

If you use the Daily Bible Reading Notes, we would love to hear from you! Please fill out this survey as we consider how to serve you best.



Foreword

As Christians we believe not only that God speaks to us through his word...

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16)

...but also that the opportunity to listen to him is precious.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105)

Through the pages of the Bible, we meet Jesus, the true Word of God. So, use these notes to help you regularly open your Bible and – even if it is only for a few minutes in your day. Allow God's Word to challenge, rebuke, comfort or encourage you, and point you to Jesus. We hope this leads you into prayer and assists you to commit each day to do "the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

St Paul's Daily Bible Reading Notes Team

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This Booklet

On Monday and Tuesday, we will follow the sermon series, beginning with a focus on Relationships and then moving to 1 Corinthians 5–7.

From Wednesday to Saturday, we will explore the riches of the Old Testament book of Joshua, which takes up the story of God's faithfulness to Israel after Moses dies.

Each Sunday, we will meditate on a Psalm.

As usual, we will include a mix of commentary and questions.

MONDAY, 27 JULY

HEBREWS 10:24–25

A Mess Worth Making

Are there particular people you look forward to seeing at church?

1. What do you think it would look like if everyone at church spurred one another on to love and good deeds?

2. Why do you think it's important for Christians to meet together regularly? What effect would it have if we didn't?

3. What's one change you could make to your approach to church and relationships with other Christians?

Pray that God would help you to implement that change.

TUESDAY, 28 JULY

EPHESIANS 4:29–32

Encourage One Another

When have you felt encouraged by another Christian?

Our words can have so much effect. As the saying goes, 'The pen is mightier than the sword'. Whether written or spoken, we must use our words carefully and choose to use them to love others. Some words tear down people's confidence and spirits. Other words lift people up and give them the strength to keep going even when life is tough. What is something that someone once said to you that has stuck with you? Was it positive or negative? What kind of impact do you want *your* words to have on other people?

When we continue to sin, the Holy Spirit is grieved. The Holy Spirit is God, and is within each believer, continuously pointing us to Jesus and transforming us to be more like him. But we could not be less like Jesus when we let bitterness, anger, slander, and malicious intent take over. It's easy to think of the times when we've been the victim to harm from others but harder to see when we've been the one to cause harm. I think we've probably all struggled with every item in that list.

This passage reminds us, there's a better way to live — with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Whilst we strive to live this way, it's also helpful to remember that when we stumble (which we will) we have a God who, in his kindness and compassion, forgives us. How can you go out this week and show kindness to others?

Pray that God would help you to build others up with your words and actions this week.

Introduction to Joshua

Although Joshua contains some of the most confronting, violent passages in the Old Testament, ultimately it is not a book about warfare, but a book about God's faithfulness. The Lord keeps his promises to Abraham, gives Israel the land he promised, judges persistent evil with perfect justice, and extends mercy to those who trust him.

A few observations which may be helpful:

- the language of total destruction is typical Ancient Near Eastern battle language
- the battle commands to Israel are unique, limited and unrepeatable
- Joshua is about God's judgment of evil as much as Israel's victory
- God's mercy is open to anyone who turns to him
- the ancient world thought more corporately than we do

In the middle of Joshua there are long lists, and though these have a purpose and contain useful information, feel free to skim a little – and be guided by the notes.

We hope you find the map helpful in tracing the Israelites' movements.



WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY

JOSHUA 1

Be Strong and Courageous

What do you do when the leader you trust is gone, and the road ahead is unknown?

Joshua sits at a pivotal moment in redemptive history. The exodus is complete, the wilderness wanderings are over, and God's covenant people stand ready to receive the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18–21). Moses, mediator of the old covenant, has died, and Joshua now leads God's people into the next stage of covenant fulfilment.

God's command – *"Be strong and courageous,"* repeated three times (6, 7, 9) – is covenantal, not merely motivational. It rests entirely on God's own pledge: *"I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (5). Joshua's strength flows from God's character, not his own competence. That same word grounds his obedience. He is to meditate on the law and keep it (7–8), Torah-shaped faithfulness as the pattern of covenant life. The people bind themselves to his leadership under God (16–18), a community united by trust rather than human strength.

Yet Joshua's rest is provisional. As Hebrews 4 makes clear, the land was never the final rest God intended (Hebrews 4:8). It was a real but incomplete inheritance, a type awaiting fulfilment.

Jesus is that fulfilment. He bears Joshua's very name – both meaning "the LORD saves." Where Joshua led Israel to the border of an earthly land, Jesus leads his people into God's eternal Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:9–10). Where Joshua's conquest left enemies unsubdued, Christ's victory over sin and death was decisive and final (Colossians 2:15). And where Joshua died, Jesus rose – the living guarantee that this rest cannot be lost.

Dear Heavenly Father, ground my courage not in my own strength but in your unchanging character. Keep me trusting your presence and your word, whatever lies ahead. Amen.

THURSDAY, 30 JULY

JOSHUA 2

Rahab and the Spies

An unlikely believer reveals the power of genuine faith.

1. **Comprehension:** What had Rahab heard about the LORD that led her to believe he was the true God (9–11)?

2. **Interpretation:** How do Rahab's actions demonstrate that genuine faith produces obedience and allegiance to God?

3. **Application:** Rahab risked her security to identify with God's people. What might it look like for you to trust God and openly align yourself with Christ in your current circumstances?

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that salvation has always come by faith, not by status or works. Mark me out by your grace, as you marked out Rahab, and root my faith in Christ alone. Amen.

FRIDAY, 31 JULY

JOSHUA 3

Crossing the Jordan

Imagine yourself taking the decision to follow the Ark across the Jordan river. Would you trust the God who leads you?

