BOUNDLESS
THE WHOLE WORLD READING
THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE READING CHALLENGE
2 CORINTHIANS 3:18
And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
Foreword

As Christians and Salvationists we believe in the importance of the Bible. We believe in its divine inspiration. Yet would others say of us that we are people of the Word? Do we read it? Do we study it? Do we know what God wants to say to us through his Word?

That is why the reading and study of the Word of God is such an important part of our spiritual journey.

If we fail to read the Scripture we are severely weakened on two counts:
1. We do not know what God wants to say to us.
2. We do not know how to react when facing difficult and tempting situations!

Jesus said: ‘Scripture cannot be broken’ (John 10:35 King James Version).

Paul wrote to Timothy: ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness’ (2 Timothy 3:16 KJV).

Peter wrote: ‘For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit’ (2 Peter 1:21 King James 2000 Bible).

We earnestly encourage you to take up this Bible reading challenge and together as ‘One Army’ we will discover – or rediscover – the wonderful treasure that God has given to us through his Word.

General André Cox and Commissioner Silvia Cox
About the Writers of This Book

Major Phil Layton, BA MTh, is a Salvation Army officer and Bible scholar. He has served in corps appointments in the UK as well as a five-year dual appointment as New Testament Tutor at William Booth College, London. The author of two books – *The Sacraments and the Bible* (2007) and *The Rapture* (2009) – and one in preparation – *Bible-believing Christians* – Phil is a corresponding member of the Salvation Army’s International Doctrine Council and a member of its Moral and Social Issues Council in the UK. Married with two children, he enjoys being with his family, playing football, mountain climbing or swimming. Phil is currently on secondment as a Royal Air Force chaplain.

Captain Rachael Castle is Assistant Territorial Youth Secretary in the Australia Southern Territory and has had a range of appointments in the fields of children, youth and prison ministry. In addition to reading and sharing good food and coffee with friends, Rachael enjoys writing stories for children and has recently authored three children’s books – *Emmaline Rabbit*, *Walter Wants Wings* and *Jemima’s Lullaby* – in a joint project with the Territorial Social Justice Department. Married with three young daughters, Rachael is passionate about sharing the gospel in a way that makes sense to today’s culture.

Captain Tracey Davies serves as Territorial Children’s Ministry Secretary for the Australia Southern Territory. Prior to becoming an officer, Tracey was a teacher with a degree in early childhood education. She now has more than 25 years’ experience in a wide variety of children’s ministry. She is married with two children and lives in Melbourne. Tracey loves quilting and scrapbooking, exercising and drinking tea with friends. She is passionate about ministry that helps connect families and church together, especially in relation to the faith development of children. She also loves ministry that helps families grow in faith together.
THE NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE READING CHALLENGE – THE WHOLE WORLD READING – is an exciting initiative which began in the United Kingdom in 2010. First adopted by Hythe Corps and later by Salvationists across the UK, the challenge was to read through the whole of the New Testament within one year. Together.

WHAT MAKES THIS CHALLENGE SO ATTRACTIVE is its combination of rewards and simplicity. It is extremely ‘doable’, as it merely requires one chapter to be read each day for just five days a week, resting at weekends or using those days to catch-up if needed. It is also extremely rewarding, as the passages teach us more about God, about ourselves, and about how his plans and promises can be understood and trusted.

TO HELP MAKE THE MOST OF THIS CHALLENGE and to carefully read, consider and apply the passages within their own context, Major Phil Layton has written ‘discussion starters’ for each chapter, which may be useful either for personal devotions or for group study.

THE SALVATION ARMY is a Christian church which is confident in proclaiming its belief in the Bible as being inspired by God and applicable to our lives in faith and practice. As a Whole World Reading, let us take on this New Testament challenge to be inspired, comforted, guided and drawn closer to God.

FOR FURTHER RESOURCES AND COMMENTARIES
W: www.salvationarmy.org/biblechallenge E: biblechallenge@salvationarmy.org
Children are a vitally important part of The Salvation Army and we want to help and encourage them to engage in the reading of Scripture and experience what God has to say to them.

While adult Salvationists have resource material to guide them through the New Testament during 2015, it’s exciting that we also have material for our children.

Working through this challenge together means we can encourage each other, read together as a family or a community, and explore the Bible stories and richness of the text together. We can have conversations around teachings we might have questions about and examine what we think God wants us to learn or understand.

It’s a wonderful opportunity and privilege to explore Scripture with the next generation. You may need to help your child with some of the reading and activities, but being involved with them in this project will be a great blessing for everyone.

**Hey Kids!**

We are entering a Bible reading challenge – called The Whole World Reading – along with the adults in our families and our churches. Over this year we are going to explore some great stories from the New Testament. We are going to read important stories from Jesus’ life and learn what he was like when he lived on earth, as well as some important messages for the Early Church and what it means to be a true follower of Jesus.

Are you ready for the challenge? Let’s get started and share this journey together...
Matthew 1 The ancestral credentials of the Jewish Messiah
Why do you think the Gospel writer began with the genealogy of Jesus?
How useful do you think it was, both initially and in later years, for Joseph and Mary to have been given the name of their child, which means ‘the Lord saves’?

Matthew 2 The birth narrative continues along with more prophetic fulfilment
How many wise men are there in this narrative?
What sort of a building did they find Jesus in?
Is Jesus still a baby in this narrative?

Matthew 3 This short chapter includes the introduction of John the Baptist
Do you think it is possible to be forgiven if there is no repentance?
Jesus was baptised by John, but John’s baptism was for repentance. Do you think Jesus needed forgiveness or that his baptism was for other reasons?

Matthew 4 Jesus starts preaching, healing and calling his disciples
Do you think the author is symbolically describing a dark period of doubt and testing in Jesus’ life, or is he describing events that actually happened, including the existence of the devil?
Do you think the devil literally exists? Do you think angels literally exist?
Where did Jesus live when he began his ministry?

Matthew 5 The Beatitudes, followed by Jesus’ interpretation of the Law
In what way are Christians today the ‘salt of the earth’ or ‘the light of the world’?
Has the Law been abolished or fulfilled by Christ? Does this mean that we no longer need to adhere to the Ten Commandments, or does it mean that we are to understand them as Jesus interprets them?
Matthew 6 Jesus gives more teaching, including how to pray and prioritise in life
Is your giving to the needy something which is done to attract the praise of others, or out of love for God?
What is a prayer? Who is authorised to say a prayer? Does it need to be a certain length? Does it need to be said out loud? Does it need to be said at a certain time?

Matthew 7 The need to be discerning and put this teaching into practise
Is there a danger of judging others by their actions, while judging ourselves by our motives?
Why is the road that leads to life ‘narrow’ compared to the road that leads to destruction? What do you think verses 13 and 14 are talking about?
If Jesus is the rock, then what might the sand, rain and wind represent?

Matthew 8 Jesus’ healing power and an example of his power over nature
In what way was the centurion’s faith greater than others?
This chapter recalls Jesus’ healing power, his power over nature and the supernatural. Has there been anyone before or since who has evidenced such powers?
Imagine if someone claimed to be divine today. What sort of evidence would we expect to see? Would it differ much from Jesus’ time?

Matthew 9 More healing and questions
Why was Jesus being accused of blasphemy?
Jesus brings a dead girl to life and heals the blind and mute. Can you imagine the impact this would have on those who heard about it?

Matthew 10 The Twelve (disciples) are named and then sent on an evangelical mission
Are verses 32 and 33 a challenge or a comfort for Christians today?
Matthew 11 Jesus talks about John the Baptist and the need for repentance
Do you think verses 20 to 24 suggest some unbelievers will find God’s judgement more bearable than others?
Is there a marked contrast between what Jesus says in verses 20 to 24 compared to verses 25 to 30, or are they interlinked?

Matthew 12 Jesus helps interpret what the Sabbath is for and refers to the prophet Jonah as a ‘sign’ of his own death and resurrection
How accurately was this prophecy fulfilled?
Some biblical scholars do not believe the story of Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish. Does today’s reading help clarify this line of thought?

Matthew 13 Jesus tells some parables and explains why he uses them

Matthew 14 Jesus feeds 5,000 people and walks on water
Sceptics accuse Jesus of having performed an illusion. What do you think?

Matthew 15 Jesus explains how faith comes from within, not by rituals
Does the Church have traditions, teaching or doctrine which can become obstacles to a relationship with God?
**WEEK 4**

**Commencing 26 January**

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**Children's Challenge**

**The Rich Young Man**

**Matthew 19:16-30**

Sometimes it can be hard to remember to put Jesus first, so today we will create something that might help us to remember. Use a thick strip of paper or card and some glue or staples to make a simple crown. Write Jesus’ name on it and decorate it brightly using anything you like.

Here are some ideas: coloured pencils/crayons, glitter, stick-on gems, sequins, stickers etc. (Hint: decorate the crown before you stick it together!)

As you make your crown, discuss with your group why you think Jesus is the greatest treasure we have. Place your crown somewhere you will see it every day to remind you how special Jesus is and that he should be number one in our lives.

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**Matthew 16** The Pharisees demand a sign and Jesus predicts his death

In what way was Jonah a 'sign'? Are there still people today who insist on seeing a sign of some sort before they will believe? Do you think this is a valid request?

Jesus asks his disciples: 'Who do you say I am?' What would your answer be today?

Did Peter miss the point of Jesus' death? Did his sorrow blind him to the good news of the Resurrection or was his misunderstanding simply clouded by his genuine concern for Jesus?

Do Christians sometimes focus on today while neglecting the promise of what is to come?

**Matthew 17** The Transfiguration

The Transfiguration demonstrates the glory of Jesus, but does it also emphasise how limited our knowledge is of time and space?

The disciples were filled with grief (vv 22, 23). Is this a surprise or understandable?

**Matthew 18** Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

What is the difference between being childish and being childlike?

Take time to dwell on verse 10 and all its implications for you and others.

**Matthew 19** Jesus teaches and welcomes children

What would the benefits and difficulties be with adhering to this teaching (vv 3-12) on marriage and divorce?

