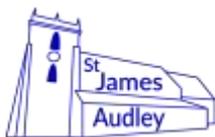


Bible Reading Notes

November 2019 – Judges 1-7



How to use these Bible reading notes

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

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

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

These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets. Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'. It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes. If you have any problems, email alicecornes@gmail.com

Thursday 1 November

The book of Judges is full of deep misery and great salvation. It's the most violent book in the Bible and it's full of Jesus. Judges tells the story of God's people Israel as they start living in the land he promised them.

Read: Judges 1:1-5

- What does God tell Israel? (v2)
- Judah is told to do a difficult thing. What do they do? Do they believe God? (v3-5)

Apply

What Judah is asked to do is hard – but when they obey, God is with them. (We'll think about Simeon in a couple of days' time.)

- Which of God's commands do you find difficult? Perhaps jot a few down.

Pray

- Ask God to give you faith like the tribe of Judah.
- Ask God to help you obey him!

Friday 2 November

Judah is faithfully following God's instructions. Here they deal with a king called Adoni-Bezek.

Read: Judges 1:5-8

- What do they do to him? (v6)
- Is it fair? (v7)
- How powerful was Adoni-Bezek? (v7)
- After Adoni-Bezek, what do the men of Judah conquer? (v8)

Apply

God's judgements can be pretty gruesome. It's worth facing that head on as we go into the book of Judges. But they are always just.

- Do you believe that God is always just? Where do you struggle to believe that? How can the idea of God's fairness and justice be a comfort?

Adoni-Bezek is a powerful enemy – and after defeating the enemy, God's special city Jerusalem is captured. This is a little picture for us: Jesus defeats the great enemy, the devil, and then he builds his kingdom.

Pray

- Praise God for his justice!
- Ask for faith if you struggle to believe he's just.
- Praise God that Jesus has defeated the devil and is building his church.

Saturday 3 November

The story of battle continues. For today's reading, it's important to remember that Judah is the royal tribe – the tribe that Jesus will come from.

Read: Judges 1:9-17

- Caleb and Othniel are Gentiles (non-Jews) who've decided to join God's people. What happens to them? (v11-15)
- The Kenites were also outside God's people. Are they destroyed? Why or why not? (v16)
- Simeon was a wicked tribe that was under a curse (see Genesis 49:5-7). What happens to them? (v17)

Apply

Three different times in this section we see people who should die, but instead they enjoy victory. And it's all because they join Judah – the tribe Jesus will come from.

- Can you think of anyone you know who deserves punishment?
- Would you like to see them enjoying victory by coming to Jesus? If not, why not?

Pray

- Pray for whoever you thought of just now!
- And pray for yourself too...

Sunday 4 November

We're taking a Sunday pause from Judges to look at a wider theme. The book of Judges is full of war – and it's often God's people fighting, under God's leader. We're also in a war, but ours looks a bit different.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

- Who is our enemy in this war? (v11-12)
- Whose armour do we have? (v13)
- What is the armour? (v14-17)
- What is our weapon? (v17)
- How do we fight? (v18)
- What gives us confidence? (v10)

Apply

- Do you live as though there's a war on?
- Are you putting on all the armour Paul talks about?

Pray

- Pray through each item of armour. Thank God for it, and ask him to help you fight effectively!

Monday 5 November

As God gives Israel their land, they're meant to completely drive out the Canaanites.

Read: Judges 1:27-34 (or 1:18-34 if you've got time)

- Do they drive them out? Why or why not? (v27)
- Is that a good enough reason? (If you're not sure, check [Deuteronomy 7:17-19](#))

It's reading passages like this that we wish Israel had a leader who would direct them to do what God had commanded them. Hold on to that wish!

Apply

It would have seemed so reasonable at the time – if they forgot God's promise.

- In our fight against the devil's schemes (which we saw yesterday), are there sins that you think are too difficult to get rid of?
- What do God's promises tell you?

Pray

- Ask God to give you faith to trust him.
- Ask him for help in fighting and driving out sin.

