physical Bible if you've got one in your house, because we're going to have some Bible races, but I want to use it for you to think about later as well. And so if you can have that.
- And then, something that I struggle with, when I'm sitting there staring at a screen, is staying engaged in what's going on and I tend to, if I've not got something to do with my hands, (but I do have a lot of fidget toys and things like that) and I tend to get distracted and not particularly focused. So, as this is an all-in service, I thought we'd set a bit of a challenge for people today to get yourself some paper and a pen or pens of multiple colours or whatever else. Because today, I'd like you during the service to create for yourself a bookmark. Our theme for today is doing an MOT of our Bible life, like how we're engaging with the Bible, what we're doing with the Bible, all that sort of stuff, so I thought it'd be really nice to create for ourselves a really nice bookmark that you can put in your Bible, and I thought, as, yeah, as we tend to need something to do with our hands you could spend the morning during the service doodling, you can create a picture, you can use a verse from the Bible that talks about, I don't know, the word being a lamp to our feet or whatever else. But yeah, create for yourself a really beautiful bookmark, and everyone can do that, whether you are young or whether you are old.

We've got some fun songs today with some actions or certainly in the very first song we've got some actions, so I'd love to see people joining in with those. I really apologise now, because the first song does get stuck in your head, it will be there for the rest of the week. But it's a good fun song. And can I just encourage you that, just because it's a kid's song, don't switch off from it and think, "it's a kid's song, I don't want to engage in this;" like, see what God's going to say to you through that song as well.

So, let's settle our hearts a bit. Let's settle ourselves. Take a moment to breathe.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank You for this time that we get to spend together this morning. Father, I ask that You would draw close to each person that is watching this service, and each person that's engaging with this service. Would You speak to each person. Would You speak to each one of us. Father, we may be in our own homes, but I ask that You would help us to feel like we are part of this community. We're all here together, worshipping You, digging into Your Word. Father, would Your Spirit move amongst Your people today. Help us to learn something new about You, help us to draw close to You.  
Amen.

Right, so, I'm going to hand over to Luke to stick our worship songs on, and yeah, have some fun, enjoy.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Song: Heroes of the Faith**

1. Like Noah who built the ark  
When the rain came down, came down,  
Like Moses who followed God  
And led the slaves in Egypt out,
2. Like David who threw a stone  
And the giant fell down, fell down,  
Like Jonah who ran away,  
But in the belly of a whale turned round,

#### *Chorus:*

I wanna be a hero of the faith;  
In Your power I'll run this race  
A hero of the faith  
For You!  
I wanna be a hero of the faith;  
Make me strong so I can be  
A hero of the faith  
For You!

3. Like Daniel who who trusted God  
So the lions made no sound,  
Like Joshua's mighty shout  
Meant the Jericho walls fell down,
4. Like Abraham's story sings,  
He was faithful in all things,  
Like Mary who welcomed God  
When she birthed our heavenly King,

#### *Chorus*

#### *Bridge:*

No weapon formed against me  
Will defeat my faith in God;  
The enemy won't break me  
In my weakness You are strong.

#### *Repeat bridge*

#### *Chorus x 2*

I wanna be a hero!

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Song: This I Believe**

1. Our Father everlasting  
The all-creating One,  
God Almighty,  
Through Your Holy Spirit,  
Conceiving Christ the Son,  
Jesus our Saviour.

#### *Chorus 1:*

I believe in God our Father,  
I believe in Christ the Son,  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
Our God is three in One.  
I believe in the resurrection,  
That we will rise again,  
For I believe In the Name of Jesus.

2. Our Judge and our Defender  
Suffered and crucified.  
Forgiveness is in You.  
Descended into darkness,  
You rose in glorious life,  
Forever seated high.

#### *Chorus*

#### *Bridge:*

I believe in You;  
I believe You rose again;  
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

#### *Repeat bridge*

#### *Repeat chorus*

#### *Chorus 2:*

I believe in life eternal,  
I believe in the virgin birth,  
I believe in the saints' communion  
And in Your holy Church.  
I believe in the resurrection  
When Jesus comes again  
For I believe in the Name of Jesus,  
For I believe in the Name of Jesus.

## **Children's Video: Why Read the Bible by PursueGOD Kids**

[Boy:] Hey kids, have you ever had to build something? Maybe you were helping your dad build furniture or maybe you were building a cool toy set. When you built those things, do you have to follow an instruction manual?

[Girl:] Well, in today's lesson we're gonna learn about the instruction manual of life: the Bible. The Bible tells us how to be saved.

[Boy:] Being saved is something we talk about a lot. And that's because it's really important

[Girl:] When we put our trust in Jesus and we believe He died on the Cross for our sins, then we're saved.