Imagine standing on the banks of the Jordan, a flooded river ahead of you, no bridge, no boat – just a command to follow the ark of the covenant into the water (1–4). That's where Israel stood. The ark represented God's own presence among his people, and yet the Israelites were told to keep their distance from it. Nearness to God was never meant to be casual– his presence is holy, and his people were to consecrate themselves before witnessing what he was about to do (5).

God then made Joshua a promise: he would exalt him before Israel, so they would know God was with him just as he had been with Moses (7). And as the priests' feet touched the water, the Jordan stopped flowing, piling up so that Israel walked across on dry ground (13–17). It's hard to miss the echo – this is the Red Sea all over again (Exodus 14:21–22). The same God, who once rescued his people from Egypt through Moses, was now leading them into their inheritance through Joshua. His faithfulness doesn't expire with a single generation or a single leader.

And this story isn't just about Israel's past – it points forward. As Joshua led God's people through the waters into an earthly land, Jesus leads his people through his own saving work into an inheritance that will never fade (1 Peter 1:3–4). The same God who parted the Jordan has already, in Christ, brought us from death to life (Ephesians 2:4–6).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you go before your people and lead them faithfully into all you have promised. Help me to trust you as the God who leads, following you even when the way ahead is unfamiliar. Amen.

SATURDAY, 1 AUGUST

JOSHUA 4

Memorial Stones and God's Faithfulness

Remind yourself of God's faithfulness in your own life.

1. **Comprehension:** Why did God command Israel to set up the twelve memorial stones (6–7, 21–24)?

2. **Interpretation:** How does the crossing of the Jordan echo the crossing of the Red Sea, and what does this teach us about God's character?

3. **Application:** What are some practical ways you can remember and share God's faithfulness in your life and the salvation he has accomplished through Jesus?

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for being faithful to your promises from generation to generation. As the stones stood to remind Israel of your saving power, let the cross and empty tomb stand as my constant reminder of your faithfulness in Christ. Amen.

SUNDAY, 2 AUGUST

PSALM 5

God's Presence

When have you needed to take refuge in the Lord or to beg for him to protect you?

This psalm once again contrasts the arrogant who pursue wickedness and the righteous who seek to please their Lord. But the real focus is on the character of the Lord and his relationship with his people.

The psalmist starts with a personal, heartfelt cry to “my King and my God” to listen to his distress. He reminds himself (4–6) of God’s character – a holy God. He approaches God in his house with great reverence and fear, bowing low in humility before him (7). The arrogant however, stand against God (5). They are wicked in their thoughts, words and deeds (10) and so they can’t be in God’s presence.

Romans 3:9–20 however, reiterates that all humanity is wicked, using verses from this and other psalms to describe us all. Jesus said just as much, “*no one comes to the Father except through me*” John 14:6. On our own, there is no way to the Father. But through Jesus, we can be brought in. He brought the sacrifice of his own blood (Hebrews 10:19) and humbled himself to the grave (Philippians 2:8) paying the price for the wicked to be brought into God’s presence.

Through Jesus all those who love his name are now welcome in God’s presence. And we can apply verses 11–12 to ourselves. We can sing for joy trusting in God’s protection spread over us. This protection is both tender – like the wings of a mother hen protecting her chicks (11) – and strong – like the shield of a mighty warrior. I have found this promise comforting in times of trial for myself and my family.

If you are facing a difficult time, take refuge in the Lord who loves you... or perhaps you could pray for a Christian friend to be reminded of God’s protection over them so that they can “*ever sing for joy*”.

MONDAY, 3 AUGUST

MATTHEW 18:15–20

A Mess Worth Making

What is an immense responsibility you have that you wish you could share?

By the grace of God we are saved; saved sinners. When sinners gather together, tension and mess can happen, and we can often see other people's sin quite clearly. But instead of pretending the sin and problems don't happen, Jesus encourages us to bring it out into the light and deal with it.

Don't talk about the problem with others unless you've actually tried to talk about it directly with the person concerned. If they are resistant to address the issue, then you can involve others, all the while aiming to restore relationships and invoke real change in the person.

The community of believers have real responsibility here to look out for one another and help one another, that includes addressing sin. The responsibility does not fall on one person or leader but is shared amongst us. Although shared, we should feel the weight of this responsibility. Whatever judicial decisions the church makes about forgiving or banishment will have an effect on the eternal state of the person concerned. A thought which probably makes us uncomfortable! Let this be a reminder of how serious we should take this process of addressing one another's sins.

Ultimately our hope is that we are a community of believers that honours God and seeks ongoing relationship with him and with each other. When we gather together God is with us, answering our prayer and transforming us to be more like him.

Pray that God would help you with the gift of wisdom, so that you can discern when someone needs help in identifying and addressing their sin. And pray for great humility in yourself as you do that.

TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST

MATTHEW 18:21–35

Forgive One Another

Has there been a time when you have been hurt by a fellow Christian?

1. What does this parable tell us about the debt we owe to God (24–25)?

2. How should this parable re-shape our attitude towards forgiving others, in comparison with God's forgiveness?

3. The very nature of forgiveness means that someone has committed a true hurt and sin. That's no small thing. Depending on the sin, it may take time to move your heart to forgiveness but nonetheless, we should seek to do just that. Is there someone you need to forgive?

Pray that God would move your heart to be as forgiving and gracious as his, and pray that he would help you to forgive others when they sin against you.

WEDNESDAY, 5 AUGUST

JOSHUA 5:1–12

Preparing to Enter

How do you think the Israelites felt as they stood on the edge of the fulfilment of God's ancient promise?

Having crossed the Jordan River, the nation of Israel is now poised to take over the land God had promised them. That promise was part of the agreement (or covenant) that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17 when he said:

"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants.....to be your God and the God of your descendants.... The whole land of Canaan... I will give... to you and your descendants".

God was establishing a relationship with Abraham and the nation that would come from him. And the sign of that covenant would be circumcision of all males. During the desert wanderings circumcision was neglected, but now, the physical sign of circumcision was to remind Israel of their commitment to follow God wholeheartedly in response to God's commitment to them. The nation had now crossed over into enemy territory, but the enemy was melting in fear (1)! Though the effects of the circumcision would take some time to heal, Israel was safe.

