



If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.

THE DAILY READING BIBLE

EPHESIANS

LAMENTATIONS

PROVERBS

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 Ephesians, Lamentations and Proverbs. 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 6

EPHESIANS

LAMENTATIONS

PROVERBS

The Daily Reading Bible (Volume 6)
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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 sixth volume contains 60 readings, all designed to be done in 15–20 minutes. These short 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 sixth volume includes:

- studies on Ephesians (written by Tony Payne)
- studies on Lamentations (written by Bryson Smith, part of the ministry team at Dubbo Presbyterian Church)
- studies on Proverbs (written by Joshua Ng, pastor of International Uni Church and University Chinese Church, University of New South Wales).

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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:

EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION

Reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a bit like looking through a telescope and realizing you can see the whole galaxy in which our little planet resides. While we're 'star-gazing', the apostle is there at our elbow, unveiling the great mystery of the purpose of life, the future of the world and, of course, the ultimate Lordship of Christ—the one who made everything, the one who everything is for and the one who everything is about. But Paul doesn't just dazzle us and make us feel small; he shows us how we insignificant human beings fit into all of this—what has happened to us in Christ, what we are now destined for, and why we cannot walk away from that telescope and continue as we are without giving serious thought to the way we live. Gaining insight into these things might fill us with awe, but ultimately our attitude must give way to the attitude of the psalmist in Psalm 62, which is where we will end our little star trek.

You might like to use the following prayer (or your own variation on it) before each of the next 20 studies. It is based loosely on Isaiah 66:1-2:¹

*Heavenly Father, Creator of all things,
There is no temple that could contain you, no darkness that could approach you, and no good work of mine that could stand before you. Yet you have promised to turn your face to the one who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at your word. Father, give to me that heart of humility, that as I now read your words, I might tremble before them and obey. In the name of Jesus Christ, your eternal Word.
Amen.*

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

READING 1

EPHESIANS 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ

with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In

1. Thus says the LORD:
"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?"

² All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word."

him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

1. *Read the passage and jot down everything God the Father has done for us through Christ. What is God's ultimate purpose in all this?*
2. *Read it again. What things in the passage humble us and remind us that all these blessings are from God?*

PONDER What is the purpose of creation and world history? What is the purpose of your life?

PRAYER IDEAS Give thanks for these incredible blessings and pray that God would be merciful to others that you know.

POINTERS v. 9: The word 'mystery' will pop up again in Ephesians. It refers to the 'secret' that has now been revealed through Christ—namely that, in Christ, even the Gentiles have now been gathered in as members of God's household. This was God's ancient purpose but it has now been fully and clearly made known.

v. 10: "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" refers not just to the totality of the world (including the Gentiles) but to the 'heavenlies'—the powers and forces of the heavenly or spiritual realm. We will come across this word 'heavenlies' (it is plural in verse 10) a few more times in Ephesians.

READING 2

EPHESIANS 1:11-14

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

1. *Read the passage and note what is said about "we" and what is said about "you".*

2. *How may individuals share in the "inheritance" that God has in store for his people?*

3. *What guarantee do we have that we will one day take possession of this inheritance?*

PONDER What makes you think you have what it takes to last the distance as a Christian? What encouragement does this passage give?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for your share in his glorious inheritance and for the gift of his Spirit. Pray that you might praise God by telling forth his greatness to others.

POINTERS v. 11: "have obtained an inheritance" is better translated 'were made a heritage', as in the NASB margin notes. This refers to the way God chose his people Israel to be his portion or inheritance (cf. Deut 32:9;² Ps 33:12;³ Exod 19:5-6⁴).

v. 12: "to the praise of his glory"—to praise means to advertise; to tell forth how great someone or something is. Israel was made God's own inheritance so that they could show forth God's glory to the whole world (again, see Exod 19:5-6).

v. 14: This is the other sense of 'inheritance' that is often used in the Bible—that is, what we will inherit as God's people (the promised land in the Old Testament; the glorious heavenly fulfilment of that in the New).

READING 3

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

1. Read the passage through and then look carefully at verses 17-19. Paul asks God to give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know ... what?
2. What do you think it means to have the "eyes of your hearts enlightened"? What sort of 'knowing' is this?
3. Re-read verses 19-23. Can you imagine a more exalted picture of the rule of Christ and the power of God? Why does Paul want his readers to really know this?

PONDER How well do you 'know' the things mentioned in this passage? How can you know them more? How will knowing them more change your daily life?

2. "But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage."

3. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

4. "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep

my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ^e and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."