[Boy:] That means God has forgiven us for all the bad things we have done, and we'll be able to be with Him in heaven someday.

[Girl:] And the Bible's what teaches us all about that. But that's not all.

[Boy:] The Bible teaches us what's really true about God and Jesus.

Sometimes it can be hard to know to believe.

[Girl:] There are a lot of different religions in the world that believe a lot of different things. And sometimes it's hard to know which one is right. Lucky for us, the Bible can help us check our facts.

[Boy:] If we hear something about God or Jesus and you're not sure if we can believe it, check the Bible, but the Bible does even more than that. The Bible shows us when we're doing something wrong.

[Girl:] The Bible also tells us how we should and shouldn't act. Memory verse!

[Boy:] It corrects us when we're wrong and teaches us to do what is right. It tells us that we should do things, like obey our parents, and be nice to people.

[Girl:] It tells us we should also not do things like lie, hurt people, or steal. And there's one more thing.

[Boy:] The Bible is our instruction manual for life. The Bible gives us all sorts of instructions and information,

[Girl:] but the only way to know what the Bible actually says is to read it yourself.

[Boy:] When you're building something, you have to look at the instructions for every single step, otherwise you might mess up what you're trying to build.

[Girl:] So the Bible's our instruction manual for life, and we have to make sure we're reading every single day.

[Boy:] So kids, next time you're building furniture with your dad, think of this lesson.

[Girl:] And remember, the Bible is our instruction manual for life, so keep reading it, doing what it says. Hey kids and parents. If you want to learn more about the Bible, or obeying God, check out the links below.<sup>1</sup>

### **1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 [ERV]**

[Michelle:] I don't think I and Penny need to do to anything else for the rest of this service, that's kind of said it all. Anyway, so I've got mighty helpers this morning, Isaac and Jessica, and in Youth, when we need to find a Bible verse, we don't just get our Bibles and look it up, we have a little bit of fun with it. So, we all need to put our Bibles on our heads,



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1 See end of transcript.

and you can do this at home too. You are getting really good at deportment now. And you have to put your hands under your armpits, No, Isaac, other armpit, you doughnut.

[Isaac:] Fine. If you really want me to.

[Michelle:] So I'm going to shout out the Bible verse, and then whoever finds the Bible verse first, they're gonna read it out. Okay?

[Isaac:] It'll be me.

[Michelle:] We'll see.

Right, ready? So you're gonna look up 2 Timothy chapter three verses 14 to 17. That's the New Testament, not old, 2 Timothy. So if you're going through, it's "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Acts and Romans follow on."

[Isaac:] Got it.

[Michelle:] Got it already?

[Isaac:] Yeah.

[Michelle:] Let's just find it. So two Timothy chapter three verse 14 to 17.

[Isaac:] My gosh I'm faster than my mother!

[Michelle:] Okay, cool. So, Isaac, two Timothy three verses 14 to 17 please.

[Isaac:]

**14** But you should continue following the teaching you learned. You know it is true, because you know you can trust those who taught you. **15** You have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child. These Scriptures are able to make you wise. And that wisdom leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live. **17** Using the Scriptures, those who serve God will be prepared and will have everything they need to do every good work.

[Michelle:] Fantastic, thank you very much Isaac. Over to Penny.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Talk: Why Read the Bible**

[Penny Bryans:]

Hello, good morning. I have to say that I have found this really challenging, to do a mini-talk on the massive Bible – a book that's all about our amazing God, and what God has done to rescue us from sin and death, and how He's still doing it. And please forgive me where I have missed obvious things that really should have been included.

So, we're doing an MOT on reading the Bible. Last month it was on prayer. An MOT, as I'm sure most people know, is a test for a vehicle to make sure that it is roadworthy, able to do the job it's meant to do without being a danger to the driver and passengers or to other road users, so it's not going to fall apart and it's not going to be dangerous: fit for purpose. So, last month, Andrew looked at our prayer lives being fit for purpose. This month, we're looking at the Bible. I'm going to take a quick look at roughly, why we might read the Bible and Michelle will have a look afterwards at how. I think I'd like to make it clear, though, that when we talk about reading the Bible that that really includes listening, and it really means knowing the Bible, because obviously some people are unable to read it but they are able to hear it.

So, we read the Bible, as Isaac read for us, because the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. They are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us. And all this, so that we may be equipped for every good work. That is, to live our lives in the fullness to which God has called us.

Now, I'd like to share with you an acronym that Jeremy's dad was quite fond of. Perhaps you already know it. I'll tell it to you and give you a few seconds to see what you think it might mean. Please may I have the first slide. Thank you.

So have a look, it's 'C D M'.

What do you think 'C D M' stands for? Have a chat amongst yourselves.