Two significant things happened after this. Firstly, the nation was now able to celebrate Passover for the first time since they had left Mount Sinai. Secondly, the day after Passover they ate some of the produce of the land. The manna that God had provided for them on their desert journey stopped, never to be seen again. God's gracious generosity was still providing their "daily bread" but in a new way.

In the New Testament, Paul talks of the "circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit" (Romans 2:29). So as Christians, we please God when our hearts are changed by his Spirit so that we love and obey him just as the Israelites were commanded to do.

Father, thank you for your faithfulness in keeping your promises. Help us, by your Spirit, to love and obey you. Amen.

THURSDAY, 6 AUGUST

JOSHUA 5:12–6:27

And the Walls Came Tumblin' Down

This first conquest in Canaan was certainly unusual and dramatic!

1. In chapter 5:13–15, what do you think God, through “the Commander of the army of the Lord”, wanted Joshua to understand? How did Joshua respond? When God was commissioning Moses, he told him he was standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:5). Do you think God was likewise commissioning Joshua for the task ahead?
2. God had been very patient in delaying judgement on the wickedness of the Canaanites. Do you think God was using the nation of Israel as his executioner in this one-off conquest of the land? Did this make them more righteous than the Canaanites? (For a clear answer, read Deuteronomy 9 especially verse 4)
3. What evidence is there in this chapter for who is in charge of this miraculous military operation (2–5)? Why do you think the Ark of the Covenant was taken into this battle when that wasn't the normal practice? What was special concerning the spoils of this battle that God commanded the Israelites (17–19)?
4. Rahab was a Canaanite and yet she was saved from destruction. What does that tell us of God's desire for all people whatever their past?

Father, we confess our sin and waywardness. Thank you for your great patience and mercy, *“not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). We come in repentance and faith to you, through Christ our Saviour. Amen.

FRIDAY, 7 AUGUST

JOSHUA 7

Israel Has Sinned!

After such a great start to entering into God's Promised Land what went wrong?

As part of God's instructions for the taking of Jericho, God also told Joshua what was to be done with the spoils of battle (6:17,18). This first city that was conquered was to be "*devoted to the Lord*" (6:17) and given over to total destruction. Only the precious metals were to be kept for the Lord's treasury. And only Rahab and her family would be spared because she helped Israel's spies.

Joshua's reaction to the defeat of the battle at Ai appears to be blaming God. His despair and fear of the surrounding nations is matched by God's sharp rebuke to stand up and face the fact that "*Israel has sinned*".

Although it was only one man, his actions affected the entire nation. The same is true in the Christian life if we keep tolerating sin. In this instance, there would be no further military success until the sin was rooted out. God could not ignore this disobedience. Even though the punishment seems severe. Israel had to learn, right from the start, that God's commands were to be obeyed if they were going to prosper taking over the land.

As the lot falls on Achan, he admits his covetousness. He has caused trouble for Israel and he and his family perish in the Valley of Achor.

"Achor" means "trouble", and yet we read in the prophecy of Hosea 2:15 that God "will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope". Surely this points to the punishment that Jesus took on our behalf, opening a way back to God's mercy and grace. And as we'll see in the next chapter God was ready to once again bless Israel with success.

Lord God, help us understand more of your holiness and greatness. Give us hearts that want to obey you, knowing that you are always merciful and gracious and want the best for us. Amen.

SATURDAY, 8 AUGUST

JOSHUA 8

Sin Acknowledged: Now Success!

How do you feel when you make a fresh start after a failure?

1. What encouragement does God give Joshua as they attempt to take Ai again (1)?

2. Even though there was a strategy for taking the city (with an ambush group), who gave the instructions and ultimately, was going to give the victory to Israel (1 and 7)?

3. What was to happen to the plunder after Ai was conquered compared with the plunder from Jericho (2)?

4. What did Joshua do in verses 30 and 31 on behalf of all the people? Do you think Joshua was encouraging Israel to renew their covenant with God by reading the Law to them?

Father, we read of many tests of obedience in these chapters. Help us to learn that not only are you dishonoured, but we lose out too when we disobey you. Grow in us a desire to love and obey you more. Amen.

SUNDAY, 9 AUGUST

PSALM 6

Mercy!

Have you ever felt the kind of overwhelming distress that has kept you awake, crying, all night? Did you bring this sorrow to your Father?

Unlike last week's psalm, this psalmist does not turn quickly to rejoicing. We feel the ongoing, debilitating impact of suffering – he is “faint”, in “agony” and “anguish”, “worn out” and “weak”. He pleads with the Lord, “How Long?”

This psalm is an all-out plea for God's mercy, based on God's character. God has promised that he will protect David as God's anointed king and put one of his sons on the throne. So David is pleading with God in great sorrow and tears to keep his promises to him. In verse 4 we see that, despite circumstances and ongoing suffering, he trusts in and appeals to the Lord's unfailing love.

In verse 8, there is a change in tone from David as he realises God has answered him. He warns his enemies to leave, because he realises that God has heard his sorrow. He then even more resolutely declares in verse 9, *“The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer.”* God has kept his promise to David and delivered him.

Are there times in your life when you feel such great sorrow that you cry yourself to sleep each night? Such anguish that you feel like God is against you? From David's example and from our Lord Jesus' example, we should throw ourselves onto God's steadfast love, expressing our hurt to him, but waiting patiently and trusting him to answer and save us in his own time.

Thank God that *“neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

(Romans 8:38–39)

MONDAY, 10 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1–9

Thanksgiving

Who's opinion are you most likely to listen to (it can be a person you know or someone on social media)?

