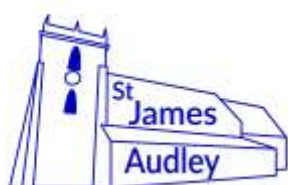




Bible Reading Notes

June 2023
Mark 5-8 and Psalms 142-150



How to use these Bible Reading Notes:

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

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

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

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

1st June

To start these notes, let's remind ourselves of the main themes we see running through the book of Mark.

The King

Read Mark 1:14-15

- What long-awaited event does Jesus announce?

The Cross

Read Mark 3:6

- What shadow is already hanging over Jesus?

The Call

Read Mark 1:17-18

- What response is Jesus calling for?

Pray

Thank Jesus that he came as King to make the world right again, and that he established his kingdom by dying for us. Pray that as you read Mark you would repent, believe the good news and follow King Jesus.

2nd June

Abuse. War. Earthquakes. Climate change. Terrorism. Violence. Demonic influences. Can God restore order to his world? Does he even care?

Read Mark 4:35-38

- What details show that the storm was great?

Read Mark 4:39

- What details show that Jesus' power is great?

Read Mark 4:40-41

- Why are the disciples more afraid than before?

Think

Even seasoned fishermen were scared by this storm, but Jesus talks to it like an unruly child! In the Bible, storms and seas are often pictures of nations and demons rising up against God (see Psalm 65:5-8). So this shows Jesus' ability to subdue not just nature, but also the rage of nations and demons who oppose God.

- How is this good news for the world we live in?
- From this passage, how would you answer the disciples' question in v.41?

Pray

Thank Jesus that when he was on Earth we see a glimpse of how God will restore order to everything – thank him for that coming promise too.

3rd June

Rebel forces have invaded God's world. Squatters have broken into his home. Can Jesus evict these powers?

Read Mark 5:1-5

- How does Mark show the impure spirit's strength?
- How does Mark describe the man's misery?

Read Mark 5:6-13

- How does the conversation reveal Jesus' authority over these demons?

Think

"Legion" was the largest unit in the Roman army. As the Romans occupied Israel, these demons occupied and oppressed this man – until Jesus evicts them.

Like a film trailer shows you the best bits of a forthcoming film, Jesus' miracles show us what his kingdom will be like – free from Satan's power!

- How is this good news for the world we live in?

Pray

Praise Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, for his liberating rule. Pray for anyone you know living in fear of demonic powers.

4th June

After he calmed the storm, Jesus rebuked the disciples for responding in fear rather than faith.

Read Mark 5:14-17

- What changes in the man do the locals observe?
- What is their reaction to this transformation?

Even though Jesus' authority brings freedom and wholeness, these people fear him and want him out of their lives.

Whenever we keep Jesus at a distance and live our way rather than his we make the same error.

- What difference will it make to remember that Jesus' rule is liberating?

Read Mark 5:18-20

- What does Jesus tell the man to do (v.19)?

Think

- What is your story of how the Lord has had mercy on you? Who can you tell it to today?

Pray

Ask Jesus to help you joyfully submit to his loving rule, and thank him for his daily mercies to you.

5th June

David is hunted by Saul's army, hidden in a cave that is more prison than protection (see 1 Samuel 22:1).

Read Psalm 142:1-2

- Who does David turn to in stress and distress?

Read Psalm 142:3-4

- What is God doing (v.3)?
- What does David have "no-one" else to do (v.4)?

Read Psalm 142:5-7

- How does David picture his relationship with God?
- What reasons does he give God to answer him?

Think

Making God our refuge means looking to him for protection and security. Making God our portion means finding so much happiness in him we don't need anything else to be content.

Pray

Thank Jesus that in difficulty he is a strong refuge and that in discontentment he is a satisfying portion.

6th June

Ever felt ready to throw in the towel? In a race, a project, a relationship? How about in serving Jesus?

Read Psalm 143:1-6

- What does he ask God to do, and not do (v.1-2)?
- How is he feeling in this situation (v.3-6)?

Read Psalm 143:7-10

- What requests does he make?
- What reasons does he give for God to answer?

Read Psalm 143:11-12

- What is the basis of his confidence in prayer?
-

Think

One sign that our confidence is in our righteousness rather than God's is that we pray less when things are hard. We think God's against us, so we don't pray for grace; or we think we can't carry on because it depends on us, so we don't pray for guidance.

