



THE DAILY READING BIBLE

ELIJAH

MATTHEW 1-4

1 THESSALONIANS

60 daily readings with full Bible text

THE DAILY READING BIBLE

An all-in-one, take-anywhere package to help you feed regularly from God's word.

Time to get back into regular Bible reading? *The Daily Reading Bible* has everything you need to get started, and in one compact, portable package.

This volume contains 60 readings from Elijah, Matthew 1–4 and 1 Thessalonians. Each reading is designed to take around 15–20 minutes and contains:

- *the full text of the Bible passage for that reading*
- *some questions to get you thinking*
- *some 'points to ponder'*
- *some ideas to get you started in prayer.*

It's all here in one booklet that you can take with you anywhere—on the train, on the bus, to the park at lunchtime, or to your favourite armchair.



THE DAILY READING BIBLE

Volume 12

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1 THESSALONIANS

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INTRODUCTION

Readng our Bibles regularly is getting harder. That, at least, seems to be the common experience of many Christians. We could waste lots of ink speculating on the reasons for this: is it the frenetic pace of life these days? Is it spiritual laziness? Is it the impact of postmodernism on our culture and the lack of certainty when it comes to interpreting the written word?

But a better option than speculating on the reasons, we thought, was to provide a new resource for Christians to help them get back into a more regular habit of reflecting daily on God's word. So back in June 2001, we decided to start including a section called 'Bible Brief' in our monthly magazine, *The Briefing* (see www.matthiasmedia.com.au for more information about *The Briefing*). The 'Bible Brief' provided 20 short readings each month—acknowledging that there will be days we miss or days when we want to do something a bit different—with questions, thoughts to ponder, and suggestions to get started in prayer.

Now, several years later, we have a good collection of 'Bible Briefs', and it's time to offer them to a wider audience in a format that will, we hope, be even more convenient and useful.

This twelfth volume contains 60 readings, all designed to be done in 15–20 minutes. These daily Bible readings are designed to

help you feed regularly from God's word. They won't cover every issue in each passage, nor even every passage from each Bible book. In other words, *they are no substitute for the in-depth study of the Scriptures* that you may undertake personally, in small groups or through listening to sermons.

With the kind permission of our friends at Crossway Bibles, we've been able to make this a complete package to take with you—we've included the English Standard Version Bible text with each daily study. So you can take this one book with you and have everything you need—on the train, on the bus, or to the park at lunchtime—wherever and whenever you can get 20 minutes to yourself.

How to use these readings

- *With a penitent heart*, the true prerequisite for all Bible reading. Open with prayer (perhaps using the prayer suggested at the beginning of each set of studies).
- *With 15–20 minutes* of peace and quiet. If you can take longer, and want to read and pray further—great! But we have designed the readings to be done in a fairly short space of time.
- *With an accurate modern translation*. We recommend and have included the new ESV translation. The writers of the studies refer to this translation. Contact us for further details about the ESV or visit www.matthiasmedia.com.au/ESV

- *With a pen.* Even if you only jot down brief ideas, writing focuses the mind.
- *As a guide and help, not a straitjacket.* Feel free to dig further into the passage, to notice and ponder things that the questions don't point to.
- *As a launch-pad for prayer.* Use the prayer ideas at the end of each reading as a starting point for your daily prayer. Many of the points that will arise from the readings will be things you can pray for yourself, and also for others (family, friends, neighbours, etc.). Why not compile a list of people you want to pray for (you can write them in the blank space below), and use the prayer ideas from each reading to pray for the next person on your list?

This twelfth volume includes:

- studies on Elijah (written by Paul Sheely, pastor of evening church within the Dubbo Presbyterian Churches)
- studies on Matthew 1–4 (written by Bernie l'Ons from Lakes Evangelical Church on the New South Wales Central Coast)
- studies on 1 Thessalonians (written by Rory Shiner, pastor of St Matthew's Unichurch congregation and staffworker with the Christian Union at the University of Western Australia).

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Please note: the main section of Scripture for each study is reproduced before the questions. Other Scripture references are reproduced as footnotes at the bottom of the page, or, where the passages are too long to be included as footnotes, in the appendix.

PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR:

ELIJAH

INTRODUCTION

King David is dead. The glory of Solomon's kingdom has been undone by the foolish policies of his son Rehoboam, and the nation is split in two. The northern kingdom (Israel) moves inexorably toward destruction, eventually being taken into exile by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6–23) and consequently moved off the stage of world history. But in this rather grim situation one of God's greatest prophets conducted his ministry—the prophet Elijah (whose name means “my God is Yahweh”). This set of studies taken from 1 and 2 Kings will allow you to spend some time in the company of this great and fearless man of God.

You might like to use this prayer (or your own variation on it) before each of the next 20 studies:

Father God,

Thank you for the ministry of your servant Elijah. Help me to gather strength from his example, courage from his words and grace from his failings. Above all, help me to know you better, the one to whom he so faithfully pointed. In Christ's name, Amen.

NB: Tick the box when you've completed each study ✓

READING 1

1 KINGS 16:29–34



In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.³⁰ And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.³¹ And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.³² He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.³³ And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.³⁴ In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation

at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

1. *The reign of Ahab is important background to the story of Elijah. What do we learn about Ahab and his reign?*

2. Notice the number of times Baal is mentioned in this passage. Baal was thought to be the god of rain and thunder, and therefore of fertility and life. Why might Baal have been an attractive god to worship? Compare your answer to the depiction of God in Deuteronomy 8:10–20 (see appendix, p. 69).

3. How does the account of Hiel illustrate the stupidity of ignoring the word of the Lord (cf. Josh 6:26)?

PONDER Although they enjoyed the benefits and blessings of being the people of the Lord, Ahab and Israel sought blessing elsewhere. Are you wondering whether life on the other side of the fence might be greener?

PRAYER IDEAS Confess any discontentment and temptations to the Lord, and thank him for his absolute and gracious goodness. Ask him to open the eyes of your heart to the blessings you enjoy in him.

READING 2

1 KINGS 17:1–6

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."² And the word of the LORD came to him:³ "Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.⁴ You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."⁵ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan.⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

Elijah makes a dramatic entrance (although

it's nothing compared to his departure!). Elijah comes as the bearer of the word of the Lord that Ahab, Hiel and Israel had rejected.

1. What is the significance of the Lord choosing to withhold rain? (Hint: remember the powers ascribed to Baal; see Reading 1.)
2. What lesson should Israel have learned from this judgement?

1. Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho.

"At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates."

3. *In removing Elijah from Israel, the Lord was inflicting a greater judgement on Israel: he was removing his word. But Elijah is sustained by the Lord in the wilderness. What hope is there in this for Israel?*

PONDER There are always alternatives to the Lord that demand our loyalty, love and service. Meditate on John 10:1–10 (see appendix, p. 69).

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God for his help in hearing his word and in shunning alternative voices.

READING 3

1 KINGS 17:7–24

And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son." ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

¹⁷ After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his

illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" ¹⁹ And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" ²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." ²² And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." ²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

1. *What is the significance of the location of Sidon? (See 16:31 in Reading 1.)*