C D M

Right. Well, I don't know what you said amongst yourselves, but I wonder how many people said 'Cadbury's Dairy Milk'? I've tried to use the right colours there. And Jeremy's dad would get it out of the cupboard and offer you a bit of CDM. He was quite partial to it. Anyway, having put that into your head, I'm going to use those three letters as three rough points for why we read the Bible.

Please could we have the next slide. Okay. C stands for 'character'. We read the Bible to know God's character to go deeper with Him, to know Almighty God, to know Father God, to know the God who made the world, and made and knows and loves each little individual person in it. The disciples really knew Jesus because they spent so much time with Jesus. They learned to trust Him in every situation, those deep times of prayer that Andrew mentioned last month, those deep times of reading His Word, and God revealing Himself to us, will lead increasingly to know how to trust Him in our own situations, and in those for other people.

Character

Next slide please. Thank you. Now the D stands for 'direct' and I've had to fit in a few words into 'direct': the D comes from 'discipleship'. The R and E from 'rebuking', and the C for 'correction', and the T for 'training.' Isaac read them all out earlier.

Direct  
Discipleship  
Rebuking  
Correction Training

- The 'discipleship' part is the reading of our Bible daily, the routine of just making sure we stay in tune with Jesus, keeping in touch with God.
- In rebuking and correction, we need to know God's Word to know what is right and where we may have gone wrong, to show us the right way out of the situation, which way we should go.
- And in training, we, in our lives, we need to learn new ways of doing things from God and learn how to put them into practice.

Next slide please. Thank you. The M in CDM stands for 'maturity', putting our roots deeper into God, growing in our life with Him, and increasingly, His life will flow out of us. As we get to know God better, as we give ourselves up to Him to be disciples, we will be increasingly led by the Holy Spirit, more experienced at trusting God, more aware of our need to depend on Him, and we will grow in maturity. Does anyone know a mature Christian who doesn't know their Bible?

Maturity

Last slide please. Thanks. So, these three areas are reasons that we really do need to read the Bible, and you could even use them to say that really knowing God and His character will direct us into maturity. Thank you, please could we have the slides off now.

CDM  
Character  
Direct  
Maturity

Now, I'd just like to add a few more things before I finish. It's easy to read the Bible just as a book, in a hurry, to read the words, to learn knowledge. But the Bible is God's written Word to mankind. It is God-breathed. It's His living Word. God's Word is life-giving, life-changing and life-preserving. We need to read it, asking God to talk to us by His Holy Spirit. We need to read it, expecting to hear Him speak. When we give ourselves to reading the Bible, just as with prayer, it's not just for nothing, it's for actual change, change in us

and our lives, in our shared life with other believers, and for the world around us. That really makes a difference. Have you ever watched someone slip away from God and back into the world? Have you seen how things change for them, very often, little by little? Perhaps start by missing a few meetings, distancing from one another, perhaps still talking the talk with you, but then rationalising that you don't need to go to church, you don't need to be with other Christians. With the lack of God's input in their lives, slowly they start to feel awkward in the presence of believers, and there are plenty of reasons why they don't want to remain in fellowship with other believers. Their prayer and Bible habits will have been the first things that slipped.

But God has sanctified us. That means He's called us and cleansed us, forgiven us and He's set us apart to be different from people who don't believe Him. And He's given us everything we need to live in this world, but not to live like the rest of the world, by praying and reading the Bible, staying in tune with God and His people, we are keeping ourselves for Him, for the good and amazing things that He has for us to do. And we are better protected and armed for whatever we come up against.

Now, some of this sounds a bit heavy doesn't it? Training and rebuking and correction. But as God's children, we do need Him to deal with us as a good father should. However, there is more than just the training and correction. The Bible is a gift to us from our Heavenly Father, who loves us and wants to equip us for fullness of life in Him with a full life. Let me read Psalm 19, verses seven to eight.<sup>2</sup>

- |   |   |   |                          |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| 7 | The law of the Lord is perfect,           | ◆ | reviving the soul;       |
|   | The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, | ◆ | making wise the simple.  |
| 8 | The precepts of the Lord are right,       | ◆ | giving joy to the heart. |
|   | The commands of the Lord are radiant,     | ◆ | enlightening the eyes.   |

This is very good news. God's Word revives our soul, makes us wise, brings joy to our heart and allows us to see what He wants us to see. He really changes us; and through us, He changes the world. So, if you are finding it hard to get reading the Bible, or to hear God when you do read or listen, remember what's in it. Remember the 'C D M'. The Bible is a gift to us from the God who loves us and wants us to have a full life in Him, not a partial life.