Tuesday 6 November

Yesterday we saw that Israel didn't totally drive out the other people from the land. They made agreements with them that they could stay (and so also their worship of false gods).

Read: Judges 2:1-5

- What things about God should have encouraged God's people to do what he said? (v1)
- What had God commanded and how have Israel responded? (v2)
- What will be the consequences for Israel? (v3)
- How devastating is that news? (v4-5)

Israel's failure will come back to haunt them. (That's pretty much the rest of the story of Judges...). This happened in the lifetime of Joshua, who will get a good write up tomorrow. But even he hasn't led the people in total obedience. God's people need a leader who will perfectly lead them in obedience.

Apply

- Can you think of ways that sin traps and snares people when they allow it to stick around in their lives? And in yours?
- Thank God for Jesus, your perfect leader, who will never let you settle down comfortably with sin.
- We need other people to help us with sin we're trapped in (to help us connect up to Jesus, our perfect leader). Who could you ask to help you?

Wednesday 7 November

Joshua was the great leader after Moses who led the people into the promised land. Today we read about the end of an era.

Read: Judges 2:6-11

- How do things go while Joshua is alive? (v7)
- How do things go under the elders he trained?
- How do things go after that? (v10-11)

Apply

This passage shows us two really important things. First is the importance of the leaders of God's people. Good leaders, good times; bad leaders, bad times.

- Do you pray for the leaders God has given you?
How can you help them?
- What quality of leader is Jesus?

Second is the importance of older believers teaching the next generation. Because Israel fails to do that, everything goes wrong.

- How can you help the next generation to know God? (Your own children, or young people at church)

Pray

- Praise God for our leader Jesus.
- Spend some time praying for Christian leaders.
- Spend some time praying for the next generation.

Thursday 8 November

In the next days, we're going to see the pattern of Judges. Here's what happens, over and over again.

Read: Judges 2:11-19

- What did Israel do? (v11-13)
- How did God punish them? (v14-15)
- Then what did God do? (v16)
- Did he do that because they had changed? (v17-18)

Apply

Tomorrow we will think about the role of the judge. Today we see God's priorities and character.

We read later in Judges that Israel committed what we think are 'big' sins – murder, rape, and more. But what sin does Judges focus on here? (v11-13)

- Do you think that sin is such a big deal?

In this passage we see that God's justice makes perfect sense – he gives Israel what they deserve. But his mercy has no explanation! He just is merciful.

- Which do you find harder to understand – God's justice or his mercy?

Pray

- Confess to God any idolatry in your own heart.
- Praise God for his amazing undeserved mercy to you.

Friday 9 November

Let's look at the pattern of Judges again.

Read: Judges 2:11-19

- What did the judges do? (v16, v18)
- How long did they do it for? (v18)
- What do the judges keep doing which stops them leading the people away from idolatry? (v19)

Apply

We see this cycle of a saving judge who then dies and it all goes to pot. If only one could just keep living!

- Imagine how awful it would be if at some point our leader Jesus now died for good and we were left without him.

Jesus: 'I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!' Revelation 1:18

Pray

- Tell Jesus how pleased you are that he is never going to die and leave us leader-less.

Saturday 10 November

We've been seeing Israel's stubborn, persistent rebellion.

Read: Judges 2:20-3:6

- What is God's judgement on them? (2:21)
- Why does he do that? (2:22, 3:1-2, 3:4)
- How do Israel react? (3:6)

Apply

God often lets us endure the consequences of our own sin. But that's not just a punishment – it's a chance for us to realise the seriousness of our sin and turn to God wholeheartedly.

- Are you living with the painful consequences of your sin?
- Have you repented of those sins? Are you trying to obey God now in this painful situation?

Pray

- Talk to your leader Jesus. Ask him to help you when you sin – that he wouldn't let you rebel further but would help you repent.
- Repent of any specific sins you thought of, and ask for help to obey God now.

Sunday 11 November

We've seen the general pattern of Judges in the last chapter. Now we see the first story of that pattern playing out in reality.