- How does your praying change when serving Jesus is difficult?

Pray

Call on God to help you put your confidence in God's faithfulness, so you don't give up when faith is hard.

7th June

Some contests are so one-sided that they're foregone conclusions – like this one.

Read Psalm 144:1-4

- How does he describe God?
- How does he describe human beings?

Read Psalm 144:5-15

A Rock vs a Breath: there's only one winner!

- How does he describe God's victory (v. 5-11)?
- How does he describe the prosperity and security God gives to his people (v.12-15)?

Think

Faith flourishes when we have a big view of God (v.1-2) and a small view of people (v.3-4). If we think our enemies are big, we fear them. If we think our allies are big, we trust them. If we think we are big, we fall into self-reliance and entitlement. If we think God is big, we pray big and serve boldly!

- Which humans do you see as bigger than they really are? What difference will it make if you remember they are just a "breath"?

Pray

Ask God to help you to be humble like Jesus, remembering his sovereignty, grace and mercy.

8th June

Jesus' miracles are like holiday brochures for his future kingdom: they show us how wonderful it will be so we long to join him there.

Read Mark 5:21-24

- What does Mark tell us about Jairus?

Read Mark 5:25-29

- What contrasts can you spot between this woman and Jairus?
- How does Mark highlight her desperation?

Read Mark 5:30-34

- How does Jesus' conversation with the woman help her move from fear to faith?

Think

Take a moment to marvel at the time Jesus gives to an unnamed woman.

Pray

If you identify with the unnamed woman's shame, pain, unworthiness or fear, imagine Jesus saying v.34 to you, and thank him.

9th June

Jairus' daughter is dying, but Jesus has been spending ages talking with a woman who isn't – is he too late?

Read Mark 5:35-36

- What devastating news is told to Jairus?
- What does Jesus challenge him to do?

Read Mark 5:37-43

- Why do the crowd laugh at Jesus (v.37-40)?
- How does this scene reveal Jesus' power and his tenderness (v.40-43)?

Think

In these miracles, faith has been the right response to Jesus' power and fear has been the wrong one. But why continue in faith when death has already won?

Jesus can raise a girl from the dead as easily as we can wake a child from their nap! Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, everything sad will come untrue – even death itself!

- How is this good news for the world we live in?

Pray

Pray that like Jairus you will keep trusting Jesus even when he delays in answering your desperate prayers.

10th June

Lots of the stories in the book of Mark end in the crowds being amazed by Jesus. This one ends with Jesus being amazed by the crowds. What could be so shocking it astounds the Son of God?

Read Mark 6:1-3

- What does Jesus do to amaze his home town?
- How do they respond?

Read Mark 6:4-6

- What title and proverb does Jesus apply to himself (v.4)?
- What is Jesus amazed by (v.6)?

We've seen the demonised man, the unnamed woman and Jairus all put faith in Jesus, but his hometown who have known him for 30 years do not. Mark says Jesus "could not" do many miracles there, because they lacked faith!

Think

- Why is faith so vital to the working of Jesus' power?
- How is this passage a warning to people who have been around Jesus and church for years?

Pray

Ask God to graciously increase your faith.

11th June

In chapter 3, Jesus called the Twelve to be a new Israel, called to know him and to make him known. Time for the making known to begin.

Read Mark 6:6-11

- What four actions does Jesus take (v.6-7)?
- How must the Twelve dress?

When Israel left Egypt in the Exodus they also took just a garment, a belt, sandals and a staff (see Exodus 12:11). The Twelve are wearing Exodus costumes to remind people of that deliverance. They preach a message of deliverance and do signs of deliverance. Jesus is leading a new Exodus – freeing people from slavery and judgment to serve God!

Read Mark 6:12-13

- What did the Twelve preach and do?

Pray

The specific instructions were for this specific mission, but this was a foretaste of Jesus' global mission that continues today. Pray that news of Jesus' rescue would spread in your street, city, nation and throughout the world.

12th June

After Jesus calmed the storm, his disciples asked, “Who is this?” Time to reflect on some possible answers to that question.

Read Mark 6:14-16

- Who do the various groups think Jesus is?
- What do these answers have in common?
- Are any of them right (glance back to Mark 1:1)?

Think

This month we’ve seen Jesus calm storms, drive out demons, heal disease, raise a child from the dead, treat individuals with beautiful compassion, and send out the Twelve to show that a new Exodus is happening.