This letter is addressed to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a city that had many visitors and travellers and it was under Roman law. There were many religions and gods that were worshipped and the worship of these gods was completely inseparable from work, family, friendship, and everyday life in general. There were also eloquent, charismatic speakers who made money by amazing people with their ideas of social improvement and philosophical thinking. You can imagine this would be quite a difficult place for new impressionable Christians, especially those who didn't have a Jewish heritage or knowledge of the Old Testament.

Many other letters begin with a thanksgiving or salutation, just like this one. Only this one is a bit different because Paul doesn't thank God for the good things the Corinthians have been doing in the faith. Instead, he thanks God for all that he has given the Corinthians. This might be a hint that the Corinthians aren't doing so well in the faith and need reminding of where their gifts really come from. This is also a reminder to us. It might be easy to think our age is a time of great social advancement with all sorts of helpful information at our fingertips. We can be just as impressed and influenced by all the voices around us. And yet, we need to remember that it is God who has given us all things. Any worthwhile knowledge or skills we do have come from him. He sustains us in the faith, he grows us, he enriches us. We actually don't bring much to the table. We need to keep going back to God and his Word.

Pray that God would help you to focus on him instead of all the voices and opinions around you. Ask that you would remember his wisdom and generosity to you, always.

TUESDAY, 11 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 – 25

Christ, the Wisdom of God

What is a wise saying that's stuck with you?

Have you ever thought about how strange it is that we proclaim the good news about Jesus being crucified? Imagine being an ancient Roman or Jew at the time of this letter. You would know that crucifixion is about the most shameful and gruesome punishment there is, reserved only for the worst sorts of criminals. Why would people go around excitedly talking about this Jesus guy who was crucified, as if that was a good thing? And yet as Christians we know that it is good news, because Jesus took the punishment that we deserve and freed us from sin and death.

God's wisdom often sounds backwards to us – *"the last shall be first"* (Matt. 20:16), and *"you must lose your life to save it"* (Luke 9:24). And yet he has made the world quite deliberately to work this way. We can only truly understand life, death, and the way the world works through God's eyes. His wisdom is far greater than any human wisdom we think is profound. The most amazing thinkers of our time will always be missing the crucial piece of the puzzle if they haven't understood Christ crucified and how his sacrifice is God reaching his hand down to us to bring us into relationship with himself. Understanding God's wisdom is both beautiful and humbling, all at the same time.

Pray that you would never be ashamed to proclaim Christ crucified, that you would trust first in God's wisdom. Thank God for his immeasurable and profound wisdom.

WEDNESDAY, 12 AUGUST

JOSHUA 9

The Gibeonite Deception

What do you do when you're backed into a corner? What about when victory seems certain?

1. Why would the Gibeonites resort to deception rather than joining the alliance in verses 1–2?

2. It's clear in verses 7–8 that the Israelites were suspicious of the Gibeonites. So why did they not consult God?

3. When faced with a decision or a tricky situation, is your first instinct to seek out God or do you often resort to your own reasoning and wisdom?

This is not a smooth, decisive victory for the Israelites. However, Joshua seems to salvage the situation and we see the Gibeonites fear God's power. Perhaps the point of this story is meant to leave us wondering 'what would have happened if they just sought out God's wisdom?'

Challenges and triumphs both can distract us from God. Let us remember to thank him for every great success and ask his help in every great struggle.

THURSDAY, 13 AUGUST

JOSHUA 10:1–15

The Sun Stands Still

When was the last time you asked God for something impossible?

1. How do you think the Israelites would have felt when they heard that the Gibeonites were under threat? (Remember the events of Chapter 9).

2. Why did the Israelites fight at all? Couldn't God have killed all the enemies with hailstones?

3. Why did Joshua ask for the sunset to be delayed? There is more than one answer.

God's miracle with the hailstones emboldened Joshua to ask for an even greater miracle. But he asked in the interest of God's will being done, and his name being glorified. Let us bring our requests to God with the same intent.

FRIDAY, 14 AUGUST

JOSHUA 10:16–43

Conquest

Have you ever felt that you were punished more harshly than you deserved?

This is a particularly bloody portion of Joshua and it can be difficult to understand how our loving Father could sponsor such violence. There are certain things that I feel it is important to know when reading this passage.

Firstly, the people in this passage were not killed because of their race or where they live. They received the just punishment for their own sin. God's mercy is open to all. This is demonstrated by the Gibeonites in chapter 9 and by Rahab in chapter 2. The Canaanites in this passage have not sought God's mercy, rather relying on their military strength to overcome the instrument of God's judgement.

It's also worth noting that the phrase 'they left no survivors' (used many times in this passage), may or may not be literal. This was a common thing to write in ancient middle-eastern battle reports to indicate a decisive victory.

Either way, I am convinced that anyone slain by Joshua's army was deserving of death as punishment for their sin. We know that God judges fairly.

Having said that, this should not make this passage less confronting. The punishment for sin is dire because sin itself is dire. If the way God punishes sin ever seems too severe, it is only because we have forgotten how severe our sin is.

This passage makes me very grateful to be living under God's mercy, bought with the blood of Jesus. Let us pray that we would remember the severity of our sin and that it would increase our gratitude for our King's sacrifice.

SATURDAY, 15 AUGUST

JOSHUA 11–12

Northern Kings Defeated

What is the relationship between trust and obedience?

1. Note how often the phrase “as the Lord commanded” is used in this passage? Why do you think the writer wanted to emphasise this?

2. How does this chapter show Joshua’s commitment (with all Israel) to fulfilling all he has been commanded to do (note verse 18)?

3. At the end of chapter 11 we read that “*the land had rest from war*”. Then in Chapter 12 we have a summary of all that has been achieved first under Moses (verses 1–6) east of the Jordan, then under Joshua (the rest of the chapter) in Canaan. How does this chapter emphasise the faithfulness of God in the context of his people’s obedience?