Read: Judges 3:7-11

- What does Israel do? (v7)
- What does God do? (v8)
- What does Israel do? (v9)
- What does God do? (v9)
- Why is Othniel able to win? (v10)
- What is the result of his victory? (v11)

Apply

The Spirit makes peace (v11) by waging war (v10).

- Do you think of the Holy Spirit as a warrior?

God's people always need a leader who has the Spirit who can fight for us against the devil.

Jesus: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me' (Luke 4:18)

All Christians have the Spirit now, too.

- Under Jesus' leadership, do you believe that the Spirit can actually help you win the war against the devil?

Pray

- Praise God for the gift of the Spirit!

Monday 12 November

In this story, Israel are punished when God lets Moab rule them. But then God rescues them from the wicked and cruel king of Moab. The story is deliberately funny, as the proud king meets his end in a humiliating way. It's got surprise, toilet humour, embarrassment – the whole lot. Enjoy it!

Read: Judges 3:12-25

- For how many years did Eglon dominate Israel, fattening himself at their expense? (v14)

Apply

Tomorrow we will see how Ehud is a picture of Jesus. But today we will listen to God about rulers like Eglon. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5)

- Are there powerful, proud people in the world that you're afraid of? How can this story be a comfort?

Pray

- Praise God that he saves his people, even though they don't deserve it.
- Praise God that he brings the proud low!

Tuesday 13 November

The last part of the story showed Ehud single-handedly kill the wicked king Eglon. But the story isn't quite done.

Read: Judges 3:26-30

- What does Ehud do after escaping? (v26-27)
- What does Israel do? (v27-29)
- What's the result? (v30)

Apply

This is actually a picture of Jesus and us. Ehud singlehandedly wins the victory; then all the people join him for the mopping-up operation. In the same way, Jesus single-handedly wins the victory by his death and resurrection. Now he calls us to join him in the mopping up! This should give us great confidence: we're still fighting, but the victory is really already won.

- Do you sometimes forget Jesus has won the victory and think it depends on you? When?
- Do you sometimes forget you're called to fight with Jesus? When?

Pray

- Praise God for Jesus' victory!
- Praise him for the honour of being in his army.
- Ask him to help you fight well.

Wednesday 14 November

Today's passage is very short, but it's encouraging!

Read: Judges 3:31

- "Shamgar" is not an Israelite name, and "Anath" is the name of one of those false gods. So Shamgar is probably the son of a pagan who converted to the true God.
- An oxgoad is normally a farmer's tool, not a weapon. Do you think maybe the Philistines were a bit surprised to be killed by a non-Israelite farmer with a non-weapon?!

Apply

God loves to use unexpected people like Shamgar to do his work in unexpected ways. **The biggest example of that is Jesus**: nobody expected the Saviour to be like him, and nobody expected salvation to come in the shape of a cross!

- List some ways that the cross is a surprising way of God saving his people.

Pray:

- Praise God for his surprising salvation in Jesus and his cross!
- Praise him that he's the one who plans it all, not us.

Thursday 15 November

Today we meet Deborah. She is given a lot of airtime in Judges so we'll follow her story for a few days. Today, she teaches us about men and women.

Read: Judges 4:1-9

- What does Israel do (again!)? (v1-3)
- Who is Deborah? What does she do? (v4-5)
- Who should lead Israel? Does he? (v6-8)
- Is Deborah impressed? (v9)

Apply

Deborah is a wise, godly woman that God uses greatly.

- Can you think of examples of women like that in your church, or in your life? Do you help women to be like this?

Deborah *also* insists that leading God's people is a job for men – and where men refuse to lead, it's shameful.

- Do you believe this? Do you act like it?
- This topic often raises questions. If you need to think more about this, who is a someone you can talk to who you know will show you what God says in the Bible?

Pray

- Thank God for his good design for men and women.
- Ask him to help you embrace and support both the gifts of women and the leadership of men.

Friday 16 November

Last time we saw Deborah and Barak gearing up for battle. Now the battle arrives.