- Who do you think Jesus is?
- What difference will that make to you today?

Pray

“Glorious Father, give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that I may know you better” (Ephesians 1:17)

13th June

An A-Z is a book that maps every street in a city. Psalm 145 is an acrostic (each line starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet) – like an A-Z that maps God's character.

Read Psalm 145:1-13a

- For how long will he praise God the King (v.1-2)?
- What words does David repeat in describing his great God (v.3-13)?

Read Psalm 145:13b-21

- What does God do for "all"?
- What is the link between the "every" in v.21 and the "alls" in the previous verses?

Pray

David begins this song as a solo, and ends by calling a worldwide choir to join him in praising God the King.

Why not try and use the letters of our alphabet to help you praise the wonderful breadth of God's character today?

"Father, you are the Almighty, you are Beautiful, you Created the heavens and the earth..."

14th June

The Pentateuch at the start of the Bible records God's promises and rescue in 5 books. The Psalms responds with 5 books of praise and prayer. They end with 5 psalms that both start and finish "Praise the LORD" (which in Hebrew is "Hallelujah")

Read Psalm 146:1-4

- Who should we not trust, and why?

Read Psalm 146:5-10

- List the reasons why we should put our hope in God instead:

Think

This is another psalm that reminds us that people are small, but God is big. So don't look to a parent, partner, employer, celebrity, politician or child to give you happiness, significance and security. They "cannot save" (v.3). Put your hope in God!

Pray

Praise God for all the wonderful reasons listed in verses 5-10.

15th June

John the Baptist lost his head physically when King Herod lost his head figuratively.

Read Mark 6:17-29

In 8:35 Jesus says, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." This story illustrates both sides.

Herod saves his life

- Why does Herod do what he knows is wrong (v.26)?
- When would it have been easier to do right?

Think

- Are you delaying obedience to God's word at all?
- When does wanting to impress human beings lead you to sin? How will this warning change you?

This story comes in the middle of the mission of the Twelve: what is Mark telling us about mission?

Pray

Reflect on Mark 8:35 and pray that like John you would live and speak for Jesus whatever the cost.

16th June

What's worse than being disturbed and interrupted when you're working? Being disturbed and interrupted when you're trying to have some time off.

Read Mark 6:30-34

- How does Jesus show care and concern for his apostles when they return from their mission?
- How does Jesus show care and concern from the crowds when they interrupt him?
- What does he say they are like (v.34)?

Think

Jesus is the true shepherd of God's people, who feeds and leads us through his teaching (v.34).

- How does this passage make you glad to have Jesus as your shepherd?

Pray

Pray or sing your way through Psalm 23 to praise Jesus for being a kind and compassionate shepherd and to renew your trust in him.

17th June

Imagine that you receive two invites to dinner on the same night – which will you choose? After Herod's brutal banquet, Mark describes Jesus' fantastic feast. Which will you choose?

Read Mark 6:35-44

- How does each detail show the magnitude of this miracle?
- How did the crowd feel before and after (v.36,42)?

Jesus feeds his people in the desert just like the Lord fed Israel in the desert during the Exodus (Exodus 16). Then God rescued people from slavery and judgment to be his partners in blessing the world. This new Exodus, led by Jesus, will be similar but greater.

Think

King Herod's banquet was in the palace with powerful, invited guests. He was a self-serving host who silenced God's word and served up a severed head.

- How does King Jesus' banquet contrast?
- How does this feast make you glad to follow Jesus as your King?

Pray

Thank Jesus that one day you'll sit with him and the rest of God's children at His great feast.

18th June

Our view of Jesus gets clearer – and so does our view of the human heart.

Read Mark 6:45-50

When God appears to people in the Old Testament, certain patterns occur: there's often a storm (Ezekiel 1:4), God passing by (Exodus 34:6-7), God walking on the sea (Job 9:8-11), people being afraid (Isaiah 6:5).

- How do we see these patterns occurring (v.48-50)?
- What is Mark telling us about Jesus?

“It is I” in v.50 literally means “I Am”

Read Exodus 3:13-15

- What is Jesus telling us about himself?

Read Mark 6:51-56

- How do the disciples react to this revelation (v.51-52)?

Think

Jesus reveals himself as the God of the Exodus, but the disciples react like Pharaoh did in the Exodus – with hardened hearts!