God alone decides whether we will succeed or fail. But that does not mean that everything we do will be easy. Let us pray that we would work hard at the endeavours that matter, and that God would bring success, particularly in the battle against our sinful nature.

SUNDAY, 16 AUGUST

PSALM 7

False Accusations

Have you ever been falsely accused?

You may not have ended up in court to defend your innocence, but perhaps you've been the object of untrue gossip; perhaps some falsehood about you started circulating and impacted the way people related to you. It's a horrible feeling. Any defence you offer can seem like defensiveness and end up leading more people to believe that the slander is true. This psalm shows us a better way than self-defence.

David, pursued by enemies because of some false report (3–5), turns to God for refuge (1). The court of human opinion makes mistakes; the court of the righteous God never does. God probes hearts and minds, finding the truth without fail, for no evidence can be hidden from him. God is righteous – incorruptible, unbribable, handing down the wrath that the wicked deserve. Rather than defend himself, or seek revenge against his enemies, David entrusts himself to the God who judges justly.

Jesus, of whom David is but a shadow, adopted the same attitude: *"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."* (1 Peter 2:23). Of course, we are not righteous in ourselves and some suffering is self-inflicted, but as Jesus' followers we do try, however weakly, to please God by living in obedience to him, in gratitude for his free gift of salvation.

When you suffer unjustly, when they gossip about you or slander you, when the Evil One who prowls around like a lion accuses you, may you find refuge in God, the righteous Judge.

Peter writes if we *"suffer according to God's will we should commit ourselves to our faithful Creator and continue to do good"* (1 Peter 4:19). Pray for strength to do this, for yourself and others you know who are falsely accused or in hostile situations.

MONDAY, 17 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 4:18–5:8

Taking Sin Seriously

Is there a difference between sinning Christians and non-Christians? What should the church's response be to both?

Paul has obviously received a shocking report that a man in the church is in an incestuous relationship. But Paul was even more shocked that the church had allowed this man to remain in the fellowship with his sin unchecked! They had undoubtedly lost all sense of moral responsibility by condoning the offender's behaviour.

Paul says *"And you are proud!"* (2) It would seem from this that the church had adopted a "progressive" view of sexual relationships and proudly thought they were exercising a licence for any conduct, a "new morality". But Paul is quite explicit in his condemnation of this sin; the offender is to be excommunicated.

Expulsion from the church may seem unduly harsh, but incest was forbidden even by Roman law and the Jewish Law commanded stoning (Leviticus 18:8). The offender is to be "handed over to Satan" a form of discipline implying that the offender will lose the security of the church and all its benefits. And yet the punishment is to be remedial and not vindictive with the hope that there will be repentance and that his spirit will be saved (5).

Paul goes on to talk about how any form of evil needs to be rooted out of God's fellowship, otherwise it will spread just like yeast in a batch of dough. He tells the Corinthians they ought to grieve over the sin rather than boasting about it.

He reminds them of the Passover festival which Jews celebrated without yeast (representing wickedness) in their bread and instead celebrated with the unleavened bread of "sincerity and truth".

Father, forgive us if either individually, or in our church life, we tolerate certain sins and so dishonour your name. May your Spirit convict, challenge and change any wrong attitudes. Amen.

TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 5:9–13

In The World But Not Of It!

Are you ever tempted to withdraw yourself and your family from the secular world and mix only in Christian circles?

1. Paul affirms that if we live in this world, we will have to engage with *“the people of this world who are immoral, greedy, swindlers or idolaters”* (10) What does it mean, then, for Christians to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13–16)?

2. Who does Paul say Christians should *not* associate with or even eat with? What particular sins does he mention? How will this verse impact your interactions with those who call themselves Christians, but whose behaviour consistently fits the list in verse 11?

3. While Christians are to exercise discipline within the church, who is to judge those outside the church (13)? How does knowing this impact your interactions with non-believers whose values and behaviour offend you as a Christian?

Lord God, keep us from dishonouring your name by the lives we live within the church fellowship. We pray that we will be able speak the truth in love to those who are straying or rebellious. May we be a shining light in a dark world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 19 AUGUST

JOSHUA 13:1–14:5

Receiving God's Inheritance

God's faithfulness can sometimes be hidden in the details we are tempted to skip.

With the major battles complete, Joshua is now old, yet God declares, "*there remains very much land to possess*" (13:1). The conquest is not finished. God's promises are certain, but they still require faith-filled obedience from his people.

The emphasis now shifts from conquest to inheritance. The repeated language of inheritance and allotment reminds Israel that the land is not a reward for military success but God's gracious gift, promised long ago to Abraham and now being fulfilled. Joshua's task is to distribute what God has faithfully provided.

These verses establish the theological foundation for the detailed land allocations that follow. Every boundary, town and allotment testify that God keeps his promises and provides exactly what he has pledged to his people. One tribe stands apart. Levi receives no territory because "*the LORD... is their inheritance*" (13:33). This is a deliberate reminder that God's greatest gift is not land or prosperity, but his own presence. Every other blessing flows from belonging to him.

As Christians, we too live between promise and fulfilment. In Christ we have already received an eternal inheritance, yet we still await its fullness. As you read these chapters, don't simply ask "How was the land divided?" but "What do these chapters teach me about God's faithfulness, his provision, and the inheritance he has given me in Christ?"

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are faithful to every promise you make. Help us to trust your promises, to persevere when fulfilment seems incomplete, and to value you above all the gifts you provide. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THURSDAY, 20 AUGUST

JOSHUA 14:6–15

Caleb's Inheritance

Faith doesn't 'grow old' – it grows stronger because it trusts a faithful God.

As the land is being divided, Caleb steps forward to remind Joshua of a promise made over forty years earlier (Numbers 14). While an entire generation perished because of unbelief, Caleb remained faithful, trusting God's promise despite overwhelming opposition. Now, at eighty-five years of age, he asks not for the easiest portion of the land but for the hill country still occupied by the Anakim. Caleb's confidence rests not in his own strength but in the Lord's continued presence: "... *the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out*" (12). Caleb stands as a powerful example of wholehearted faith that perseveres over a lifetime and continues to trust God for what remains unfinished.