Read: Judges 4:10-16

- Chariots were like the tanks or fighter jets of the ancient world. So who has the stronger army – Barak (v10) or Sisera (v12-13)?
- Who wins? Why? (v14-15)
- How complete is the victory? (v16)

Apply:

Perhaps we don't think of God as a warrior. But that's the picture we're given here!

- Can you think of situations in your life where it looks like evil has the upper hand?
- Can you think of situations in the world where evil looks much stronger than God's church?
- How is this story an encouragement?

Pray

- Praise God that he fights for his people – and wins!
- Ask him to help you trust him
- Ask him to fight for you and the whole church!

Saturday 17 November

Yesterday we saw God win a great victory for his people. But one man got away – the commander, Sisera. So the story isn't quite done...

Read: Judges 4:17-24

- Why does Sisera trust Jael?
- How does Jael reassure him?
- Then what does she do?

Apply

Because women are physically weaker than men, it was humiliating to be killed by a woman. So here's another example of God humiliating proud enemies.

But there's more than that. Sisera's head is crushed.

Since the Garden of Eden, a Messiah has been promised who would crush Satan's head. Jael is another reminder along the way that that Messiah is still coming - a rescuer of God's people who crushes the head of their enemy.

Pray

- Praise God that he never forgot his promise from the Garden of Eden to send a Satan-crusher.
- Rejoice in Jesus who has defeated Satan when he died on the cross, and will totally crush Satan when he comes again. Tell Jesus how great he is.

Sunday 18 November

After the great victory of chapter 4, Deborah sings a song. The song was meant to teach Israel, and it's got a lot to teach us.

Read: Judges 5:1-11.

- What is Deborah delighted about? (v2,9)
- Who does she praise for that? (v2,3,9)
- How does Deborah picture God? (v4-5) Spend a little while imagining this!

Apply:

If we praise God for the willingness of his people, we're actually admitting something really big: our hearts are in his hand. He's the one who makes us willing, who changes hearts. That is awesome power – as awesome as the picture in v4-5.

- Do you forget how powerful God is? When, and how?
- Do you see willingness to serve God in yourself? In your church?

Pray:

- Praise God for willingness you can see – it comes from him! And ask him for more.
- Praise God that he is so powerful and our hearts are in his hand.

Monday 19 November

The next bit of Deborah's song looks back in how different people in Israel fought for God – or didn't!

Read: Judges 5:12-22

- Which tribes helped? (v13-15, 18)
- What did Reuben do instead? (v15-16)
- Which other tribes did nothing? (v17)

Apply

Deborah's song is for the people to sing every year. Imagine being from the tribe of Reuben (v15-16) and hearing it over and over again! How would you have felt?

Imagine being from Zebulun (v18) and hearing it every year. How would you have felt then?

God honours those who serve him, and shames those who refuse him.

- Can you think of someone who has faithfully served God that you can honour?
- How should the promise of honouring and shaming affect you?

Pray

- Praise God for faithful people.
- Ask God to help you serve him faithfully and receive honour!

Tuesday 20 November

In the next bit of Deborah's song, she sings about a town who didn't help and a woman who did.

Read: Judges 5:23-27

- What was wrong with Meroz? What's God's attitude to them? (v23)
- What's God's attitude to Jael? (v24)
- Why? (v25-27)

Apply

This is actually quite a scary passage. Meroz didn't do anything. And that was the problem! Sometimes our worst disobedience isn't the bad stuff we do. It's the good stuff we *should* do but don't.

- Are there things you should do that you aren't doing?

The flipside is glorious, though. Jael *does* serve God, even though it's hard and gruesome. And she's called "most blessed of women"!

- Which is better: an easy life or praise from God?

Pray

- Confess to God your "sins of omission" - things you should have done but didn't.
- Ask for God's help to boldly do what he commands.