Why would being rich make it harder to enter the Kingdom of God?

**Matthew 20** The parable of the workers in the vineyard

How do you interpret the parable?

How important and reassuring do you think these prophecies (vv 17-19) became after Jesus had ascended into Heaven and left his disciples? Can Jesus still heal today (v 34)? If he can, but does not, what does that mean?
Matthew 21 The triumphal entry
Why did Jesus seem to judge the fig tree so harshly? Was it because he was hungry?
Why do you think Jesus did not give a straight answer regarding his authority?

Matthew 22 Jesus gives the greatest commandment
To what extent do you hold and implement this commandment within your own life?
What about the second greatest commandment (v 40)?
Is it true to suggest that Jesus demonstrated his authority not only through miracles but also through sound logic?

Matthew 23 Jesus speaks plainly against the hypocritical piety of the religious leaders
Jesus makes some hard criticisms. What does it tell you about his character?

Matthew 24 Jesus speaks on the end times and being ready for his return
Can we know when Christ will come for his Church?
What state of alertness should we maintain?
What impact should his return have on sharing the gospel and the way we live?

Matthew 25 Jesus uses parables to illustrate the coming judgement and the need to be ready
Is it possible that Jesus might come again within our lifetime?
What do we mean by being saved?
Do these parables give an insight into God’s eternal justice as well as his eternal love?

Matthew 22:1-14
In this parable Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven as a place where everyone is invited, even the poor, the sick and the homeless. That is good news! Everyone can be a part of God’s Kingdom.
This week:
Help plan and prepare a meal with your family. While you are doing this think about someone you know who needs to be invited into God’s Kingdom. Pray for them while you prepare.
As a family you may even be able to invite this person to come to share dinner with you.
**Children’s Challenge**

**Jesus is alive!**

Matthew 28:1-10

The tomb where Jesus was buried was a place where people were sad and upset, but three days after he had been placed in the tomb something amazing happened: Jesus did not stay dead! "He is alive!"

Using some items from your garden or outside your house, create the tomb where Jesus was buried.

Use some sand, rocks, twigs, branches etc to create the tomb, and you could add some people made from pegs, pipe cleaners or extra twigs.

You could act out how people were feeling when they knew Jesus had died, then how they felt when they knew that Jesus had not stayed dead but was alive.

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Matthew 26 Jesus is anointed, betrayed, arrested, tried and denied

Was the Last Supper a Jewish Passover meal?
What was the significance of the meal?
Do you feel sorry for Peter?
Do you think his denial was predetermined or simply pre-known?

Matthew 27 The death of Jesus

Do you think the regret of Judas indicated his guilt, or that ultimately he was saved?
Why did Pilate have Jesus flogged if he was handing him over to be crucified?

Matthew 28 The Resurrection

What does the Resurrection teach about Jesus’ authority to make promises?
Without the Resurrection, would the disciples have been willing to endure persecution? Would Jesus’ death have had such an impact for so long?

Mark 1 The shortest Gospel and the first to be written

Why was Jesus baptised by John?
The evil spirits recognise Jesus (vv 23, 24).
Why the secrecy and why the sacrifices?

Mark 2 Jesus heals a paralytic, calls a disciple and answers questions

How do you think the homeowner felt about having a hole made in his roof?
Did Jesus abolish the Sabbath, or give his interpretation of the Law?
**Mark 3** Jesus heals on the Sabbath, is recognised by more evil spirits and calls the Twelve

Why do you think Jesus gave the evil spirits strict orders not to reveal who he was?
Test yourself. Can you name each disciple?

**Mark 4** Jesus uses parables to teach and demonstrate his authority over nature

Can you think of cultures or individuals who fall into each of the categories listed in the parable of the sower?

**Mark 5** Jesus casts out demons, heals a woman and brings a dead girl back to life.

Why do you think Jesus asked the name of the evil spirit within the possessed man? Didn’t he know it?
Can you imagine the impact in the area of 2,000 pigs drowning?

**Mark 6** John the Baptist is beheaded, Jesus feeds 5,000

Do you recognise the ways in which God uses those closest to you (vv 1-6)?
Jesus not only met but also overwhelmingly surpassed the needs of the 5,000. What can you learn for yourself from this event?

**Mark 7** Jesus explains the need to challenge tradition that obscures God’s will

Are there traditions within the Church and society that seem good but are in danger of obstructing your relationship with God?
Mark 8 Jesus miraculously feeds 4,000 people and heals a blind man
The feeding of the 4,000 was impressive, yet two chapters earlier we read about Jesus feeding 5,000 with less food! Do you think that this miracle adds to the credibility and authenticity of the reports? What do you think the 'cross' is that Jesus refers to in verse 34?

Mark 9 The Transfiguration, an exorcism, serving one another and avoiding sin
Take a look at verses 10 and 32. Is it fair to say that the disciples were slow to understand Jesus’ teaching and mission? How can you be a servant?

Mark 10 Prediction about Jesus’ death and resurrection
Jesus’ teaching on divorce may seem rather strict to some and perfectly normal to others. What do you think?

Mark 11 The triumphal entry and Jesus’ anger at the Temple. His authority is questioned
In verse 11, was Jesus preparing himself for what was to follow?

Mark 12 The greatest commandment
How useful would it be to memorise and practise the two greatest commandments?
Mark 13 Jesus describes end-of-time signs
To what extent can we know anything about the end times? If we cannot know the date of Jesus’ coming, is there any benefit in thinking about the end of time – his return? If not, then why does the Bible mention it so much?

Mark 14 Jesus is anointed, remembered, betrayed, arrested, tried and denied
Do you think Mark recalled the story in verses 1-9 because of Jesus’ prediction (v 9)?
Do you think Jesus simply knew what responses would be given (vv 12-16)? Or had he already made arrangements to use the upper room?
Can you imagine what Peter must have felt like in verses 27-31?

Mark 15 Jesus is mocked, flogged, killed and buried
Does this chapter fulfil Jesus’ prophecy in Mark 10:33?

Mark 16 As predicted in Mark 10:34, Jesus defeats death and is resurrected
Is it understandable or incredible that Jesus’ followers still had difficulty in believing he had risen until they had seen him for themselves?
How important to your faith is a belief in the Resurrection?

Luke 1 The birth of John the Baptist and Gabriel’s visit to Mary
Verses 1-4 give the reason for the Gospel having been written. Can you summarise Luke’s motive?
Were the doubts of Zechariah (v 18) natural? Should he have believed a message from the angel of the Lord, however unlikely?
Do you believe in the virgin birth? If so, or if not, why?
The birth of Jesus, the visit of the shepherds and his presentation at the Temple
How old would Jesus have been when presented at the Temple?
Why did Mary and Joseph present the offering of the poor (Leviticus 12:8) when the wise men brought gold (Matthew 2:11)?

The ministry of John the Baptist and the genealogy of Jesus
Compare verses 4-6 with Isaiah 40:3-5. What can be learned from the difference?

Jesus resists the devil’s temptations and begins his ministry
Is the devil real?
When he returns to Nazareth, Jesus faces a lack of belief in his authority. Why do you think this was?

Jesus begins calling his disciples and performs miracles of healing
Why do you think Jesus ordered the leper not to tell anyone of the healing?
What deeper purpose did Jesus demonstrate in healing the paralysed man?

Jesus provides teaching on the Sabbath, love for enemies and judging others
How easy is it to personally implement verses 27-36?
Which of the builders are you in verse 48 and 49?
Luke 7 A centurion demonstrates amazing faith in Jesus and a dead man is brought back to life
   Do you think Jesus raised the dead man out of compassion for the mother, as a sign to the onlookers, both of these, or for some other reason? Why do you think John asked this question (v 19)?

Luke 8 Jesus tells parables, controls nature and raises another dead person back to life
   Why did Jesus often use parables (v 10)? How easy would it have been to be Jairus and not tell anyone what had happened?

Luke 9 Jesus sends his disciples on a mission and describes the cost of following him
   Is it feasible that there may come a time to shift the target of gospel ministry if it is not being accepted (v 5)? If so, how do you know when that time has arrived? Is it plausible that verse 27 is referring to the Transfiguration and to the witness of Peter, James and John? How would you interpret and apply verse 62?

Luke 10 Jesus sends out 72 followers and emphasises the priority of salvation
   Is it tempting to imagine just 12 disciples? Do these additional 72 help you to imagine the impact his ministry was having? How can verse 20 be applied to your life and ministry today? Is it possible to become so busy serving the Lord that you neglect spending time with him (vv 38-42)?

Luke 11 Jesus teaches his disciples to pray and opposes the established religious leaders
   Verse 13 refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Is this what these verses are really talking about? Jesus showed little fear of tackling hypocrisy and false teaching (v 37-54). Are you as fearless?
Luke 12 Jesus teaches the parable of the rich fool and the need to be ready for Heaven

Many thousands were flocking to see Jesus. Could this have been as a result of the ministry of the ‘72’ in Luke chapter 10?
Verse 7 says ‘don’t be afraid’. Is this compatible with the advice about fearing God in the preceding verses?
What is the teaching of verses 35-46?

Luke 13 Jesus tells more parables and heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath

Do bad things only happen to bad people? If so, what do verses 1-5 suggest?
In what ways is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed, or yeast?
Why did Jesus compare the way of salvation to a ‘narrow door’ (vv 22-30)?

Luke 14 Jesus interprets the Sabbath and teaches through more parables

How do you interpret the great banquet (vv 15-24)?
In a Jewish context verse 26 means to love less. Is this a helpful interpretation?

Luke 15 Jesus uses parables to describe the importance of every lost soul

How much priority do you give to helping others become saved too (vv 1-10)?
Once a lost sheep or coin has been found, is it possible for that sheep or coin to become lost again?
Who do you think the father and two sons represent (vv 11-32)?

Luke 16 Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus

How do you interpret the parable of the shrewd manager?
The story of the rich man and Lazarus speaks about what to do in life.
What does it say about life beyond the grave?
Luke 17 Jesus talks about service for God and heals 10 lepers
How would you interpret verses 7-10 and apply them to your life?