1. What qualities of Caleb's life are repeated throughout this passage, and what do they teach us about wholehearted faith?
 2. Why does Caleb ask for Hebron – the most difficult part of the land to possess – instead of choosing an easier inheritance? What does this reveal about his confidence in God?
 3. Looking back over your own life, where have you seen God's faithfulness, and what "unfinished territory" is he still calling you to trust him for today?
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Heavenly Father, give us hearts like Caleb's—wholeheartedly trusting you, courageous in following you, and confident that you will always keep your promises. Amen.

FRIDAY, 21 AUGUST

JOSHUA 16–17

Joseph's Inheritance

God has already given his people the inheritance – will they trust him enough to possess it?

Joshua 16–17 records the inheritance of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph. While God faithfully gives them a large and fruitful inheritance, the passage also exposes two recurring problems: they fail to drive out the remaining Canaanites (16:10), and they complain that their inheritance is insufficient (17:14–18). Joshua challenges them to trust God, act courageously, and take possession of what has already been given. The passage reminds us that God's gifts are to be received with faith, gratitude and obedience—not complaint or compromise.

1. Two problems emerge in these chapters, how are they related?
2. How does Joshua's response to the complaint of the descendants of Joseph (17:14–18) reveal what genuine faith and obedience look like?
3. Where might we be tempted either to tolerate spiritual compromise or complain about what God has given us, rather than trusting him and faithfully using his gifts?

Heavenly Father, keep us from complacency and complaint. Help us to trust your promises, faithfully use the gifts you have given us, and courageously follow wherever you lead. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SATURDAY, 22 AUGUST

JOSHUA 18–19

Finishing the Inheritance

God's promises are not simply to be admired—they are to be trusted, received and lived.

After years of conquest, seven tribes have still not taken possession of their inheritance. Joshua challenges them, *"How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land the LORD... has given you?"* (18:3). The remaining land is surveyed and allotted by lot before the LORD at Shiloh. The section closes with Joshua receiving his own inheritance last.

1. Why does Joshua rebuke the seven tribes in 18:3, and what does their hesitation reveal about faith and obedience?
2. What is the significance of the land being allotted by lot before the LORD rather than simply being divided by human choice?
3. Joshua received his inheritance only after the others had been provided for (19:49–51). What does this teach us about godly leadership, and how might we reflect that attitude in serving others?

Father, thank you that you always keep your promises. We pray you would mould our hearts to be content with what you have entrusted to us, faithful in using it for your glory, and eager to serve others before ourselves. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

SUNDAY, 23 AUGUST

PSALM 8

How Majestic Is Your Name

How do you respond when someone says “man is just another animal”?

1. How do you feel as you read this Psalm? What scenes from nature and human experience come into your mind?

2. What does this Psalm teach you about the greatness of God?

3. What does this Psalm teach you about the nature of humans in relation to the rest of the created order?

4. How can you be a good steward of God’s world today, ruling over it with care and concern?)

Search up the song version of Psalm 8 by Shane and Shane:

Psalm 8 (How Majestic Is Your Name)

Reflect on this psalm while listening to the song.

MONDAY, 24 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1–8

Lawsuits Among Believers

Do you have unresolved “disputes” with Christian brothers and sisters? How are you handling them?

If we truly think of ourselves as one body, then seeking intervention from those outside the church does seem impossible, just as Paul declares. Philippians tells us that we “*should look not only to our own interests but to the interests of others*” (2:4) and in humility “*consider others better than ourselves*”. Paul, at other times, appealed to the Roman system of authority when the Jews pursued their accusations against him, so he is not always against using the legal systems to arbitrate. However, the focus here is on disputes between Christians.

Here, Paul’s argument revolves around our status in God’s kingdom and the access this gives us to all the riches of his wisdom and discernment (2–6). Even the lowliest of “saints” (us) is capable of judging angels(!), so obviously we should be able to make judgments on trivial earthly matters.

It follows that if disputing brothers can find no one within the church that they feel is worthy of passing judgement, then they have already abandoned the way of the cross – holding tightly onto their own rights and continuing to pursue practices that betray the fellowship of believers.

Sadly, in the history of the church and even in recent times, we see many moments where the individual’s quest for “rights” blocks out all other considerations. The spectacle of infighting between Christians makes a good news story, but should bring shame to us. Our bad behaviour impacts our witness to Christ’s redeeming power.

Pray for the wisdom that God promises to believers and act now to resolve disputes between you and another Christian. Pray for true reconciliation and humility as you meet at the foot of the cross. Pray for Christian leaders to model a commitment to “*make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*” Ephesians 4:3

TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9–11

You Were Washed

What demonstrates to others that you follow Christ?

1. According to verses 9–10, who will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do you see yourself in this list?

2. Do you find the first sentence of verse 11 comforting or confronting? Why?

3. How does each of the verbs “washed”, “sanctified”, “justified” help you to understand Christ’s work in your life?

2 Corinthians 5:17 says *“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come”*. Reflect on the changes in your life since you became a Christian. Ask for the Spirit’s help to continue to become more like Christ.

WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST

JOSHUA 20

Cities of Refuge

"It is mine to avenge; I will repay", says the Lord.
(Romans 12:19)

The sixth commandment is *"You shall not murder"* (Exodus 20:13). The Hebrew word for this expresses a premeditated and deliberate act for which the penalty was death. The avenger of blood (3) was the next of kin of the slain person and had the obligation of executing the murderer without delay.

In the haste and emotion of a death, it is possible that a mistake is made and the death was accidental and not a premeditated act. Cities of refuge where the innocent person could flee were established. After the fugitive had presented his case and was accepted by the elders, he was allowed to live in the city and must be protected from the avenger of blood provided he stayed within the confines of the city. He must stay there until he had a full trial and until the death of the current high priest. He could then return home.