Wednesday 21 November

Deborah finishes her song by imagining Sisera's mum waiting for her (dead) son. **It's pretty savage...**

Read: Judges 5:28-31

- How is Sisera's mum feeling? (v28)
- How does she try and reassure herself? (v29-30)
- Is Sisera's mum a good woman? **What's her attitude to Israelite women, for example?** (v30)
- How does Deborah feel about all this? (v31)

Apply

We can feel a bit uncomfortable reading a passage like this! But Sisera and his mum are experts in evil: it's good for God to judge them. And if it's good that God does it, then it's also good for us to rejoice in it.

As Deborah (the leader of God's people) sings over her defeated enemies, we get a picture of what it'll be like for Jesus (The Leader of God's people) has totally defeated his evil enemies.

- Alongside a godly desire to see people saved, do you have a sense that it's good that God's enemies will be defeated?

Pray

- The best way to apply this is to pray it! Pray v31!
- Praise God that he is just.
- Ask him to judge his enemies and save his people.

Thursday 22 November

Today we start a famous story: the story of Gideon. But before we meet him, we need to set the scene...

Read: Judges 6:1-10

- What do the Israelites do (again!)? (v1)
- What does God do? (v1)
- How bad is it? (v2-5)
- How does Israel react? (v6)
- How does God answer? (v7-10) (What has he done? What have they done?)

Apply

We might be surprised here: Israel asks for help and God doesn't immediately help them! But actually he's being very merciful: he's exposing their sin so they will repent. Israel thinks their big problem is Midian. God knows their real problem is their sin.

- What do you think are the big problems in your life? Do you think that God agrees?
- God reminds them of how he's saved them. How has God saved you? Do you often remember that?

Pray

- Ask God to help you see your sin clearly.
- Praise God for how he's saved you.

Friday 23 November

Israel's in big trouble. Because of their sin, God's given them to the evil Midian. But now he's going to act...

Read: Judges 6:11-16

- When we meet Gideon, what's he doing? How does he feel about Midianites? (v11)
- What are God's first words to him? (v12)
- How does Gideon feel about this – and what's God's answer? (v13-14)
- When Gideon objects again, what's God's answer? Has he changed his message from v12? (v15-16)

Apply

What a better leader we have in Jesus than God's people had in Gideon!

- Spot the differences between them (e.g. in bravery, trust in God and his word).

What Gideon has going for him is God keeps saying: I'll be with you. Jesus is better still. Jesus is God with us:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us").

(Matthew 1:23)

Pray

- List before God the Father as many things as you can think of from this passage that are excellent about his Son Jesus. He loves to hear that.

Saturday 24 November

Gideon's been talking to God, and God's answered his objections. So Gideon realises he needs to do something...

Read: Judges 6:17-24

- What does Gideon do? (v17-19)
- Does God accept his offering? (v20-21)
- How does Gideon react? (v22)
- What message does God have for him? (v23)

Apply

It's an interesting story: God is very gracious (accepting a meal from a human!) but he leaves Gideon absolutely terrified.

- Do you think of God as scary? Should you? (If you need a hint, read Proverbs 1:7!)

God reassures Gideon: not because God isn't scary, but because God is gracious.

- How does Gideon react to this? (v24) Does it seem like a big deal to you that God has been gracious to you?

Pray

- Ask God to give you a healthy fear of him.
- Praise God that he gives us peace with him!
- Thank God for our leader, Jesus, who is God himself and familiar with God's company!

Sunday 25 November

We're in the story of Gideon, so let's see what the New Testament says about him. Hebrews 11 is all about people who have faith in the Old Testament.

Read: Hebrews 11:32-40

- (Note Gideon is mentioned in v32!)
- What did these guys do through faith? (v32-35)
- What did these guys suffer through faith? (v36-38)

Apply

- Does it surprise you that Gideon is in this list?
- What words would you use to describe the kind of God who takes people who are mainly cowardly and untrusting and is willing to honour them as 'men of faith'?
- What is a difficult situation in your life? What is your attitude to it? Does the fact that God is with you have an impact?
- Faith is about trusting God for the future. What you think about the future, does he feature?

Pray

- Confess your lack of faith to God.
- Praise him for his great and precious promises!
- Ask him for more faith.