Well, I'd just like to pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for giving us the Bible, and for helping us to understand it. I pray that You will revive our souls, refresh us and make us wise with Your wisdom. And I pray particularly for people who are struggling, that You will bring real joy to their hearts, as they read Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Song: Holy and Anointed One**

Jesus  
Jesus  
Holy and Anointed One  
Jesus

Jesus  
Jesus  
Risen and Exalted One  
Jesus

Your name is like honey on my lips;  
Your Spirit is like water to my soul;  
Your Word is a lamp unto my feet;  
Jesus I love You – I love You.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Matthew 4:1-4 [NLT]**

[Michelle:] So we've got our second Bible race, so everybody should know the drill by now. Bibles on your heads, hands under your armpits.

[Isaac:] Why do you make it so hard?

[Michelle:] You're doing good. I'm impressed. Oh look, we're actually going in height order.

[Isaac:] Oh, not that.

[Michelle:] Right. So are you ready? We're looking at Matthew chapter four verses one to four.

[Jessica:] Got it!

[Michelle:] You got it. Good Job. Isaac? Matthew chapter four verses one to four.

[Isaac:] Matthew three - where's four? It just goes to four to five... If you're going to Matthew three and then it goes to the first one...

Oh my gosh, that's a thin page!

[Michelle:] Okay, got it? Cool.

[Isaac:] Yep.

[Michelle:] Jess got it first, like, so Jess, can you read it for us? Wonderful.

[Jessica:]

**1** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. **2** For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

**3** During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

**4** But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

[Michelle:] Fantastic, thanks very much. Now you can scoot off.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Talk: How to Read the Bible**

Can you grab your Bible, and just hold it in your hand for a minute. What's the Bible like for you? Is it an old friend?

What words come to mind? There's loads of passages in the Bible that talk about what the Bible is like.

Psalms 119:105 says the Word is like a lamp which lights up our path.

Psalms 119[:103] talks about God's Word being sweeter than honey, because His words are so enjoyable to hear and to read.

Psalms 12 verse 6 says that God's Word is like gold and silver, because the metals look so perfect and God's Word is perfect as well.

Jeremiah 23 talks about God's Word being like a hammer, because it can destroy evil and crush sin including the things that we've done.

Hebrews 4 talks about God's Word being like a sword (don't have a sword), but a sword that can cut and can divide. And when it cuts, it reveals the truth about our thoughts and our actions.

Proverbs chapter 4 talks about God's Word giving us life and making us healthy, the way that medicine makes us

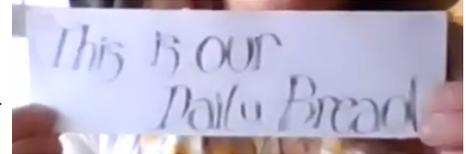


healthy.

Isaiah 55 talks about God's Word being like rain, which waters the ground, and it makes things grow because God's Word makes us healthy and strong, in living in God's way.

Luke 8 talks about God's Word being like a seed, like a little tomato seed. And when it's planted in the heart of people who hear it and obey it, it grows.

Matthew chapter 4, we've just read, speaks about God's Word being like bread. Bread's a food that's like rice or potato: people eat it every day to keep their bodies going, and we need God's Word every day to keep us going in our walk with God. My bookmark that I started doing, I went with doing "This is our daily bread." And I'll continue doodling on that later. Yeah, I really love the metaphor that Jesus uses about the Bible being like bread. He's actually quoting from a passage much earlier in the Bible, in Deuteronomy.



I don't know about you, but I love bread. I love all the different types and flavours, all the different textures, you get all different shapes and sizes:

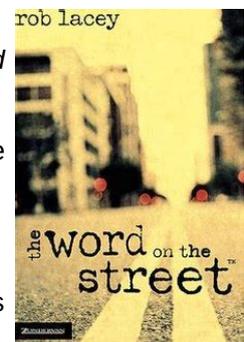
you get wraps, you get naans, you get just normal sliced loaf, it's just, it's amazing. I think that Jesus uses the metaphor of bread because everybody knows about it, everyone can identify with it, everyone, even if you've got a dietary requirement, we've all got an experience of bread.

So how are bread and Bible similar? Well, you've got your basic day-to-day bread. That's kind of like, yeah, NIV bog-standard, which is a bit like, yeah, white loaf or brown loaf if you're very unhealthy. It's your standard go-to, it's the thing that fortifies you, it fills you up, and you just get your regular amount of it. Then

you've got your bread that's full of nuts or seeds, and so that might be more like an ESV Bible, or you've got the - ooh, this one is the Hebrew/Greek interlinear Bible, so it's got all the different types of the Bible next to each other, so you can get really deep and it's got loads of detail and you can check exactly what each word means or what the original versions of it were; or you've got things that it's got like extra flavour or, you know, it's got a bit of texture or it's just a



really, like, treats-type Bible, one that maybe you can soak in, and so you've got things like *The Message*<sup>3</sup>, where you can just read it like a novel, and it might not be a word-for-word translation, but, you know, it gives a different flavour to the Word of God. You don't use it very often but it's there as a treat; or something like *The Word on the Street*<sup>4</sup>, that - I mean this is great, it puts it into really everyday language. I mean literally just open it up randomly, and we get to Romans, it says things like "Stay on the right side of the law, because like it or not, God put the law there in the first place. So if you scream for anarchy, if you trash the system, you're doing it straight at God." So clearly that's nowhere near a direct translation, but it does give a flavour of the Bible and then a flavour of God's Word, and helps you to kind of stretch your brain a bit and maybe think about things in a different way.