Six cities of refuge were established (7,8), three west and three east of the Jordan river. They were spaced carefully and all were in towns assigned to the Levites (Chapter 21) presumably so that Levites who knew the Law would see it honoured.

God stresses the sanctity of human life, as his gift, so even innocent manslaughter required a heavy penalty. While the fugitive was protected, he was effectively "imprisoned" in the city of refuge.

Jesus set the bar higher by teaching that we should love all others including our enemies; hate sows a seed which, if fully grown, can bring about murder.

Reflect that the God-bestowed sanctity of human life should increase our sense of awe at the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. Give thanks that Jesus' death and resurrection bring salvation for all who turn to him in repentance and faith.

THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST

JOSHUA 21

Towns for the Levites

How should we support those who serve us in ministry?

The Levites hold a special place in the history of Israel. This follows from Moses saying to them *"You have been set apart to the Lord today"* (Exodus 32:29) when they supported him in punishing rebels who were running wild after the golden calf incident. From then, the Levites had special duties such as caring for the tent of meeting (tabernacle) where Moses met with God.

In the Promised Land, the tribe of Levi didn't get an allotment to settle in as they were to be dispersed throughout the country. The heads of the tribal families met as Moses had commanded and chose towns in which Levites could settle, build a house and use surrounding pastureland exclusively for their stock. Apparently agricultural activity wasn't permitted as it would detract from their Leviticus duties.

As chapter 21 is almost totally names of clans and towns, some background explanation may be helpful. Levi was one of Jacob's twelve sons. He had three sons: Karratha, Gershwin and Meriam. By the time of Israel's entry into the promised land (over 400 years) Levi's descendants had grown into a number of clans spread through three groups identified by Levi's sons (Kohathites, Gershonites, Merarites). There is also mention of Aaron's descendants, the priests.

Forty-eight towns made provision for the Levites throughout Israel. There were two benefits from their dispersal. Firstly, it ensured that in every tribe were those especially acquainted with the Law and able to guide people to observe it. Secondly, they were totally aware of the situation and needs of the people.

Both of these are important today, even in our modern individualistic society. The need for faithful Biblical teaching of the truth and wholistic pastoral care never changes.

Those serving well in ministry should be respected and paid for their work. How do we support our pastors and leaders? How should we (1 Timothy 5:17-18)?

FRIDAY, 28 AUGUST

JOSHUA 22:1–20

Return and Rebellion?

How easy is it to be complacent or self-satisfied after a “job well done”?

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were allocated tribal areas in land east of the Jordan. Moses initially refused their request but agreed after negotiation. All the men of army age would cross over and help their fellow Israelites until Canaan west of the Jordan was conquered.

1. How would those returning to their homes feel with Joshua’s commendation in verses (2,3,6)? Would they have seen their efforts as completing the task God had given them?

2. Would they think it necessary for Joshua to remind them not to drift spiritually but to love God and serve him with all their heart and soul? Do we have the same challenge?

3. How did the ten tribes in Canaan immediately respond to the news that the “returnees” had built a large altar on the Israelite side of the Jordan?

4. Before acting to punish the rebels for their sin, the priest and ten tribal leaders went to challenge the altar builders. What examples did they use to prove that disobeying God by some, even an individual, could bring God’s wrath upon the whole community of Israel? Paul?

Father, help us to grow in loving you with all our heart. Amen.

SATURDAY, 29 AUGUST

JOSHUA 22:21–34

Restoration

Have you had the experience of realising your first impression of someone was not correct after you've spent time with them?

We read yesterday that the armies of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were returning home east of the Jordan River. On the way they built an altar on the western side of the river. The 10 tribes in Canaan were very angry but sent a delegation to reprove the returnees before taking action.

The eastern tribes were quick to explain they didn't build the altar to rebel against the Lord, disobey him and establish non-conformist worship. They would continue to worship God on the altar at the tabernacle. They intended the altar to be a witness.

Just as in our times monuments are erected to remember important events, subsequent generations have always been likely to more easily forget the lessons of history without reminders, for example ANZAC memorials. God had often told Israel to set up memorials for future generations, for example the twelve stones from the Jordan river (4:1–7).

The returnees realised that the Jordan was a natural barrier and future generations in Canaan may treat the tribes east of the river as outside God's covenant saying *"You have no share in the Lord"* (25). This altar would be a witness to the truth.

The delegation was pleased, with Phineas the priest saying *"you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord's hand"* (31). All the Israelites were glad to hear the report when they returned (33).

There are some lessons for us in this; firstly, not to be hasty in judgement but to fully investigate a matter. Be quick to listen; slow to judge. Secondly, knowing that our current culture often regards past truths not relevant to them, ensure that important teaching is understood and encourage acceptance.

Father, help me to guard the gospel, but not to be hasty in judging others. Amen.

SUNDAY, 30 AUGUST

PSALM 9

The Righteous Judge

The news is full of oppression and injustice. How do you respond?

From “re-education camps,” to unrestrained violence against people groups, to generations-long systemic injustice – there are many in our world who are oppressed, afflicted, and needy. This is the daily reality for Christians in many countries, where our brothers and sisters find themselves thrown in prison, or have their belongings seized, their property taken away from them, suffering beatings and even death.

While this might not be your daily reality at this stage, it is useful to hear in the Psalm the nature of God towards the oppressed. *“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble”* (9); *“He who avenges blood remembers; he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted”* (12); *“God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish”* (18). Meanwhile, those who are perpetrating the oppression will certainly perish. Those who have forgotten God, and mistreated other people whom God loves, will themselves be forgotten.