Luke 18 Jesus welcomes children, predicts his death and warns about the love of possessions
Was the Pharisee (vv 9-14) in error to pray boldly, to exalt himself, or to compare himself with others?
Is there a difference between a childish and a childlike faith?

Luke 19 The story of Zacchaeus and the parable of the 10 minas
The parable of the 10 minas is told for the reason given in verse 11 (which is interesting in itself!) and so who is the king, who are the servants and who are the subjects?
While Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem, who were the crowds praising God out loud and how many do you think there were?

Luke 20 Jesus silences his sceptics and provides further teaching
The teachers of the Law and chief priests understand this parable (vv 9-19) as speaking against them, but where do you and I fit into this story, if at all?
The chapter ends with a very stern warning: 'These men will be punished most severely.' Should we take this at face value? What are we to make of it?

Luke 21 Jesus explains how our giving is relative to our circumstances
Do we ever compare our giving (finance, time, abilities) with that of what we perceive is being given by other people? Can we ever judge the value of what others give?
Verses 5-38 speak of 'the signs of the end of the age.' Do we understand these verses? Do we want to understand them? Does it matter if we understand them?
What would be the pros and cons of trying to understand them?
Jesus eats with his disciples / The Last Supper


This was the last special meal Jesus had with his disciples and he had some important things to share with them. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that the sacrifice he was about to make for them on the cross, was so that we can all be friends and connected with God.

Think about the times you share meals with others. What might you do together at those meals to remember what Jesus has done for you?

During the week, choose a meal and volunteer to say a special prayer after you have finished, remembering all that Jesus has done for you. ‘I am thankful for this meal and that Jesus...’

Luke 22 The Last Supper before Jesus is betrayed, arrested, denied and put on trial

During the Passover meal Jesus broke bread and told the disciples ‘do this in remembrance of me’ (v 19). How often do you think he meant this should be done?

It may be easy to assume the disciples let Jesus down by falling asleep (v 45), but can you sympathise more with the drowsiness that is caused by sorrow?

Luke 23 The crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus

What would have been the repercussions for us if Jesus had proved his power and authority and saved himself in response to the dying criminal’s insults?

What day of the week did Jesus die (v 54)?

Luke 24 The resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples and ascends into Heaven

What day of the week did Jesus come back to life? How many days and nights does this mean he was dead for?

Was Jesus’ body tangible? What evidence is there?

Where is Heaven (v 51)?

John 1 Jesus is the Word made flesh and the Lamb of God

Who is the Word made flesh?

Is the Word also God?

Why do you think John the Baptist called Jesus ‘the Lamb of God’?

John 2 Jesus changes water into wine and clears the Temple

Do you think Mary was fully aware of Jesus’ power?
John 3 Jesus teaches Nicodemus and John the Baptist testifies about Jesus
Would you describe yourself as a ‘born-again Christian’?
Is there any other kind of Christian?

John 4 Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman and many Samaritans believe through her testimony
In verses 39-42 God used the woman’s testimony to great effect. Are you willing to be used in the same way?
The man believed in Jesus’ word (v 50). Do you ever have difficulty in believing the words of Jesus?

John 5 Jesus heals at the pool of Bethesda and states his authority to give life to the dead
What did Jesus mean in verse 14? What could be worse than the man’s prior condition (v 5)?
The Jews were trying harder to kill Jesus (v 18) because he claimed equality with God. Do you think he was right, or was he a liar or deluded?

John 6 Jesus feeds the 5,000, walks on water and calls himself the Bread of Life
Verses 53-59 may give the impression that some form of cannibalism is being proposed. Is this true or is Jesus referring to his title of being the Bread of Life in response to verses 30 and 31?
Does verse 35 help you to understand what ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ mean within this conversation?

John 7 Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles
Note the disbelief by his brothers (v 5) who later believed.
What do you think Jesus meant in verses 33-36?
Listening to God is a really important thing for Christians to do every day. How might you go about doing this? You might like to stop and listen in a quiet place or even listen to music to help you focus and listen to God. It is important to find what works for us.

Take time this week to try some different ways of listening to God.

Find a quiet spot, read today’s Bible passage again, then sit or lie quietly and listen to God. Maybe take a notebook and jot down some words or pictures that come to mind as you focus on God. You could even listen to some music or make some music of your own.

Stop what you are doing – perhaps at home or at school or when you are playing with your friends – and focus on God for a few minutes. You might like to write or draw some of the things that came to mind during this time as you listen to God.

John 8 Jesus rescues the adulteress and makes more claims about his divinity
What do you think they were going to accuse Jesus of (v 6)? If he agreed with their interpretation of the Law, were they hoping his compassion would override it?
What do you think Jesus might have been writing in the sand (vv 6-8)? Some may say that proving Jesus’ divinity is a big part of John’s Gospel (vv 58, 59). Can these verses help with proclaiming the gospel today?

John 9 Jesus heals a man born blind and talks about spiritual blindness
How might verse 3 guide someone who fears that their illness or physical condition is a judgement from God?
The Pharisees interrogate the man born blind and end up feeling lectured by him (vv 13-34)! What can this teach us?
The man born blind believes in Jesus. What is the first thing the man then does (see also Luke 4:8)?

John 10 Those who oppose Jesus do so on the grounds of his claims to be God
Who could ‘the gatekeeper’ be referring to?
In verses 30-33 Jesus calls himself the Son of God, and refers to God the Father. The two are one, both are God and the Jews understood perfectly well that this was his teaching. How helpful are these verses to those who struggle with belief in the Trinity?

John 11 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. The plot to kill Jesus intensifies
What does verse 35, the shortest verse in the Bible, tell you about Jesus? Why was he crying?
Compare verses 45 and 53. Jesus becomes a polarising figure. To what extent is this still true today?

John 12 The triumphal entry and Jesus predicts his death
Why is the information about the disciples’ ignorance in verse 13 useful? How does it add credibility to the Gospel account?
Can you imagine what it must have been like to hear the voice of God (vv 28-30)?
John 13 Jesus washes his disciples’ feet and predicts his betrayal and denial
How literally should we take the command from Jesus in verse 14? Who do you think this disciple (v 23) could be?

John 14 Jesus claims to be the Way, the Truth and the Life, and promises the Holy Spirit
Verses 1-3 are sometimes used by proponents of the Rapture – the belief that Jesus is preparing a place for us in Heaven and that he will come and take believers to be with him prior to his second coming. Could there be an alternative interpretation or is it logical to interpret these verses in this way? Is there any room in verse 6 for the possibility that other religions may also lead to God and salvation?

John 15 Jesus teaches about attitudes to each other, to God and the world
In what ways has Jesus loved his disciples (and us)? How can we repeat this loving behaviour towards one another?

John 16 The work of the Holy Spirit is summarised and the disciples understand more
If the Holy Spirit had not yet been sent, what would those early gatherings of believers have been like without his presence?

John 17 Jesus prays for himself, his disciples and all believers
Jesus prays for you and me (v 20)
What exactly is Jesus saying (v 24)?

John 18 Jesus is the true vine
What happens to a branch if it isn’t connected to the vine? What do you think might happen to our faith if we don’t stay connected to Jesus? There are many different ways we can stay connected or tuned in to Jesus, including talking to him through prayer, reading the Bible, spending time with people who love Jesus and care about us, listening to someone teach about Jesus’ life, helping others, listening to music, spending time outside in God’s creation, and reading books about Jesus’ life and teaching. Include some of the above in your week. Be specific about a time and place – it will help you remember to do it! Share with someone else how you like to stay connected with Jesus.
John 18 Jesus is arrested and taken before the Jewish leaders and then to Pilate. Compared to the other Gospels, John’s account puts Jesus firmly in control during his arrest and trials. Do you agree? Could the other disciple be John? If so, it seems he had access to details of the trials (v 16). Other accounts describe the Last Supper as a Passover meal. Jews were keen not to become defiled (v 28) so that they could eat the Passover meal later that day. Does this add credibility to the theory that, to allow for presentation and slaughter of the lamb, the Passover was extended two days, or do you think that some ate the meal during the daytime and some the evening before (each Jewish day is from sunset to sunset)?

John 19 Pilate has Jesus flogged, then crucified, after which Jesus is laid in a tomb. Why did Pilate have Jesus flogged (v 1)? Was it a legal requirement, an attempt to win favour with the crowd or a last ditch attempt to save him from execution? The sign above Jesus on the cross differs slightly between Gospel accounts; verse 20 gives the reason why.

John 20 The resurrected Jesus appears to his followers. Why do you think Mary didn’t recognise Jesus (v 14)? What was the significance of locked doors and what can be learned from this (v 19, v 26)? As Jews the disciples knew that only God was to be worshipped. Note what Thomas said (v 28) and how Jesus accepted his declaration.

John 21 Jesus guides the disciples to a miraculous catch of fish and reinstates Peter. Is there any reason for mentioning that 153 large fish were caught (v 11)? In verse 15 is Jesus referring to the other disciples or the fish? Verse 24 identifies the beloved disciple as the Gospel writer.

Acts 1 Jesus ascends into Heaven and Matthias is chosen to replace Judas Iscariot. Luke’s Gospel is addressed to Theophilus too; Acts is presumed to be written by the same author. Why was Jesus taken like this (vv 9-11)? How legitimate would it be to make major Church decisions in this way today (vv 21-26)?
Acts 2 The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, and Peter addresses the crowds
What is Pentecost?
Why were there so many Jews from every nation (v 5 and v 41)?
Was this part of God’s plan so that they would take the gospel back to their homelands?

Acts 3 Peter heals the crippled beggar and witnesses to onlookers
Why don’t we see more of these miracles today (vv 1-10)?
Peter and John are active in proclaiming the gospel. What about the other apostles?
Could the author of Acts have written everything down, or only what he observed or was told about?
Is the record of Peter’s speech a word for word account, or an accurate summary of his words?

Acts 4 The number of believers greatly increases
The number of male believers was already 5,000 (v 4).
Is it any wonder that Peter and John were arrested by those who had hoped Jesus’ death would be the end?
The apostles’ faithfulness to the gospel and boldness in preaching brought them hardship, but reason to thank God too.

Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira face the consequences of lying to God. The apostles are persecuted
Ananias and Sapphira (vv 1-10) both died when they lied to God.
How did the believers react? What can be learned from this incident?
Jealousy by the Jewish religious leaders (v 17) led to persecution.

Acts 6 The number of believers continues to grow
Stephen is falsely accused.
The Early Church had practical and administrative problems which needed addressing (v 1).
Jews accepted the gospel and some priests believed (v 7).
How do you interpret verse 15? Was it a permanent physical feature, a temporary one as Stephen witnessed to his faith, or something else?
Acts 7  Stephen proclaims the gospel and is stoned. Saul is introduced
Why do you think Stephen summarised Old Testament history which
Jewish leaders would have known so well?
Stephen’s final prayer (v 59) might remind you of another final prayer.
What can Stephen’s witness, prayer and death teach us?

Acts 8  Some of Philip’s ministry is described. Saul sets out to destroy the
Early Church
Does God sometimes allow evil so as to encourage good (v 4)?
What can verses 15-17 teach us about the nature of baptism, prayer
and the laying on of hands?
How do you interpret verses 39 and 40 when Philip is taken away and
then appears elsewhere?

Acts 9  The amazing story of Saul meeting Jesus
Saul, a devout Jew, knew all about Jesus, but persecuted him and later
worshipped him. Was this conversion or a calling? If conversion – from
what? If a calling – to what?
Although the Church spread through persecution, it was strengthened
by a period of peace (v 31). How might this enhance our understanding
of contemporary issues faced by the Church and individuals?

Acts 10  Peter begins to understand that the gospel is for Gentiles as
well as Jews
Peter often does things in threes (v 16)!
People heard the message, received the Holy Spirit and then were
baptised (vv 44-48). Can this tell us anything about the nature of
proclamation, salvation and baptism?
Why were the Jewish believers so surprised that Gentiles were being
saved?

Acts 11  Peter explains his actions to the Church leaders. Persecution
spread the gospel
Peter retold the story of Gentile converts; he contrasted the baptism
of the Holy Spirit with water baptism (v 16). As they had been baptised
with the Holy Spirit, was baptism with water necessary?
Acts 12 The apostle James is killed. Peter makes a miraculous escape from prison
The believers mourn the death of James and rejoice in Peter’s miraculous escape (vv 1-19). What can be learned from these contrasting outcomes? Imagine how Peter felt behind the closed door (v 14).

Acts 13 Saul is called Paul and sets out on a missionary journey with Barnabas
Paul, like Stephen, began with what his hearers already knew (vv 16-41). Why do you think that was? Can jealousy (v 45) still overpower the desire for truth?

Acts 14 Paul and Barnabas proclaim the gospel and perform miracles
Verses 8-20 give an example of how fickle people can be. Could the same happen today? Can you think of examples? Despite nearly being killed in Lystra, Paul and Barnabas return to encourage the new believers. Is there someone facing hard times who you could encourage?

Acts 15 Christian leaders met to discuss the terms for Gentile membership
Unlike Jewish converts, Gentiles became Christians without accepting the Jewish Law. The problem was not the acceptance of Gentiles, but the terms on which they joined the fellowship of believers. What would the implications have been if the final decision had gone in favour of the Jews? Are there any areas of Christianity that oblige new believers to subscribe to various rituals or practices before they are fully welcomed into the Church?

Acts 16 Paul’s missionary journeys with Silas and Timothy
The author of Acts includes himself in Paul’s travels (v 10). Did he join the journey at Troas perhaps? The simplicity and joy of the gospel (vv 31-34).
Acts 17 Paul’s missionary journey takes him to Thessalonica, Berea and Athens

Why do you think the Jews were jealous (v 5)?

How can the noble character of the Bereans (v 11) be acquired today?

At the Areopagus (v 22) Paul began his message with something familiar to the members. How could this example be used in witness today?

Acts 18 Paul encourages the churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch and Galatia

Verse 2 helps to date Paul’s travels.

News about Jews being expelled from Rome brings understanding to Paul’s letter to the Romans.

Paul was a tentmaker (v 3).

If you try to witness and are opposed (v 6), do you leave the matter with God and move on?

Paul stayed for sometime in Corinth (v 11).

Acts 19 Paul spends considerable time in Ephesus. There was resistance to the gospel

What can be learned about using the name of Jesus (vv 13-17)?

Were the people worried about their beliefs or their incomes (v 23-27)?

Acts 20 Paul continues his travels through Macedonia and Greece and revives a dead man

Paul changed his plans (v 3).

A short but amazing story (vv 7-12) demonstrating how God was using Paul powerfully.

Acts 21 Paul finally returns to Jerusalem and, after being greeted, is arrested

Compared to verse 3 in the preceding chapter, why do you think Paul was so unconcerned about the threat this time (v 13)?

Despite becoming a Christian, it is clear that Paul was still a Jew (v 24 and v 39).
Acts 22 Paul outlines his Jewish credentials
  God spoke to Paul through a trance (vv 17-21). Does he still speak in this way or was it an Early Church phenomenon?

Acts 23 Paul escapes an ambush
  Paul divided the Sanhedrin by using his knowledge of different beliefs (vv 6, 7). Did he manipulate the truth or was his statement entirely accurate?

Acts 24 Paul’s trial before Felix
  When Paul spoke about the judgement to come, Felix became afraid and decided not to hear any more (v 25). Is this a subject that puts people off the gospel today? Should we avoid the subject for fear of causing offence?

Acts 25 When tried, Paul witnesses to Festus and King Agrippa
  Compare Paul’s self-defence to the silence of Jesus at his trial. What do you make of the contrast?

Acts 26 Paul’s testimony
  Paul’s testimony shares his life experience to proclaim the gospel. What is your life testimony?

Paul’s Defence Before Agrippa

Acts 26:1-32
  Paul was sharing his testimony with King Agrippa. A testimony is a truthful retelling of something you have experienced; part of your story or journey. People who follow Jesus often tell their testimony, sharing how meeting Jesus has made a difference in their lives. It doesn’t have to be long or complicated — just true. Have a go at writing or drawing your own testimony using the questions below.
  How did you come to meet or know more about Jesus?
  How has meeting Jesus changed what you think, say or do? Is it different to before?
  Share your story with someone. Maybe someone who doesn’t yet know Jesus.
Letters are a wonderful way to communicate. How do you feel when you receive a letter, especially from someone that you care about and have not seen for a while? Write a letter to someone you care about and have not seen recently.

Reread the Bible passage and see if you can include some of the things that Paul has mentioned. Include a greeting, an encouragement or the things you love or appreciate about that person, and then share something about God with them.

Acts 27 Paul sailed for Rome and was shipwrecked
Do the author’s frequent references to ‘we’ help validate the account (v 2)? Is this chapter only useful for historic purposes or telling the story of Paul’s journeys? Is there something you can learn and apply to your life?

Acts 28 Paul survived a snakebite in Malta and finally arrived in Rome
Note how quickly people changed their minds about Paul (vv 4-6). Paul was encouraged by seeing other Christians (v 15). Are you an encourager?
Some believed the gospel and others did not (v 24). Was Paul’s ministry successful? How do you judge your success at sharing the gospel?

Romans 1 Paul writes to the Christians in Rome
Christians in Rome were predominantly Gentile, possibly because the Jews had been expelled by the emperor (v 13). Paul makes a clear statement to the Gentile Christians about their place in the salvation story and reminds them that they are not greater than the Messianic Jews (v 16).
What are the ‘unnatural’ and ‘shameful’ acts that Paul is writing about in verses 26 and 27? Is it possible that such acts are no longer wrong in God’s eyes? Did Paul write into a certain context that is no longer applicable to our society, or are these verses we seldom consider because of their consequences?

Romans 2 Paul writes to Gentile Christians about God’s judgement and the Law
Jew and Gentile were saved through Christ and judged by the same measure (vv 9-11).
How could Paul’s teaching be applied to our understanding (vv 28, 29)?

Romans 3 God’s faithfulness and our righteousness through faith
Do the Ten Commandments reveal our need for forgiveness (v 20)? Further evidence for the divinity of Jesus (vv 23, 24).
Romans 4 Justification comes only by faith
Paul explained how Abraham was justified by faith. Why was this explanation so important to Paul? What is its relevance today?

Romans 5 Through Adam we are sinners but through Jesus we are forgiven
Does this concur with your experience (vv 3, 4)?
Paul spoke about Adam as though he was a real, historical person in the same way that Moses was (vv 12-14). How might this be viewed by those who doubt the reality, truth and historical accuracy of the Bible’s account of creation?

Romans 6 Slaves to righteousness instead of slaves to sin
Does this chapter help explain the link between salvation and holiness? Can someone be saved without pursuing holiness?

Romans 7 Paul struggled with sin
Can you sympathise with Paul’s predicament (vv 15-20)?

Romans 8 There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus
Do you understand and share Paul’s sense of the ‘inward groaning’ (v 23)?
Do you have times when you wish to pray but words fail you (vv 26, 27)? How reassuring are these verses?
How do you interpret these words of predestination (vv 29, 30)? Was Paul referring to believers who had already died? Was he talking about the Jews or Christians in general? Is this an argument for predestination for each individual?

Romans 8:31-39
It is pretty cool to think that nothing – yes, nothing – can separate us from God’s love.
Using the strongest glue you can find, stick two items together – one representing you and the other representing God and his love. Place the glued items somewhere you will see them throughout the week to remind you that: ‘Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’
Children's Challenge

Anyone can be saved

Romans 10:5-17
Today’s passage has some really important messages in it for each of us to remember. Read the verses a couple of times. Highlight or underline the words or phrases that you think are important. Share the parts that you think are important with someone else in your family or at your church. Write out one verse that you can decorate and place it somewhere you will see and be reminded of it this week.