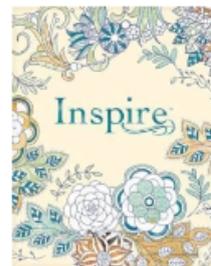


So there's all these different types of Bibles that you can use. And they've all got different purposes. If you really want to dig into it, then obviously you've

3 The Message by Eugene Peterson, ISBN 9781631468223

4 The Word on the Street by Rob Lacey, ISBN 9780310932253

got these things like the ESV. Or you've got the ones like *Inspire Bible*<sup>5</sup>, I love this Bible. It's so beautiful, and like, it's got things that you can colour in and things that you can use to kind of meditate and focus and just sit and spend some time really soaking in God's Word.



And even within the Bible itself, there's all different types of writing: there's poetry, there's factual history, there's a love story, there's so much drama. Like, it's great how you can get young people involved in the Bible when you talk about things like tent pegs being stuck through people's heads and stuff like that. But both the Bible and bread, they give us sustenance, one fulfils our physical needs, and gives us energy that we need to survive the day-to-day. And the other fulfils our spiritual needs, which keeps our relationship with God going day to day.

How do I know who God is? The Bible tells me.

How do I know the stories of God's people like the heroes in the faith that we sang about at the start? (I'm really sorry about that song... but I'm not - like #SorryNotSorry). I know about those heroes of the faith because the Bible tells me about them.

How do I know what sin is and what's going to separate me from God? The Bible tells me.

How do I know who Jesus is, that died to pay the price for my sin, that His death sets me free from sin, so that I can be in a right relationship with God? The Bible tells me.

How do I know what Jesus taught? The Bible tells me.

How can I learn how Jesus lived His life so that I can imitate it, and I can follow Him? The Bible tells me.

How do I know what to believe is right and true? Like, if it's in the Bible, then I know it's true.

How do I know how to live a life that's pleasing to God? Because the Bible tells me. How does God speak to me in my everyday?

He speaks to me through His Word, through the Bible.

This is is the true, living, breathed word of God. It's the way I know God's story, it's the way I know how my life fits in with His story. But if I don't spend time reading His Word, then how can I know Him? Both Penny and I've been doing the Bible In A Year, and although we use completely different apps and books, and it's not the first time that I've attempted it, but I'm hoping to get further than March this year, although I'm a couple of days behind. (It's really hard to do weekends - I don't know why.) Yeah, the difference this year, though, is that it's the first year that I've done it, as a sitting-down-and-properly-studying-and-reading-God's-Word thing. Like in previous years, I've listened to it on my phone. And, oh my goodness, the voice is so like chill and relaxing, but it probably sends me to sleep, or I've done it so that I've just read the passages but haven't really done any study behind it.

But this year, the story of God has really come alive for me. I've loved digging into scripture, I've explained it to a few people like this: so my in-laws, they live in Nuneaton. And I can explain the route from Kenilworth to Nuneaton pretty well. But if I tried to do it all in one fell swoop, it wouldn't really work. I kind of have to do it in sections and kind of make those sections connect together. So I could tell you how to get from Kenilworth to the Asda roundabout and how to get from the Asda roundabout to the Ricoh roundabout and how to get from the Ricoh up to George Eliot. Are you with me? You're picturing along, because you know those different sections. And then when you get to the George Eliot, then I can tell you the way through Nuneaton to get to their house. And this year when I've been reading the Bible, it's kind of connected all those different bits of God's story together for me, so I knew, like, the overarching,

the story of, you know, creation, Jesus, redemption. (That's like the shortest version of God's story ever!) But I knew that, I knew even different sections of it, so I knew, like Abraham to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, Jacob and his sons, like I knew the whole thing about Joseph and his technicolour dreamcoat, I knew that story so well, but I've never really connected together the 12 tribes of Israel were the 12 sons of Jacob. I knew about the name change of Jacob to Israel, but, I don't know, it just hadn't... I don't know whether I just hadn't got the kind of connection of, like, the place, and Israel the person, I don't know, but anyway suddenly this year, I had this proper lightbulb moment and it just connected everything together. For everyone else, I mean maybe that was common knowledge for you. But for me, it suddenly clicked into place.

