

Bible Reading Notes

Sept '19 – Apostles' Creed & Lord's Prayer

How to use these Bible reading notes

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

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

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

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

Day 1: 'Words of Life'

This set of notes are particularly designed for people who haven't read the Bible by themselves before. If you have, they'll still be very useful! Why not encourage a friend to start reading them too?

We're starting with what Jesus says about the Bible. Why read it at all? And how do we read it right?

Read John 5:39-40

That means John's Gospel (find it on your Bible's contents page), chapter 5 (big numbers), verses 39-40 (small numbers).

- Why should we study the Scriptures (the Bible)?
- Who do the Scriptures testify about (v 39)?
- How should we respond to the Scriptures (v 40)?

We need food each day to have physical life. We need the Bible to have eternal life. So read it every day!

Apply

The Bible isn't a book of rules or advice or heroes to copy. It's good news about Jesus. So look for what it says about Jesus, and respond by trusting and following him.

- How does this change what you look for in the Bible?

Pray: "Holy Spirit, help me to read your Word each day, and to come to Jesus each day for life. Amen."

Day 2: 'I Believe in God'

Now we're going to look at what we believe as Christians. The earliest Christians summarised this in the Apostles' Creed (see the back cover page). We'll look at one phrase each day to help us grow in faith – trusting in God each day.

Read Acts 17 v 24-25 (find it in the contents page)

- What does this tell us God is like?
- What does it tell us God does not do?

This is the first thing Christians believe about God: he is the source of everything else that exists. We depend on him; he does not depend on us. We need him; he does not need us. We owe him everything; he owes us nothing.

Apply

- How does this change the way...
 - ...you see God?
 - ...you see life?
 - ...you see yourself?
- Try to learn the Apostles' Creed off by heart – start by learning the first line today.

Pray

Praise God that he is Lord of everything.

Day 3: 'The Father'

The creed has three sections, because the God we worship is Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit. In what way is God Father?

Read John 17 v 24

This is Jesus, God the Son, praying to God the Father.

- What was God doing before he created the world?
- What does Jesus pray we will enjoy one day?

Before God made the world, he wasn't lonely. He has always been a Father loving his Son in the joy of his Spirit. So God's very nature is love. This is the meaning of life: God made you so that you too could share in his joyful love.

Apply

- Do you find it easy to believe that God loves you as your Father? Why do you think this is?
- What difference would it make if you knew God loves you as a Father?
- Keep learning the first line of the Creed.

Pray

Thank God the Father for loving you as his child.

Day 4: 'Almighty'

God's love would be no help to us if he wasn't strong enough to save us. So it's good news that God is sovereign.

Read Daniel 4 v 34-35

This is what Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylon, eventually confessed about God.

- How powerful is God?
- How long will he be in charge for?
- Who can stop God doing what he wants?

Apply

If God was pure might, that might be scary. But the God with this power is also the Father who loves us. This world is ruled by your heavenly Father!

- How does believing that God is Almighty help you...
 - ...when you worry?
 - ...when you pray?
- Keep learning the first line of the Creed.

Pray

"Father, I praise you that you are Almighty, and that you use your power to work out your good plans for us. Amen."

Day 5: 'Creator of Heaven and Earth'

The first verse of the Bible tells us "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth". So what?

Read Revelation 4 v 11

- What is God worthy to receive?
- Why?

Apply

God is owed everything, because he owns everything. God owns everything because he made everything. That means you are precious (God himself made you!) and accountable (you are not your own – you belong to him!). Our purpose is to enjoy God's love and to worship him with all of our lives.

- What parts of God's creation do you find especially wonderful and beautiful (include yourself)?
- How does knowing God made all this make you want to worship him with all you are?
- Today, learn the second line of the Creed.

Pray

"Father God, I honour and glorify you for making such a beautiful, ordered, intricate, and enormous universe. Amen."

Day 6: 'Jesus Christ, his only Son'

God's creation isn't as good as he made it to be – we have ruined it by our sin. The rest of the Creed outlines what we believe about how God saves his world (including us!).

Read John 20 v 30-31

- What does John want us to believe about who Jesus is?
- What gift will we enjoy when we believe in Jesus?

“Messiah” (Hebrew) and “Christ” (Greek) both mean “Anointed King”. So Jesus is both God's Son, and also the King anointed with God's Spirit.

Apply

Jesus the Son is as fully God as the Father is. Just as we show our love for a parent in how we treat their child, we can't love God without honouring his Son Jesus (John 5 v 23).

- How does this give you a bigger view of Jesus?
- Learn this line of the Creed along with the first two.