Romans 9 Paul explains God’s sovereignty in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles
The New International Version of the Bible has footnotes suggesting other ways of phrasing verse 5. What is the difference between them and why do you think the translators preferred to write it in this way? Do you know people, groups or churches who rely more on ‘good works’ to be saved rather than faith in Jesus (vv 30-33)?

Romans 10 ’Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ (v 13)
Is there anyone you know who needs to hear the gospel (vv 14, 15)? Is there any reason why you couldn’t be used by God to tell someone the good news?

Romans 11 The remnant of Israel
Do you believe God has replaced his relationship with Israel with that of the Church, or will the Jews be ‘grafted back’ into a relationship with God through belief in Jesus Christ (vv 11-27)?
Is Christianity rooted in Judaism?
What is the primary doctrinal difference between a Jew and a Christian?

Romans 12 Hate what is evil; cling to what is good
What is ‘the pattern of this world’ (v 2)?
How do you interpret verse 11? Do you ever find yourself lacking in zeal?

Romans 13 Love is the fulfilment of the Law
Should we submit to the authorities even when we disagree with them (vv 1-7)?
Do you think verse 8 gives financial as well as practical and spiritual advice?
Romans 14 Paul urges consideration of others
What had the believers in Corinth been struggling with (vv 1-4)?
Is there a danger of over-simplifying this teaching?
What sort of days do you keep special (v 5)? Does it matter on what day the Sabbath is kept (Exodus 20:8)? Do you find this chapter liberating?

Romans 15 Christians should accept one another
Can unity be expressed through diversity (vv 5-7)? What is the difference between unity and uniformity?

Romans 16 Paul sends final greetings and warns against false teaching
What advice did Paul give to this church regarding false teachers (v17)? Is this advice something that will help or hinder the teaching in Romans chapter 15? Should unity and acceptance be upheld at all costs – including that of doctrine and truth? Or does upholding unity sometimes entail creating a distance between truth and false teaching?

1 Corinthians 1 Paul writes a prelude to the Church in Corinth
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is included in this greeting (v2).
Division in the church seemed to be a frequent problem. Did Paul try to bring unity through sound teaching (vv 10-12)? Why did Paul consider water baptism not part of his ministry in preaching the gospel (v 17)?

1 Corinthians 2 God’s wisdom revealed
In what way is the gospel easier for the intellectually humble to accept than it is for the intellectually proud?
How is God’s wisdom superior to any human wisdom?
1 Corinthians 3  Paul urges unity and humility within the Church
Is there any modern-day equivalent to the problem Paul is speaking of (vv 1-5)? Is there a danger of elevating the words of some great Christian leaders and neglecting what the Bible says?
What is ‘the Day’ (v 13)? What ‘work’ is Paul talking about and what ‘fire’?
What is the ‘reward’ (vv 14, 15)?

1 Corinthians 4  Paul warns against arrogance
What are ‘the mysteries God has revealed’ (v 1)?
Is Paul being sarcastic (v 10)?

1 Corinthians 5  The Church is advised to deal with internal affairs
What does ‘put out of your fellowship’ mean (v 2)? Do you think this means not to attend a particular church any more, or not to associate with a person (v 11)?
Can this act of discipline be used as a guideline for similar problems within the Church today (vv 1-5)?
Are there occasions to implement judgement inside the Church (vv 11, 12)?

1 Corinthians 6  Paul tells the church to settle disputes internally
Should disputes between believers be taken to non-Christian judges or is this passage trying to help its readers see a bigger picture (vv 1-6)?
How do you interpret verses 9 and 10? Are any of the things mentioned acceptable in the Church today? Is it legitimate to ‘pick-and-mix’ theology based on social acceptability?
Can this teaching (vv 19, 20) be expanded to include the need to ‘honour God with your bodies’ with regard to drugs, exercise, eating and sleeping?

1 Corinthians 7  Paul differentiates between his advice and the Lord’s
How would you summarise this chapter?
1 Corinthians 8 Knowledge does not surpass love and concern for others
What do you think verse 2 means?
Would you agree that the chapter talks about keeping your conscience clear and helping others do the same?
Is there anything you do or don’t do as a matter of conscience rather than obedience?

1 Corinthians 9 Preaching the gospel and receiving a living
What do you think caused Paul to write these questions and statements (vv 3-12)?
How do verses 19-22 and 24-27 apply to you?

1 Corinthians 10 Historic warnings, freedom and responsibility
Subjects already mentioned and which come up later suggest there may have been a number of Jews in the Church (v 1).
Can you think of a time when you felt tempted beyond your control (v 13)? Did God provide you with a way out?
Can you think of instances when you have the right to do anything but not everything is beneficial (v 23)?

1 Corinthians 11 Instructions on worship and the Lord’s Supper
Is it possible that Paul is referring to his Judaic traditions rather than setting rules for Gentile churches (v 2)?
Paul allowed women to hold positions of authority in the Church (v 5).

1 Corinthians 12 Spiritual gifts and their interdependence
Can you identify nine gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul lists by way of example (vv 8-10)? How would you summarise the teaching of Paul in this chapter?
1 Corinthians 13 In ‘the love chapter’, Paul describes the greatest spiritual gift

Think of the person who you are closest to. Does your love for them match this definition (vv 4-7)?
What do we ‘know in part’ (vv 9-12)?

1 Corinthians 14 Paul talks about various gifts and the need for orderly worship

The gifts of preaching and speaking in tongues – which is greater (vv 1-25)?
Have you ever met someone (or a group) who has elevated the gift of speaking in tongues?
Is speaking in tongues wrong? If you speak in tongues is it helpful to you? What about others?
What would your reaction be if someone started speaking in tongues during Sunday morning worship?
What would your expectations of the church leader be in such a situation (v 39)?

1 Corinthians 15 This chapter describes the importance of the Resurrection

How important is belief in the Resurrection to the rest of your faith (vv 12-19)?
Try to imagine what life would be like if you didn’t believe in the Resurrection.
‘We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed’ (vv 51-53). What do you think this means?

1 Corinthians 16 Paul makes some personal requests and final greetings

The collections were to be made in keeping with personal income (v 2).
Is your offering in keeping with your income? How do you know?
What do you make of verse 22?

2 Corinthians 1 Paul writes again to the Church in Corinth with a change of plans

Why do you think Paul wanted to inform the readers of his troubles (v 8)?
Do prayers cause God to act in ways that he wouldn’t otherwise (v 11)?
2 Corinthians 2 Paul describes Christians as ‘an aroma of Christ’
To those who want to hear the gospel and to those who don’t, are you aware of your spiritual ‘smell’ (v 15)?

2 Corinthians Lives that reflect the glory of the Lord
If your life does not reflect the Lord’s glory, what impact could that have upon others (v 18)?

2 Corinthians 4 ‘We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen’
Do you believe you will be resurrected? On what do you base your belief (v 14)?
How can you fix your eyes of what is unseen (v 18)?

2 Corinthians 5 God reconciles himself to the world through Christ
In what ways can our present bodies be compared to tents (vv 1-4)?
Although salvation may be by faith alone, does verse 10 indicate that works will also be judged?
Are you Christ’s ambassador with the message of being reconciled to him (v 20)?

2 Corinthians 6 ‘What fellowship can light have with darkness?’ (v 14)
Who is it that Paul is telling Christians not to have fellowship with, and in what context – marriage, friendship (vv 14-18)? Does he mean in the Church or interfaith?

2 Corinthians 5:11-21
Look at verse 17 and read it a couple of times. Wow, isn’t it amazing that because of Jesus we get to be a new person or, as some translations say, a ‘new creation’?

With some clay, plasticine, play dough or other sort of modelling clay, create yourself as a ‘new creation’.
Place your model somewhere to remind you that because Jesus died for us we are made clean and new – that’s right, a new creation!
2 Corinthians 7 Paul is encouraged by the response to his previous letter
What sort of things today may have the ability to ‘contaminate body and spirit’ in your life (v 1)?
How would you explain the difference between ‘godly sorrow’ and ‘worldly sorrow’ (v 10)?

2 Corinthians 8 The Church in Corinth is urged to excel in the grace of giving
With regard to your financial giving, what does verse 12 mean?
Who is this ‘brother’ (v 18)? Has Paul deliberately not named him and, if so, why?

2 Corinthians 9 God loves a cheerful giver
An important verse in what can sometimes be a sensitive topic – money (v 7)!
How much do you give? Do you give cheerfully or reluctantly? Do you reassess your giving from time to time? Does your giving reflect the importance you attach to God’s work?
This verse implies that God is not only aware of how much you give but also your attitude towards giving. Do you give because it’s expected, needed, instructed, out of obedience – or something of each?

2 Corinthians 10 Paul defends his ministry
Have you ever stopped and taken time to seriously think about the Lord’s commendation for you (v 18)?

2 Corinthians 11 Paul warns the church about false teachers
What does the term ‘angels of light’ in verse 14 mean (v 1-15)?
Is it possible that there are people ‘masquerading’ as Christian teachers and preachers in your community who are actually ‘false apostles’ and ‘deceitful workers’? If so, what can you do to guard against this, protect yourself and proclaim the truth?
2 Corinthians 12 Paul talks about the ‘thorn in his flesh’ and God’s grace

Paul thinks it is possible for a person to be transported (by God) from earth to Heaven (vv 1-4). Is this a helpful affirmation of the plausibility of a future rapture of the Church?
Do you have any idea what Paul’s thorn in the flesh might be (v 7)?
Why was Paul given this thorn in the flesh? Could this be a reason why sometimes we have permanent irritations or obstacles in our lives?

2 Corinthians 13 Paul gives final warnings, and then greetings

Sound advice for Christians – aim for perfection; listen to Scripture’s appeal; be of one mind; live in peace (v 11).

Galatians 1 The churches in Galatia are accused of entertaining false doctrine

These sound like strong words, perhaps reflecting their importance (vv 6-9). Can we afford to take them any more lightly 2,000 years later?

Galatians 2 Gentiles should not have to follow Jewish customs

Is this the same revelation that Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 (vv 1, 2)?
Does knowing the flaws of some of the great apostles help add to Scripture’s reliability and authenticity (vv 11-14)?