- How does this passage exalt Christ and humble us?

Pray

Thank Jesus that we see his power in this story and thank God that he sent his son.

19th June

The heart of the clash between Jesus and religion.

Read Mark 7:1-5

- What objection do the Pharisees have (v.5)?
- What background info does Mark give us to help us understand where they're coming from (v.3-4)?

Read Mark 7:6-13

- What is the problem with the Pharisees (v.6-7)?
- What accusation does Jesus make (v.9)
- What example of this does he give (v. 10-13)?

Think

Religious people always think their extra traditions and rules will help people live God's way and obey Scripture, but Jesus shows that added human rules and rituals always clash with God's commands.

- Does your church teach any binding rules that don't come from the Bible?
- Do you treat the Bible with the same reverence that Jesus does?

Pray

Ask God to help you not to add anything extra to how the Bible says is the best way to live. Pray that you'd better grasp the sufficiency of Jesus.

20th June

The second track in praise of God's grace
and promises.

Read Psalm 147:1

- Do you feel like this is true?

The rest of the psalm gives us reasons to feel this way on all those days when we don't!

Read Psalm 147:2-20

- What does God do for his creation (v.4-5,8-9,15-18)?
- What does God do for his people (v.2-3,6,10-11,13-14,19-20)?

God's care for creation and church are interlinked. The God who creates, orders, sustains and rules creation is the same God who builds up, heals, sustains, delights in, strengthens and speaks to his church.

Think

- How does this motivate you to fear God?
- How does this motivate you to put your hope in God?
- How does this motivate you to praise God?

Why not pray to Him now using this psalm?

21st June

When you sing hymns and songs of praise to God in church, do you ever feel that you're part of a small, slightly pathetic choir?
That's not so!

Read Psalm 148:1-6

- Who praises God here (v.1-4)?
- Why do they praise God (v.5-6)?

Read Psalm 148:7-14

- Who praises God here (v.7-12)?
- Why do they praise God (v.13-14)?

The "horn" in v.14 is Jesus – the strong king praised by God's people (see Mark 1:7)

Think

- When you sing praise to God at church, who are you joining in with?
- How does this psalm help us praise God when we're part of a small church?
-

Pray

Join the angels, stars, hills, trees, animals, kings and people around the world in praising God for making the world, being the only God and sending King Jesus.

22nd June

The second half of Jesus' argument with the religious leaders.
What makes a person unclean in God's sight?

Read Mark 7:14-19

- Why can't food make us unclean (v.18-19)?
- What dramatic implication does this have (v.19)?

Read Mark 7:20-23

- What does make us unclean before God (v.20)?
- Where do the evils in Jesus' list come from (v.21-23)?
-

Think

- How does Jesus' teaching show that following religious rules won't work?
- How does Jesus' teaching show that everyone needs forgiveness and a new heart?

Jesus can abolish the Old Testament food laws because he is the one who dies to make us clean, and who makes us clean on the inside by his Spirit – read Mark 1:7 and Titus 2:14 and thank God!

Pray

Thank God that because of Jesus we are renewed and made clean – something we never could do ourselves.

23rd June

After arguing with Jewish men about purity, Jesus the Jewish Messiah goes to the “impure” Gentiles in Tyre.

Read Mark 7:24-27

- How is this woman different from the people Jesus has been talking with (v.24-26)?
- How is Jesus’ answer shocking (v.27)?

Read Mark 7:24-27

- How does the woman’s reply in v.28 show:
 - Understanding? Humility? Patience?
- How does Jesus honour her faith (v.29-30)?

Think

This woman is the only person in the whole of Mark to call Jesus “Lord”, and the only one to understand a parable and answer from inside it. She grasps that Jesus came first for the Jews, but he’s Saviour of all.

- How can this passage help when we don’t think we’re the right sort of person to be a Christian?
- How can this passage help when Jesus isn’t answering our desperate prayers?

Pray

Ask God to help you to trust that He always hears your prayers, and thank Him that his son Jesus came to save everyone.

24th June

Jesus with another Gentile. Another individual encounter with international significance.

Read Mark 7:31-37

- What disabilities does this man have?
- Why does Jesus use a kind of sign language with him?
- What effect does Jesus' word have on the man?

Apply

So far in Mark, Jesus has healed and driven out demons in Israel. Now he's just done both for Gentiles too. His kingdom will be over all nations and for all types of people. No-one is out of his reach.