On the one hand, for us in wealthy Australia, the character of our God here gives us pause to reflect on whether we are complicit in any oppression in our lives (see, for example, James 5:1–6). On the other hand, this Psalm gives us great cause to sing the praise of the Lord who is enthroned for judgment and judges the peoples with equity. In his name, one day, once and for all, all oppression will cease. If you ever do find yourself oppressed, afflicted, or needy, cry to the Lord who will hear you and remember you.

Pray for those who are oppressed today, that they would turn to God for their help, and trust in him to carry them through their affliction into everlasting life. Pray for those who are oppressing others, that they would weep in repentance before the judge of the earth.

MONDAY, 31 AUGUST

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12–17

Sexual Immorality

How much does your faith impact your decisions about your body?

1. What does Paul teach Christians in response to the ideas quoted in verses 12–13, ideas which are as current today as in ancient Corinth?

2. How does our belief in bodily resurrection (of Jesus and also of us), and eternal union with Christ, impact our attitude to the way we use our bodies in this life?

3. What, then, should our attitude be to the kind of sexual immorality described here?

Father God, you know the temptations we face in this world and the destructive impact of the lies we are told about sexual freedom. Help us to resist and to remain faithful to you. Amen.

TUESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18–20

Bought With A Price

Do you think of your body as belonging to Christ?

1. *"Flee from sexual immorality"* is an urgent command (18). Why is sexual immorality dishonouring to God?

2. How should thinking of your body as "bought at a price" by Christ (20), impact your sexual behaviour?

3. *"You are not your own"* (19) is a direct challenge to our contemporary culture's mantra. How would you share the joy of knowing you actually belong to Christ, with someone who values their total independence?

Father we thank you that we belong to you as whole people – body, mind, soul. Please help us to remember how precious we are to you – bought at the price of Jesus' death for us. Help us not to "conform to the pattern of this world", but to live in grateful obedience to your commands. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER

JOSHUA 23:1–11

Hold Fast to the Lord

Think back to the last big project you completed. Do you look back and reflect on how God helped you along the way?

1. What does Joshua want the people of Israel to remember about what God has done and promised (3–5)?

2. Therefore, how does Joshua want the people of Israel to respond to God (6–8, 11)?

3. How much merit can Israel claim towards their successful conquest of the Promised Land (10)?

4. Are there times when you need to be reminded of God's actions in your life?

The people of Israel have a lot to be grateful to God for. They were only able to take possession of the Promised Land because God fought for them. Therefore, it is right for them to respond to God by loving and obeying him. We can learn from this example by loving and obeying God as he "fights" for us in our lives.

THURSDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER

JOSHUA 23:12–16

Consequences of Disobedience

What was the last rule that you broke? What was the penalty supposed to be? Did you suffer the penalty at that time?

1. What warning does Joshua give to the Israelites (12–13)?
 2. Why is God concerned for how Israel might associate with the surviving nations around them (16; also see 7 from yesterday's passage)?
 3. What do we learn about God's nature when it comes to keeping promises (15–16)?
 4. Are there any of God's commands you've broken recently for which you need to repent?
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Dear God, thank you that you keep all your good promises to us through Jesus, and that not one of them has failed. Please forgive me for the times when I disobeyed you. Help me know your commands in the Bible and to obey them. Amen.

FRIDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

JOSHUA 24:1–15

As For Me and My House

Who is the hero in your favourite film? What did they do to earn that title?

1. From Joshua's recount of the history of how Israel got to the Promised Land, who is the hero of this historical story? How do you know they are the hero?

2. What response does Joshua want the Israelites to have (14)?

3. Why does Joshua offer the Israelites a choice in verse 15?

Dear God, thank you for bringing the Israelites into the Promised Land, and in a similar way bringing us salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank you that it is solely by your actions we have been saved. Please help me to fear you and serve you with all faithfulness and to keep choosing you above all else. Amen.

SATURDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER

JOSHUA 24:16–33

We Will Serve the Lord

How do you decide who you can trust? How do you continue building that trust? What might it take for you to lose that trust?

1. In yesterday's passage, Joshua gave the Israelites the choice of whether to serve God or to serve other gods. What do the Israelites choose, and why (16–18)?

2. How does Joshua respond to the Israelites' decision (19–20)?

3. How does Joshua help the Israelites commit themselves to God (23–27)?

Dear God, thank you that you can be trusted because of all you did for your people Israel, and for us through Jesus Christ. Please help me to serve you and forsake all other gods and idols. Amen.

SUNDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER

PSALM 10

Lift Up Your Hand, Lord

David starts this Psalm by asking a question of God. He sees evil and trouble in the world. Why does God seem to do nothing? Do you ever ask this question?

The evils David observes in verses 2–10 is extensive and horrible. The wicked are violent, deceiving, lying, preying on the weak and the helpless, full of pride. In verse 11 we see the heart of the wicked person revealed – the root of all their evil is that they have forgotten God. They think he will not see and so at the end of the day they think that no one can hold them to account, no one will judge what they have done.

The world we live in today may be different in many ways from the world King David lived in but this certainly has stayed the same. Today, the weak and vulnerable are preyed upon and neglected in nursing homes, online scams, abuse in special ed schools and child sex trafficking. We have entire industries such as advertising, social media, and politics, seemingly dependent on lies and deception. The root of all this evil and what makes our world so often a wicked place is that people have chosen to forget God.

In the face of all this, sometimes I find myself, like David, crying out to God where are you?

But like David we have hope, trusting that one day God will act in answer to his people's cries and according to his own holiness. In verses, 12–18 David paints a picture of God's justice, horrifying for those who have forgotten him, but comforting for those who depend on him. God will judge all evil one day. He will take all into account. The evil that is done against the weak and the vulnerable – that escapes all others' sight – he sees and will judge. What a comfort!

Think of a current situation you know of where evil seems to reign unchecked, bringing suffering to many. Pray for the Lord to bring justice. Pray with me, "Come Lord Jesus".