Monday 26 November

God has told Gideon to fight Midian. But before we get to that enemy, something needs to happen...

Read: Judges 6:25-32

- What does Gideon need to get rid of? Why? Who did they belong to? (v25)
- What needs to replace it? (v26)
- What does Gideon do? (v27)
- What's the result? (v28-32)

Apply and Pray

The point of this passage is simple: before you can fight the enemy, you need to get rid of your own idols.

- Why do you think Gideon was afraid?

At the point of Jesus first facing our enemy, the devil, he proved himself absolutely pure from false worship:

Jesus answered [the devil], "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" Luke 4:8

- Imagine how awful it would have been if Jesus had bowed down to the devil. Tell him how grateful you are that he didn't.

As followers of our leader, Jesus, we are called to rid ourselves of idols too, as we join in the fight.

- Are there idols or areas of disobedience in your life? What would it look like for you to get rid of them? Does the idea of that scare you? Why?
- Repent before God of any idols you know of. Ask his help to tear them down!

Tuesday 27 November

Gideon's fought his big fight with his own idols and won. Now he's ready to take on Midian.

Read: Judges 6:33-40

- What does Gideon do? Who helps him? (v34)
- What does Gideon ask God for? Why do you think he does that? What does this show about his attitude to God's promise? (v36-37)
- How does God respond? (v38)
- What happens next? (v39-40)

Apply

This story is a classic example of weak faith. Gideon does trust God – but he also struggles to trust God.

Jesus said: 'I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded me.' (John 14:31)

- Imagine if Jesus, our leader, didn't trust his Father God and stalled over doing what God asked him.

In this story, God is powerful (that's very cool!) but more importantly, he's patient.

- How has God been patient with you in your life when you struggle to trust him and do what he's asked?

Pray

- Praise God for his patience.
- Tell God what a good leader you think Jesus is.

Wednesday 28 November

Gideon is about to fight Midian – an army too big to count! And then God does something unexpected...

Read: Judges 7:1-8

- How many men does Gideon have?
- What does God say is the problem? (v2)
- What's the solution? (v3)
- Is that enough? What next? (v4-6)
- How do you think Gideon felt about this? What does he do? (v7-8)

Apply

The key to this story is in v2. It's really important that God gets the glory! Weakness helps us see that.

- What victories can you look back on in your life or church? Are you tempted to boast about them?
- Do you ever feel weak? How should this story encourage you?

Gideon intentionally made himself weak. He is a picture of God's rescuing leader, Jesus. God intentionally made Jesus look weak.

- Can you think of ways that Jesus looked weak and unimpressive (in his birth, his life, his death).

Pray

- Confess to God your sin in boasting instead of praising him.
- Thank him that he works in weakness.

Thursday 29 November

We've been waiting a long time for the showdown with Midian – and it's still not here! God has one more thing for Gideon before the battle.

Read: Judges 7:9-15

- What's God's promise? (v9)
- What does God add? Is Gideon afraid? Why? (v10-12)
- What does Gideon hear? How does he respond? (v14-16)

Apply

Just like before, God is being patient with Gideon's weak faith. Over and over again, he's patient!

God's also teaching Gideon an important lesson: his enemies might look strong and actually be terrified.

Appearances can be deceptive!

- Are there people you're afraid of? How can this story encourage you?
- Think again about God's patience. Has he been patient with you? How should you respond?

Pray

- Ask God to help you fight the fear of man.
- Praise him for his patience!

Friday 30 November

Finally, after God has spent ages teaching Gideon, we get to the actual battle.

Read: Judges 7:16-22

- What do Gideon and his men do? What weapons do they use? (v16-20)
- What's the result? (v21-22)

Apply

Gideon's weak army have a total victory!

It was totally different the way you'd expect an enemy to be defeated. But it was wholly effective – the enemy was thoroughly defeated and God's people rescued. And God got glory.

- Are you noticing more ways that Gideon is a picture of Jesus?

Pray

- Use this time to talk to God about what he's taught you in Judges.