- Are there any types of people that you think are out of Jesus' reach (think race, gender, age, religion, location, class, sexuality, education, wealth, opinions, experiences)?
- Are there any types of people that your church could reach out to but is ignoring? How could you be a part of that?

Pray

Praise Jesus that He came to save everyone, whoever they are. Ask Him to help you to be gracious like he is.

25th June

Don't you hate it when everything on TV is a repeat? So why does it look like the Holy Spirit has put a repeat in Mark's Gospel?

Read Mark 8:1-10

"During those days" means we're still in a Gentile area.

- How does Jesus feel towards the crowd (v.2)?
- What does this lead him to do (v.4-7)?
- How did the crowd feel as a result (v.8)

Think

As Jesus served and satisfied the Jewish crowd of 5000 (Mark 6:30-44), he also serves and satisfies this Gentile crowd of 4000. His rescue is for all nations – Gentiles don't just get crumbs under the table (7:28), they get a seat at the feast!

- How is this good news when we're lonely or unhappy?

Pray

Thank Jesus that he feels compassion on everyone in his world, and that he truly satisfies our hearts.

26th June

Meet two groups of people who both exasperate Jesus.

Read Mark 8:11-13

- Why do the Pharisees ask for a sign (v.11)?
- How does Jesus respond to the request (v.12-13)?

Think

- How have you seen people demand more “proof” as an excuse for not listening to Jesus?

Read Mark 8:14-21

Herod and the Pharisees both reject Jesus' word.

- What does Jesus warn them against (v.15)?
- What does Jesus say they are like (v.17-18)?

The passage ends on a question – “Do you still not understand?” It won't be resolved until the next passage.

Pray

Ask Jesus to forgive you when you exasperate him, and to heal your blind eyes, deaf ears and hard heart.

27th June

The fourth song of praise in response to God's grace and promises.

Read Psalm 149:1-5

- What is it about God that means his people should praise him?

Read Psalm 149:6-9

- In what ways is praising God powerful?

Think

"The LORD takes delight in his people" (v.4) – what difference would it make if you believed this about yourself and your church?

Pray

Rejoice in the honour that the holy Creator God delights in you. Praise him today with your heart and mouth so that through your praise Jesus' rule will be extended throughout the nations.

28th June

The final song in Jesus' hymn book – more praise!

Read Psalm 150

- Where should God be praised (v.1)?
- Why should God be praised (v.2)?
- What should God be praised with (v.3-5)?
- Who should praise God (v.6)?

Pray

Say, sing, shout your praise and adoration to God for his acts of power in creating and saving the world, and for his unrivalled greatness!

Pray that you would have such a passion of Jesus' honour that you would long for everything and everyone that has breath to praise him.

29th June

Even after Jesus' miracles and teaching, the disciples are blind to who he is – they have “eyes but fail to see” (8:18). Is there any hope for them (and us)?

Read Mark 8:22-26

- What does the man have in common with the disciples in v.17-18?
- How is this different to all Jesus' other healings?
- In v.25-26, what different phrases does Mark use to stress that the blind man is now fully healed?

Think

The clue to why Jesus does this in two stages is to see why Mark has placed this story here. Before this passage, Peter is blind to who Jesus is and why he came (v.17-18). After it, Peter sees who Jesus is, but not why he came (v.27-33). Jesus opens the eyes of the physically blind and spiritually blind in two stages.

Pray

Thank Jesus that he gives sight to the blind. Ask him to keep restoring your sight so you see him clearly.

30th June

We've known Jesus is the Christ (God's promised King) since Mark 1:1 – will the disciples ever get it, though?

Read Mark 8:27-30

- Who do the people say Jesus is (v.28)?
- Who does Peter say Jesus is (v.29)?

Think

- What is your answer to Jesus' question in v.29? Why?
- How will that affect you today?

Think it's odd that your church leaders nag you to tell people about Jesus, and Jesus tells people to be quiet (here in v.30, also 1:44, 5:43, 7:26)? The clue is that Peter is only partially-sighted here – he knows Jesus is the King, but doesn't get that he has to die on the cross yet (8:31-33). Before we tell people about Jesus, we've got to grasp what sort of King he is – a crucified, rejected, suffering, servant King.

Pray

Ask Jesus to help you understand what sort of King he is better, and praise Him for it!