And I've also been doing *Lectio 365* on and off. Again, I wouldn't say that I did it the whole way through. But every time they read a Psalm that I like, I go to my Bible and I stick a Post-it note in it and you can see there's quite a few. This is a Bible I got just for Christmas this year. So I stick a Post-it note in every Psalm that stood out to me. And it just means that like I can go to them really easily and there's suddenly a praise Psalm there. So, you know, Psalm 113 is<sup>6</sup>



- 1 Praise the LORD!  
Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD!
- 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore!
- 3 From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
the name of the LORD is to be praised!

So I can easily now find these Psalms that mean something and help me to connect with God.

I know that taking 10 minutes out of my day just to soak in God's Word feels like a genuine indulgence. And I know how hard it is for a lot of people to get 10 minutes in their day. I've had four kids. I know what it's like, I know that sometimes it's hard to even go for a wee on your own without having someone come in and bash on the door, never mind taking time to soak in God's Word. But I'd really encourage you, whether it's getting up 10 minutes earlier, going to bed 10 minutes later, or both, or get your other half to take the kids for 10 minutes, like just before they wind down from work – just find 10 minutes in your day to spend with Jesus, and to spend in His Word, because I guarantee you it will change your relationship with Him no end. And if you manage to do it at the start of the day, it makes life so much easier because you're working from that place of abiding with Jesus and abiding with God. And it means that you look at the day in a different way: you come at it from a far more positive stance, because you're using His resources and you're not working out of your own.

Like I say, I got this Bible for Christmas. It's been so life-giving, just taking time to dig into the Word or spend time meditating it and allowing it to draw me into a deeper relationship with Jesus. I haven't quite braved writing on the pages yet, which is why I've got quite so many Post-it notes in it. But yeah, the Psalms are so life-giving. You just read them and it helps, it gives you life, it makes you breathe, it helps you to just enjoy God's Word.

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6 [ESV]

So that's my thoughts, basically. But I want to point out that there's very little point in attempting to read through the Bible as quickly as possible. The whole point is that this is a way for God to speak to us and to connect with us. And if we're reading just because we're trying to get through it in a year or as quickly as possible, but not giving space for God to speak to us, then we're missing the point. We start to look like the Pharisees: they knew their scripture, and the gospels are littered with them testing Jesus on it. But they weren't open to God speaking to them through it. There's a whole section in John 5. I'd love to read the whole lot to you but we really don't have the time. So go and read John 5, but basically it's Jesus speaking to the Pharisees and telling them that they've read about Him coming in the scriptures, and they say they believe them, but He's stood there in front of them and they don't recognise Him. John 5:39 says<sup>7</sup>,

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Or *The Message* puts it this way: it says,

39-40 “You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about *me!* And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want.

If we read our Bibles for the sake of reading our Bibles, we don't meet Jesus in them. We're not seeing the woods for the trees. We need to take time, allow God to speak to us and allow His words to sink in, we need to relish it. And we need to let it breathe life into us.

### ***Discussion: Resources to aid reading the Bible***

I'm going to ask Penny to come back in now so that we can have a bit of a brain dump or brainstorm as to all the different things that you can use to dig into our Bibles so Penny, come in and join us.

[Penny:] Hello.

[Michelle:] Hello lovely.

So Penny, what things have you come across that are really useful for digging into God's Word each day?

[Penny:] Well, you rightly said, that I was reading the Bible in a year. And you rightly said that there's no point rushing through. And I tend to find on busy days, that if I'm trying to keep up on track with reading the Bible in a year, then I am rushing. So sometimes just picking a chapter, and reading through it just a little bit every day – just a bit. And if you only have ten minutes to spend, then just read a short bit and ask God to show you what He wants to show you in it.

[Michelle:] Yeah, yeah. So my mum gave me for Christmas this cool little calendar. And it does like just a verse a day. And I kind of think that even if you can just do a verse a day, like you could focus on it really well or like, Lindsey (bless her, I love Lindsey to pieces). She gives us this calligraphy course on our team Toast group. And she suggested that maybe we could use it to write out really nicely, write a verse out, and I think that we could use that really easily to just focus on one bit and ask God to speak to us whilst we're doing that drawing or colouring, because we all learn in different ways and we all do things different ways, don't we? What else have you come across?

[Penny:] Well I wanted to show you this. This is a book<sup>8</sup> that says, it's an exposition of Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18 to chapter 6 verse 9. It's a whole book on what someone got out of a few verses.

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7 [ESV]

8 Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work by D.M. Lloyd Jones, ISBN 9780851511948

[Michelle:] That's quite a big book as well!