Galatians 3 Salvation comes by faith, not through observing the law

Do you know people who say they hope they are good enough to be saved (to get to Heaven)?
Do you ever take time to consider that God loves you regardless of how faithful and obedient you are?
Is it tempting to think that salvation can be earned through being good Christians?
Why is it important to recognise that our efforts cannot help earn our salvation?
 Salvation comes by grace through faith alone. Although this is true, can it be a difficult doctrine to accept?
Galatians 4 Paul is concerned for the Galatians
Is this further evidence that the thorn in the flesh referred to in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 was his bad eyesight (v 15)? Could this be a result of being blinded when first called (see Acts chapter 9)?
Paul talks about the reality of backsliding – losing the joy of holiness and turning away from salvation (vv 8-20). Is it possible for us to backslide today?

Galatians 5 Paul speaks about freedom in Christ
The gospel of Christ is based on being saved by grace through faith in Jesus (vv 1-6). Circumcision was a sign of turning away from faith and relying on the Jewish law instead. Paul argues that such rituals are unnecessary. Are there any rituals today that we may be tempted to feel are necessary to being a Christian?
Can you memorise the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit which we should each be cultivating in our lives (vv 22, 23)?

Galatians 6 ‘God cannot be mocked’
Is verse 11 further evidence that Paul’s eyesight was particularly bad (see also Galatians 4:15)?
Do you find verses 7-9 reassuring when considering justice within the world? Do you think we ‘reap what we sow’ immediately, in God’s time, or in eternity?

Ephesians 1 Paul gives thanks to God for the Ephesian believers
In verse 13 Paul says we have the Holy Spirit and in verse 17 he is praying for the Spirit to be given. How would you reconcile these verses?
In what sense is the Church the ‘Body’ of Christ (vv 22, 23)?

Ephesians 2 Saved by grace, not by works
How are we saved (v 8)?
Do rituals, ceremonies, good deeds, church attendance and loyalty to corps sections save us (v 9)?
As Christians with the promise of eternal life through faith in Christ, can we sit back and not worry about our behaviour (v 10)?
Ephesians 3 Through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence (v 12)
To what extent do we believe this, practise it, and tell others about it?

Ephesians 4 Paul speaks about unity in the Body of Christ
What is the 'one baptism' (vv 4, 5)? Is it more about a united confession of our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rather than the means by which that baptism is made?
In what way have you grown in your knowledge and understanding of God and Scripture in the past year (vv 11-16)?
Are there any elements here that need to be eradicated from your life (vv 29-32)?

Ephesians 5 A short guide for holy living and a call for mutual respect within marriage
Paul continues to describe requirements for living in holiness (vv 1-7). Can we use this teaching to help clean up our own behaviour? Or does it describe things that we try to justify?
Some people use this passage (vv 21-33) to claim that Paul's teaching on marriage is sexist. Do you agree or is this an abuse of the text?
Does the text command mutual love and respect within marriage?

Ephesians 6 Paul describes the spiritual armour needed for spiritual warfare
Is there a devil (vv 10-18)? If there is, does he have power over us?
Why are we given 'armour' to wear? When was the last time that you deliberately checked your spiritual armour?
Who gives Paul the words to witness (v 19)?

Philippians 1 Paul commends the Church at Philippi for their joy and prayers
Do you understand Paul's feelings expressed in verse 21?
Have you ever had to stand up for the gospel in the face of opposition (v 27)? If so, what did you do? If not, what would you do?
Philippians 2 ‘Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus’ (v 5)
Characteristics of holiness are listed in this chapter. How do you measure up?

Philippians 3 Paul encourages the Church to press on in holiness
Does it sound like living as a Christian is easy or something that needs working at (vv 13, 14)?
Was Paul teaching a Rapture theology (vv 20, 21)? (Dead and living Christians will be taken to Heaven at a time of God’s choosing.)

Philippians 4 The letter ends with exhortations, thanks and final greetings
How is it possible to ‘rejoice in the Lord always’ (v 4)?
What is the link between ‘anxious’ (v 6) and ‘peace’ (v 7)?

Colossians 1 Paul proclaims the supremacy of Jesus Christ
Do verses 15-20 confirm that Jesus is God made flesh?
Who are ‘the Lord’s people’ (v 26)?

Colossians 2 Paul makes known the mystery of God
The word ‘sacrament’ comes from the Latin sacramentum which was used to translate the Greek word mysterion from which we derive ‘mystery’ (v 2). What is the mystery of God according to Paul?
If we have accepted Jesus into our lives as Lord and Saviour, is it fair then to say that our lives should be sacramental as we reflect the likeness of Christ (the mystery of God)?
How deep and rooted is your faith? Are you attracted by alternative philosophies and beliefs (vv 7, 8)?
Colossians 3
Paul gives the Christians in Colossae guidelines for holiness
How practical or relevant are these words (vv 18-21)? Are they only applicable to when the letter was written?
What would be the danger of taking these verses literally and without consideration to context, then and now?
Can a wife submit to her husband 'as is fitting in the Lord' (v 18), and in a way that is not an example of mere sexism?
Is it possible that the combination of mutual submission and love could actually be a proposal for equality (vv 18, 19)?

Colossians 4
Paul ends the letter with further instructions and final greetings
Consider what interaction you may have with 'outsiders' (vv 5, 6). In what way can your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt?

1 Thessalonians 1
Paul, Silas and Timothy write their first letter to the Church in Thessalonica
The people were waiting for 'Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath' (v 10).

1 Thessalonians 2
Paul reminds the church of his last visit and his eagerness to visit again
What is 'the word of God' (v 13)?
Do you think Paul believed that Satan is real (v 18)?
What do you believe, and why?

1 Thessalonians 3
Paul congratulates the Thessalonians for their progress
Who is 'the tempter' (v 5)?
What would be your weaknesses if the tempter were to attack you?
How can you guard against this?
For a team to work well, everyone has to contribute. Would it be fair if one or two members of a team did all the work, while others did none? There are important things that each of us need to do every week, such as spend time with family, housework, going to school and even some playtime. Sometimes we spend our time doing things that aren’t helpful or important. Think about your week and discuss in your family or small group:

- Some of the important things that need to happen each week in your family.
- How do you help get these important things done?
- What would happen if everyone stopped doing their part?
- This week, pay attention to all the different ways members of your family play their part. Think of a way to encourage them (you could give them a sticker, or write a thank-you note, or let them know what a great job you think they are doing).

1 Thessalonians 4 Paul reminds the Thessalonians about the Resurrection and the Rapture

Why do you think Paul refers to the dead as those who ‘sleep’ (v 13)? ‘According to the Lord’s word’ (v 15). Is there any record of this? If not, can we presume that Jesus provided teaching on the Resurrection that is not recorded?

Are we led to believe that the ‘dead in Christ’ have already been resurrected and are living in Heaven, or is this a future event (vv 13-16)?

The Latin word for being ‘caught up’ is raptus, which is where the word ‘rapture’ comes from, when talking about our resurrection and being taken to Heaven (v 17).

What are the similarities between verses 13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52? Some people believe that there will be a future event when God will resurrect those who have died trusting in Christ and take them to Heaven. This will be accompanied by the rapture of living believers into Heaven. Is there any other way of interpreting these verses?

1 Thessalonians 5 The timing of the Day of the Lord is unknown; we are to be ready

What do you think the ‘day of the Lord’ in verse 2 refers to? Sunday, the Rapture, the Resurrection, the second coming of Christ, or the last days before God’s final judgement?

2 Thessalonians 1 Paul gives thanks for the faith of his readers

Is your love for others ‘increasing’ (v 3)?

2 Thessalonians 2 Paul talks about a future ‘lawless one’ who will oppose God (vv 1-12)

Do the ‘man of lawlessness’ (v 3) and the ‘lawless one’ (v 8) appear to be a literal person or a vague concept or symbol?

What is ‘the truth’ to which Paul is referring (v 13)?

2 Thessalonians 3 Paul asks for prayer and warns against idleness

Why do you think Paul wrote this (v 6)? ‘Never tire of doing what is good’ (v 13)?

What is Paul’s advice to those who do not follow his teaching and why does he suggest it (v 15)?
1 Timothy 1 Paul encourages Timothy to oppose false teachers
If Timothy is being given authority to ‘command certain people not to teach false doctrines’ (v 3), does this mean that there was false teaching actually within the Church?
Is it possible for there to be teachers of false doctrines in the Church today? If so, are we to ignore it or confront it?
Is there any act mentioned in this list (vv 9-11) which you would not consider to be a sin? If so, why?
Paul claims that he is a sinner saved through Christ (vv 15-17). If he is the ‘worst’ and yet can be saved, what does this tell us about the other sins mentioned in verses 9-11?

1 Timothy 2 Timothy receives instructions on attitudes to worship
Is Paul demonstrating sexism or are these instructions (vv 11-15) based on Jewish traditions and order in worship? Can these verses be reconciled to modern worship?
Is Paul referring to the fact that Eve was an ancestor of Jesus Christ (v 15)?

1 Timothy 3 Instructions for choosing overseers and deacons
Do verses 1-13 describe you?

1 Timothy 4 Timothy is encouraged to ‘watch his life and doctrine closely’ (v 16)
Paul tells Timothy to train himself spiritually, just as he would physically (vv 7, 8). How is your spiritual ‘fitness’? Has your stamina and strength improved in the past 12 months?
Do you ever dismiss the advice and teaching of those younger than you? What does verse 12 say?
Could your ‘life and doctrine’ be rephrased as ‘holiness and belief’ (v 16)?
Why does Paul think doctrine is so important? Is it important to you?

1 Timothy 5 Final instructions on how to treat those within the fellowship of believers
Do verses 1 and 2 accurately reflect your attitude to others?
How high a priority is the spiritual, physical and emotional welfare of your family and relatives (v 8)?