[Penny:] So that's how much can be got out of, you know, that's one person's thoughts of communing with God and this is what they get out of it. But there's so much in there.

So there are reading the Bible in a year, online and on phones, there are an awful lot of apps you can use. There are all sorts of plans for reading through a certain number of chapters in a year or two years, or Bible in three years or five years. Yeah, and there are some physical things. I mean, I've got here: this is a Bible in a year<sup>9</sup>. Yeah. Someone gave it to me. And you open it and it starts at January the first, and then it goes on and it has something from the Old Testament, something from the New Testament, a Psalm and a Proverb. For every day. It takes quite a while to read it.

[Michelle:] Yeah, yeah. So this is the Nicky Gumbel version<sup>10</sup>.

[Penny:] Right.

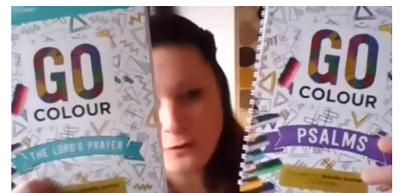
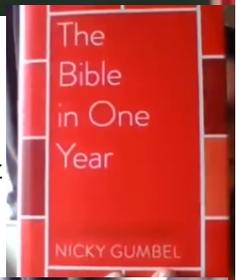
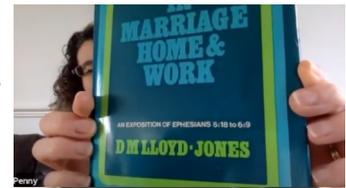
[Michelle:] But this is kind of a commentary alongside the scripture, so that's just the commentary of it, it's not the actual Bible readings. You just go and get those for yourself. But then that means that you can read the version that you want, as well.

I went to church the other day, and had a look in the cupboards that there was there, because we've chatted about, you know, people who might not have phones that have got it on. And this is just a very small selection of some of the Bible studies<sup>11</sup> that you can get. And so if anyone wants to borrow any of these from church, we've got absolutely loads of them, but you know it's all, like, six-week courses or just daily reading stuff that you can do, all different topics all different subjects.

I quite like this one: it looks a bit old-fashioned, but it's all about the Psalms<sup>12</sup>.

Oh and, speaking of which, if you didn't want to do that sort of thing, maybe you're just like maybe you want to do the meditation side of it more, there's little booklets and stuff, it doesn't matter how old you are, because there's these ones for youth as well. So you might be a youth, and these are produced by Youth for Christ<sup>13</sup>, like colouring-in and stuff but they've got activities alongside it.

And just because, like, you're a child, doesn't mean that you can't, like, do Bible-reading stuff, because you get cool Bibles. Like how funky are these? I mean,



9 The One Year Bible – various translations available, e.g. NLT, NJKV, Living Bible, also [oneyearbibleonline.com](http://oneyearbibleonline.com)

10 The Bible in One Year by Nicky Gumbel, ISBN 9781473677067, journaling edition also available, also online app.

11 Pictured: from the Cover to Cover series, available in Christian book shops and [www.eden.co.uk/cover-to-cover-series/](http://www.eden.co.uk/cover-to-cover-series/)

12 Lifebuilder series: Psalms: Prayers of the Heart by Eugene Peterson. See above ([www.eden.co.uk/Lifebuilder Bible Studies/](http://www.eden.co.uk/Lifebuilder_Bible_Studies/))

13 <https://yfc.co.uk/gocolour/>

admittedly these are from when my kids were small. This one's even lost its cover. It's been that battered. But, you know this stuff in here and just because you're an adult it's like you can read the Bible with your kids and you still get so much out of it.

I can't believe the amount of stuff I get out of Youth, like the way that that draws me into my relationship with God, just spending time in the Bible with young people. We forget that we don't have to just sit there quietly, or we don't have to be reading like direct words or whatever else, it's whatever it is, that draws you into God's presence, isn't it?

[Penny:] After Jeremy's dad had a stroke, he found it hard to read, to start with (he ended up being able to read), but for a good while, he would listen to the Bible, or have someone read it to him, and around then I learned that hearing the Bible also helped me to understand it differently. I would pick up different things than if I was reading it. So, either listening to it or having someone read it to you.

[Michelle:] The nice thing about the Bible in a Year app is that you get David Suchet reading it to you too.

Right, we'd better stop because we need to carry on with the rest of our service: we got a bit caught up in our discussion, but yeah so let's pray and then hand over to David and Ruma and Ellie for our prayers.

Father God, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that there are all these different things that we can use. Father, I ask that You would now show each person here, how it is that they're supposed to connect with You, what the best way for them to connect with You is.  
Amen.

## **Intercessions**

[Ruma:]

OK, let's pray.