1 Timothy 4:6-12
It is sometimes easy to think that because you are young, what you do and say doesn’t matter. But Paul encourages Timothy, even though he is young, to set a good example for others and to teach them about God. You are never too young to be friends with Jesus or to share what you know about him with others - just like Timothy did!
On a sheet of paper, write out verse 12 in large letters.
Cut the paper up into about eight pieces. Mix up the pieces and put them back together in order – try to do it from memory.
You might like to do this with someone else helping you, or play a game to see who can do it the fastest.

‘Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity’ (1 Timothy 4:12).
DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE LORD

2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14
Paul is such an encouragement to Timothy as he develops as a leader. I wonder who are the people that encourage you, pray for you and build you up. Take sometime to think about who these people are and thank God for them. Paul encouraged Timothy to rely on the Holy Spirit: ‘The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline’ (2 Timothy 1:7).

This is a powerful and important verse to remember. You might like to make up some actions to help you remember it. Then share it with those of your family or special friends who encourage you, pray for you and build you up.

1 Timothy 6
Paul gives instructions about false teachers and the love of money
Replace ‘master’ with ‘employer’ and ‘slave’ with ‘employee’ and see if these instructions (vv 1, 2) can be applied to everyday Western working life.
Have there been times when you have been tempted to focus more on money and possessions than on being faithfully obedient to God (v 10)?
What do verses 17-19 mean and how could you apply them to your life?

2 Timothy 1
Paul encourages Timothy to remain loyal and steadfast in the faith
Timothy appears to be a third-generation Christian, but his own faith had to be ‘sincere’ (v 3). Is your faith built on a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ or is your faith based on keeping up a family tradition?
Did you know that the Holy Spirit lives in us and guides us (v 14)? How can we ask for his help?

2 Timothy 2
Timothy is told to oppose those who have ‘departed from the truth’ (v 18)
First the ‘soldier’, then the ‘athlete’ and then the ‘farmer’ (vv 3-7); what lessons do you think Paul is trying to teach?
Paul condemns those who claim that the resurrection had already taken place (v 18). What can we learn from this? How might this verse help substantiate the belief in a future rapture of the Church?

2 Timothy 3
The contrast is made between holiness and selfishness
Do you know anyone who is ‘always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth’ (v 7)?
Paul appears to have been referring in the preceding chapters to ‘teachers’ (faith-related) (v 8). Does this surprise you?
How important and relevant do you think verses 16 and 17 will be for you and your faith in the coming year?

2 Timothy 4
Paul emphasises the importance of sound doctrine
Once again Paul implies that the judgement of the dead will be a future event (v 1). What can we learn from this?
Titus 1 Paul writes to Titus with instructions to maintain sound doctrinal teaching
Regardless of whether you consider yourself an ‘elder’ or not – could this passage (vv 6-9) describe you?
In what way do you think Titus was expected to ‘silence’ the false teachers (v 11)?

Titus 2 Further instructions on teaching
Is this chapter applicable to all Christians, or just for teachers like Titus?
Can we legitimately substitute the words ‘master’ and ‘slave’ with ‘employer’ and ‘employee’ (vv 9, 10)?

Titus 3 We are saved by faith, but should devote ourselves to doing good
Is it fair to say that holiness should be a by-product of salvation, or is it a pre-condition for salvation, or neither?
Does verse 10 sound harsh or sensible?

Philemon Paul pleads with Philemon to take back and forgive Onesimus
Paul is obviously using a play on words here – Onesimus means ‘useful’ (vv 10, 11). Paul describes him as once useless and now useful to Philemon. What might this teach us about the rest of his letters? Can there be subtleties that are missing?

Hebrews 1 The superiority and divinity of Jesus Christ
Jesus is the ‘exact representation of his [God’s] being’ (v 3) – what do you think this means?
This first chapter of Hebrews seems to emphasise the superiority of Jesus Christ to prophets and angels. Why do you think the author may have wanted to do this?
In what way is the style of these first paragraphs different from the letters we know Paul wrote?
Hebrews 2 The author warns his readers to pay careful attention to sound teaching

Should the wonders and signs we read about through Acts be seen as short-term aids that helped Christianity get started or are they miracles we should expect to continue seeing (v 4)?

Does the author indicate that he believes the devil is real or merely symbolic of evil (vv 14, 15)?

Why is it important to recognise that Jesus was fully human?

Hebrews 3 The Jewish readers are warned against unbelief

The whole chapter seems to be a warning against unbelief. Why do you think the author had become so concerned about this?

Hebrews 4 All who come to God through trusting Jesus will enter a Sabbath-rest

Is the Sabbath-rest when we get to Heaven or does it start from the moment we accept God’s gift of salvation (vv 1-13)?

Despite being fully human and being tempted as we are, Jesus did not sin (v 15). Could this be possible without the belief (see Romans 3:23) that he was also fully divine?

Hebrews 5 An expectation to move from being infant to mature believers

Was the author more concerned about the potential unbelief of some readers or about the possibility that they were no longer even trying to understand (v 11)?

Would you agree that the author is suggesting the need to go beyond the fundamentals of their faith (vv 12-14)?

Would you describe your spiritual life and faith as being in infancy or as mature?

How has your faith developed in the past year?

Hebrews 6 The author lists some of the ‘elementary teachings’ we are to go beyond

Would you have considered these subjects to be classed as ‘elementary teachings’ (vv 1-3)?

How familiar are you with these subjects?

‘The resurrection of the dead’ is classed as an elementary teaching (v 2). Should our resurrection be a more familiar topic in meetings?
Wow! What a lot of stories about people who had great faith in God. Hearing stories like these can strengthen and encourage our own faith. You might like to look more closely at one of these stories, then share with your family or friends at church what some of the amazing things were that happened because of these peoples' faith:

- The fall of Jericho – Joshua 5:13–6:27
- David and Goliath – 1 Samuel chapter 17
- Daniel in the lions' den – Daniel chapter 6

How did Joshua, David and Daniel show faith in God?
The tongue
James 3:1–12
This passage is a great reminder for us about the words we use every day. Are they building someone up, encouraging them and showing love, or are they causing someone to feel hurt or upset, even doing damage to someone else?
Go outside and find a small hill or incline that you can roll something – such as a stone or ball – down.
Think about the words that you speak – once they are spoken you cannot take them back. It’s a bit like the stone or ball that you roll down the hill – once it starts, it is hard to stop.
Take the rock or ball and place it next to your bed this week as a reminder to think carefully about the words that you use. You might even like to read the letter from James again.

Hebrews 12 ‘And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us’ (v 1)
Does the author make it sound like our spiritual journey is a sprint or a marathon (vv 1-3)?
In what ways can you liken your Christian journey to a race of perseverance?
How can we recognise what is God’s ‘discipline’ and what is not (vv 4-13)?

Hebrews 13 ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever’ (v 8)
How are we to interpret verse 2?
Is it possible that some of our encounters with strangers have actually been with angels?
If you take verse 2 literally, what do you think would be the purpose of such encounters?
How would you use verse 8 to counter the claim that the God of the Old Testament was wrathful, but the God of the New Testament is loving?

James 1 James writes to Christian Jews who were scattered by persecution
Who is this letter primarily addressed to (v 1)? What were their circumstances and how should that affect our interpretation and use of it?
How can we ensure that we allow reading the Bible to transform us (vv 22-25)?

James 2 James explains the link between having faith and being obedient
According to this principle (v 10), is there anyone who has not once broken God’s law?
Is James teaching that salvation is based on faith plus works, or is he saying that a result of our faith should be good deeds (vv 14-26)?
Are these verses an attempt to counter those who took their free salvation too far and thought that actions don’t matter?

James 3 James warns about the power of the tongue for good and evil
The power of the tongue is sometimes underestimated (vv 1-12); have you tamed yours?
What circumstances can lead you to lose control over your tongue?
If one fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, how can we use this knowledge to control the tongue?
James 4 ‘Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (v 7)
How do you understand verse 6?
How can we submit ourselves to God? Would you say James believes in a literal devil (v 7)? If so, how can we resist him?
What is the essence of the teaching James is giving through verse 15?
How is it relevant to you and your plans?

James 5 Final words of challenge and encouragement to the readers
How patient are you regarding our Lord’s return? Has your patience run out so that you no longer care (vv 7, 8)?
Are you ever guilty of grumbling against another Christian brother or sister (v 9)?

1 Peter 1 Peter begins with praise to God for a living hope
What’s the difference between foreknowledge and predestination (v 2)?
How does Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead give living hope (v 3)?
Have you been ‘born again’ (v 23)?

1 Peter 2 Peter calls Christians to live godly lives in a pagan society
Verse 1 may seem obvious for Christians to do, but should it be a routine check?
In what way is Jesus both the cornerstone for some, yet also the stumbling block for others (vv 7, 8)?

1 Peter 3 Some teaching for living holy lives
What do you think Peter meant when talking about ‘giving way to fear’ (vv 1-6)?
How is it possible to be like-minded (v 8)?
Are you prepared (v 15)?
What is baptism (v 21)?
1 Peter 4 Living for God
Did those who died before Christ’s resurrection hear about the gospel (v 6)?
What gifts have you been given that can be used for service (v 10)?
Have you suffered in some way because you are a Christian? If so, what does verse 16 teach?

1 Peter 5 Peter addresses the elders and sends final greetings
Verse 7 may be harder to implement than it sounds. Do you believe it?
Do you think Peter believes in a literal devil (v 8)?

2 Peter 1 Peter starts the letter with a reminder of the characteristic results of faith
The prescription to avoid being short-sighted Christians (vv 5-8)
Why do you think Peter calls his body a ‘tent’ (v 13)?
Is Peter referring to Jesus’ transfiguration (v 18)?

2 Peter 2 False teachers and their destruction
How can we prevent ourselves from falling victim to false teaching?
What do you make of verses 20 and 21? What do they teach us about God’s judgement?

2 Peter 3 The need to be patient, watchful and ready for the day of the Lord
Do you know people who say these things or assume that there will be no future intervention and judgement by God (vv 3, 4)?
What is the importance of verses 15 and 16, where Peter describes Paul’s letters as being among the ‘other Scriptures’?
**1 John 1** John writes to proclaim the Word of life

Why is verse 1 so important for the authority of what follows?
Do you think John means that we should confess individual sins, confess that we are sinners, or both (v 9)?
Is John persuading us to confess to each other, to a spiritual leader, or directly to God?