Father God, we thank You, Lord, we thank You for Your goodness and Your mercy. Lord, we thank You that You say that Your mercies are new every morning, and great is Your faithfulness. Lord, I just pray that You would bless us now, Lord, as we pray in Your name. And, Lord, I pray that You'd give us words and wisdom as we lift our requests to You, Lord. Father, I thank You that You are our refuge and our rest. Lord, these are troubling times, times of uncertainty, and Lord, I thank You that we can run to You. And thank You, Lord, that You say that Your Word is living and active, and that we can draw comfort from it, Lord.

And, Father, I just pray now for our church family, Lord. We pray for those that are sick, that need Your healing touch, Lord. Father, we pray that You would touch them, that You would be with them. Lord, we pray for those that are affected by COVID, whether they are affected themselves or their members of family, we pray that You'd be with them.

Lord, I pray for Pat Briffa's family as well this week, Lord, just praying for Your comfort, a tangible comfort, Lord, around her family. And I pray, Lord, that they would feel Your presence, that You would help them through this very difficult time, I pray.

And, Lord, I pray for our NHS, Lord, staff that are working around the clock. I pray that You'd give them strength, and I pray that You would protect them as well.

Lord, I pray for teachers, working again online. I pray that You'd be with them. And I pray that You would be with our children as well, Lord, I know my own children have found it so difficult with the online teaching, Lord, that You would motivate our children, that You would help them. Comfort them, Lord, I pray. And, Lord, I pray that You would encourage those that are discouraged, because it's been a long winter, Lord. I pray that the signs of spring would just give them that hope that they need. In Jesus' name, amen.

[Dave:]

And Lord, we, we pray for our wider nation as well. We remember Captain Tom Moore, Lord, and we thank You for the inspiration that he provided to so many, Lord, this year, and as his story became well known, we pray for his family at this time.

Lord, we also just just pray for the many thousands of other families up and down the country, Lord, who have lost loved ones this week, especially in this in this pandemic, we remember them, we pray for them, Lord.

And we do pray for this country, Lord, for those in authority and leadership. I pray that You would give them wisdom in the decisions that they take, Lord, and humility and compassion in all that they do, Lord. And we just pray for the nation, especially at this time.

And Lord, we do thank You for the effectiveness of the vaccine and the speed at which it's been rolled out, Lord. It's a real answer to prayer and we do give thanks for that and we pray that that would continue, Lord, that important work, that You'd be with those who are administering it, Lord.

We also just pray, so many things in in the wider world, Lord, but I just want to especially pray just for those who are oppressed, Lord. There have been a lot of stories just this past week, Lord, what's going on in Russia, in Burma, in China, Lord, we just commit these places, Lord, there's many others, of course, but we commit these places, Lord, and the people involved to You. We just lift up those who need help, Lord. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

[Ellie:]

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that long ago, You chose Your good and loving friends to help You in Your work. I want to be Your friend and follower too. So please choose me though I'm young and small. I want to be like Peter, a rock, I will be steady and true. Say to me as You said to Peter, "Come with me," and I will come. I will be Your true friend in all the ways I know. Amen.

## ***Closing Prayer***

[Penny:] Thank you for being with us. I'm just going to pray to end our service.

Loving God, we thank You for hearing our prayers and feeding us with Your Word, encouraging us in our connecting together. Please take us and use us to love and serve You and all people in the power of Your Spirit, and in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Song: Build Your Kingdom Here

1. Come, set Your rule and reign  
In our hearts again;  
Increase in us we pray,  
Unveil why we're made;  
Come, set our hearts ablaze with hope  
Like wildfire in our very souls;  
Holy Spirit come invade us now!  
We are Your church;  
We need Your power in us.
2. We seek Your kingdom first;  
We hunger and we thirst,  
Refuse to waste our lives,  
For You're our joy and prize  
To see the captive hearts released  
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace;  
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause;  
We are Your church;  
We pray: revive this earth.

### Chorus:

Build Your kingdom here,  
Let the darkness fear,  
Show Your mighty hand,  
Heal our streets and land,  
Set Your church on fire,  
Win this nation back,  
Change the atmosphere,  
Build Your kingdom here  
We pray

3. Unleash Your kingdom's power  
Reaching the near and far;  
No force of Hell can stop  
Your beauty changing hearts;  
You made us for much more than this.  
Awake the kingdom seed in us,  
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ.  
We are Your church.  
We are the hope on earth.

### Chorus x 2

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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Why Read the Bible by PursueGOD Kids - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtF9l3Raf9I>

Links from PursueGOD Kids video:

**Memory Verse:** 2 Timothy 3:16b It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

<https://www.pursuegodkids.org/bible-storyline> <https://www.pursuegodkids.org/3-habits-every-christian-kid-should-have>

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