**1 John 2** The link between faith and obedience, and a warning against false teachers

Is it possible to love the world and God at the same time (vv 15-17)?
How does verse 23 sit with the theory that all religions worship the same God?

**1 John 3** God's love for us should result in love for each other

Do you think John believes that the devil literally exists (v 8)? What are the implications of your answer?
Is it possible to have belief without action (v 18)?
How does verse 23 compare to Matthew 22:36-40?

**1 John 4** God is love. We love because he first loved us (verses 16, 19)

Is your church a worshipping community where everyone loves one another (verses 7 and 21)?
Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ?
What is the fear John is speaking about (v 18)?

**1 John 5** Obedience to God demonstrates our love for him

In what way is Christianity both inclusive and exclusive (v 12)?
‘All wrongdoing is sin’ (v 17) – is this the best definition of sin for the modern world?

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**Children's Challenge**

**Love and Forgiveness**

This passage reminds us that John had been close to Jesus – he had walked with him and experienced life and all that happened with him. A message is always more powerful when the person communicating it has experienced it for themselves. Isn't it encouraging that John is excited about sharing the good news with others?

Here is an important promise that we need to remember about God's love and grace to us:

‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins’ (1 John 1:9).

Write out this verse, decorate it and place it somewhere you can be regularly reminded of it, or work with someone in your family or a friend to memorise it so that it will stay in your heart.
WEEK 48
Commencing 30 November

CHILDREN’S CHALLENGE

WARNINGS TO BE STRONG

JUDE vv 17–25
Do you know people who make fun of God and those who follow him? It can be difficult to be strong against those who might bully us because of who and what we believe in. We need to be ready for this. If you were going to enter a race, you would do some training to build up the muscles in your legs. If you were going to do manual work, you might do some weight training to build strength in your body. What might you do to prepare to stand up against those who make fun of you for following Jesus? What might you do to help build up your faith and courage? Talk to people in your family or at church about what they do to help them be strong in their faith. Remember the verse below. There might be other Scripture verses you can find that can help: ‘Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go’ (Joshua 1:9).

2 John John warns against the teaching of a false doctrine and urges Christian love
Who do you think the ‘lady’ is to whom John is writing (vv 1, 5) – a person, a church?
Who do you think the ‘sister’ is (v 13)?
Why would John be worried about some people teaching that Jesus never actually came ‘in the flesh’ (v 7)?

3 John A personal letter of commendation and encouragement from John to Gaius
Why do you think this means so much to John (v 4)?
Why do you think John kept this letter so short (vv 13, 14)?

Jude Jude felt compelled to write (v 3)
Can you see how easy it could be to ‘pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality’ (v 4)?
Are we merciful to those who doubt (v 22)?
In what way can we save people by ‘snatching them from the fire’ (v 23)?

Revelation 1 The revelation given to John as a prophecy for us to take to heart (vv 1-3)
Where did the book of Revelation come from (v 1)?
Does verse 3 provide an extra incentive to try and get to grips with this book?
Do you believe that Jesus will come again (vv 4-8)?
Do you think of Jesus as the suffering Messiah, or as the King of kings (vv 12-18)?

Revelation 2 John is told to write messages to the angels of different churches
As you read through the messages to these churches, see if you recognise their description as a church you belong to, or know of, or a description of yourself.
Revelation 3 John is told to write specific messages to three more churches
Some scholars think these seven messages were written for the geographical churches at the time; others believe the messages are to the varied forms which the Church has taken over the past 2,000 years; others consider them to be words of challenge or comfort to churches today. What do you think?
Why does Jesus ‘stand at the door and knock’ (v 20)?

Revelation 4 John is taken for a glimpse of Heaven
John is told he would be shown what must take place ‘after this’ (v 1).
After what?
Is John being told about things that are yet to come?
It’s not often we’re given such a vivid glimpse into Heaven; how does reading this chapter make you feel?

Revelation 5 ‘The Lamb, who was slain’ (v 12) is worshipped at God’s throne
Why do you think John was so upset by this (v 4)?
Who is the Lamb (vv 6-14)?

Revelation 6 Warnings, judgements and God’s wrath is foreseen
Why would God allow such things to happen to the earth and its inhabitants?
Compared to the word ‘church’ or ‘churches’ being mentioned frequently in the first three chapters, why do you think that in chapters 6-19 – where God’s wrath is described – the Church is not mentioned at all?
Of what significance is it that at the point where these words disappear from the book, John gets called up to Heaven (4:1)?

Revelation 7 ‘The great tribulation’
Can you think of any religious organisation that attaches significance to the number 144,000 (v 4)?
If someone claims to be one of the 144,000, is it reasonable to presume that they are Jewish (vv 5-8)?
Children's Challenge

The seventh trumpet

Revelation 11:15-19
Who does the kingdom of this world belong to? Yes: Jesus – and he will rule for ever and ever! How fantastic is that? This passage reminds us of that but also looks at the end of the world – when Jesus is back in charge – and how there will be a time of judgement. Have you been judged for something you have done – perhaps a sport that you play, something you have created, or a test or challenge you have completed? There will be certain guidelines to be met in order to complete a specific task or challenge, and you will be judged on them. When we are followers of Jesus, there are certain guidelines that God wants us to follow in how we think, speak, act and connect with him. One day we will be judged on them. Look at Matthew 25:31-46, which gives a good picture of what this might look like. Don’t forget that Jesus is in charge and will rule for ever and ever!

Revelation 8 The opening of the seventh seal and the sounding of the first four trumpets
The time frame of ‘half an hour’ seems very specific (v 1). Was this prophecy symbolic or was it to be taken literally? Why do you think the number seven occurs rather frequently?

Revelation 9 The fifth and sixth trumpets
Descriptions in this chapter are very dramatic. Verses 20 and 21 may help explain the reason behind it all and what these events attempt to achieve. What do you think?

Revelation 10 ‘Prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings’
Does verse 11 help us to know how to interpret Revelation? Was it just for early Christians or has it a wider relevance? Is it history or prophecy?

Revelation 11 John is shown two witnesses who will testify, be killed and raised to life
Do these witnesses sound like people or prophets, or do you think they symbolise something else (vv 3-12)? If they are real people, does verse 12 act as further evidence of the plausibility of the Rapture?

Revelation 12 Satan knows his time is running out as he attacks those who trust in Jesus. Having read this chapter prayerfully, try to answer the following questions to the best of your ability and instincts:
Who is the dragon?
Who is the male child born to the woman?
Who is the woman with 12 stars on her head?
Revelation 13 We are introduced to ‘the beast’
Having read this chapter, who is ‘the dragon’ in verse 1 and what is being described as ‘the beast’?
 Who are ‘those who live in Heaven’ and why would the beast want to slander them (v 6)?
 Could these be Christians who had previously been taken to Heaven in the Rapture?
 Does this economic system sound plausible or does it mean something else (vv 16-18)?

Revelation 14 ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come’ (v 7)
 Is this the ultimate fulfilment of the gospel being taken to every nation before Christ’s return (v 6)?
 Is this a summary of the purpose of God’s judgement – to turn people’s hearts towards him (v 7)?

Revelation 15 ‘Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty’ (v 3)

Revelation 16 The seven bowls of God’s wrath are poured before Christ’s return
 Having read the chapter, who would you say is in control of these judgements?
 What is the reaction of those in Heaven?
 What is the reaction of those on earth?
 Imagine you saw such things predicted in the Bible, and then witnessed them actually happen. Would you curse the judge or seek his mercy?

Revelation 17 An angel explains some of the imagery to John
 Was this for his benefit or for whatever generation will witness these things?
 In reading Revelation this week, do you feel that it describes something that happened in the past, is happening now, will never happen or is prophesied to happen in the future?
Revelation 18 The judgement of God finally falls upon Babylon
It has been suggested that Babylon might be a person, a kingdom, a religion, or a centre of commerce, but do we know for sure?
If this is prophecy, will a future generation know exactly what or who Babylon is?
Is there something in this chapter that reminds you of God’s character and sovereignty?

Revelation 19 Jesus Christ defeats the forces of evil at the battle of Armageddon
Who is the bride of the Lamb (v 7)?
If the Church is the bride (see Ephesians 5:32), then who are the guests being invited to the wedding supper (v 9)?
What does verse 10 tell us about the deity of Jesus?
Is the beast described as a person (vv 19, 20)?
Does the beast appear to have a significant influence?
How effective is his battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords?

Revelation 20 The millennial Kingdom is followed by the great white throne judgement
Some people suggest that there will not be a future 1,000-year reign of Jesus, that there is no devil and no God and, therefore, no personal judgement (vv 1-6, 10, 11). What do you think?

Revelation 21 Heaven is for those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life
Having read Revelation, do you think that belief in action, social justice and spiritual evolution will prepare the way for Jesus to return and set up Heaven on earth, or would you say that life will become harder with more persecution until Jesus intervenes and rules for 1,000 years (vv 1-5). Then, after the final judgement, will a totally new Heaven and earth replace this one?
Is your name written in the Lamb’s book of life (v 27)?

Revelation 22 ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End’ (v 13)
Do you believe that the best is yet to come (vv 1-5)?
Why do you think the ‘free gift’ is so difficult for some to accept (v 17)?
If you knew that Jesus would return this year, how would your priorities change (v 20)?
SO WE HAVE completed our journey through the pages of the New Testament.

We have read together the amazing story of the salvation and redemption God offers everyone through Jesus, and we have learned more about what it means to follow and serve him today.

We are part of this amazing story – so the journey continues!
IN THIS YEAR of the Boundless Congress, Salvationists and Christian friends around the world are called to join together to read through the whole of the New Testament within one year – The Whole World Reading!

You are invited to journey with us as we reflect on God’s timeless message to his Church.

Will you rise to the challenge?

FOR FURTHER RESOURCES AND COMMENTARIES
W: www.salvationarmy.org/biblechallenge  E: biblechallenge@salvationarmy.org