Pray

“Lord Jesus, I worship you as Son of God. Help me to know you better and to follow you each day. Amen.”

Day 7: 'Our Lord'

The simplest summary of the gospel in the Bible is this: "Jesus is Lord".

Read Acts 2 v 36-38

- What title and position has God given Jesus (v 36)?
- How should we respond (v 37-38)?

Jesus is our Saviour, our Redeemer, our friend, our brother, our light, our rock, our life and much more. But the resurrection and the Creed remind us that first and foremost Jesus is our Lord. This is good news – the one in charge of history and eternity is the one who loved us and died for us.

Apply

"If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all."

- Is there any area of your life where you're not living with Jesus as Lord?
- Keep learning the first three lines of the Creed.

Pray

Thank your Lord, Jesus, that he uses his authority to save you. Ask him to be Lord of every bit of you life.

Day 8: 'Conceived... Born...'

Jesus has always been fully God. But to save us, he had to become fully human too.

Read Luke 1 v 26-38

- Whose son was Jesus (v 30-35)?
- What was the Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' birth (v 35)?
- How easy did Mary find it to believe a virgin could give birth (v 34, 38)?

Jesus' human life began with a virgin birth because salvation has to come completely from God – we can't contribute anything, because sin has us in its clutches.

Apply

- How does Jesus becoming fully human reassure us...
 - ...when we feel alone or misunderstood?
 - ...when we feel like no-one cares about us?
- Today, memorise these two lines in the Creed.

Pray

“Lord Jesus, thank you that you became a baby to live the life that I should have lived, and to die the death that I should have died. Amen.”

Day 9: 'Suffered under Pontius Pilate'

Jesus' whole life was one of rejection and suffering, climaxing in Pontius Pilate sentencing him to death.

Read Isaiah 53 v 1-6

This prophecy about Jesus was written centuries before he was born.

- What sufferings did Jesus endure?
- Why did he undergo these sufferings?

Apply

Jesus was "a man of sorrows, and familiar with pain" (v 3). He knows what it is like to be weak, sad, tired, ugly, alone, rejected, mocked, shamed, abused, hurt and killed.

- How does this assure you of his love for you?
- How does this give comfort to us when we suffer these things?
- Today, learn this line of the Creed.

Pray

Thank Jesus that he knows what it is like to suffer. Talk to him about your pain, and ask him to be with you.

Day 10: 'Was Crucified, Died and was Buried'

The symbol of Christianity is the cross, an instrument of torture. Jesus' death is the heart of the good news.

Read 1 Peter 3 v 18

- Why did Jesus have to suffer and die?
- Whose place did Jesus take when he died?
- What did Jesus' death achieve?

"Once" – Jesus' death on its own was enough to completely save us. "For sins" – Jesus' death paid the penalty for our rebellion against God. "The righteous for the unrighteous" – Jesus swapped places with us when he died. "To bring you to God" – Jesus' death repairs our relationship with God the Father, so that we can be his friends, children and servants.

Apply

- How does this verse help you see why Jesus' death is good news?
- Learn the next two lines of the Creed.

Pray

Sing a favourite song about the cross (use YouTube or iTunes if needed). Maybe "When I survey", "And can it be", or "How deep the Father's love for us".

Day 11: 'On the Third Day He Rose Again'

There would be no good news and no Christianity if Jesus had stayed dead!

Read Philippians 3 v 10-11

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to show us his passion.

- What does Paul want more than anything else?
- What difference does Jesus' resurrection make to us now (v 10)?
- What difference will Jesus' resurrection make to us in eternity (v 11)?

Apply

Jesus' resurrection gives us new life now, giving us power to change and become like Jesus. Jesus' resurrection gives us eternal life when he returns and raises us to be like him.

- How would you like to be more like Jesus?
- How does this change your view of death?
- Learn this next line of the Creed today.

Pray

Thank Jesus that he gives you life now and for ever.

Day 12: 'He Ascended into Heaven'

After 40 days appearing to his disciples, Jesus returned to heaven (Acts 1 v 1-11), where he reigns for us.

Read Ephesians 1 v 19-23

- Where has God raised Jesus to now (v 20)?
- How powerful is Jesus now (v 21-22)?
- Who does Jesus use his power for now (v 19, 22)?

Apply

We can't see Jesus now, because he is in heaven (God's space). He is now Lord of everything that we can see (our space), and everything we can't. And he uses his limitless power for you and his other followers!

- How does this help you to be sure...
 - ...that your salvation is secure?
 - ...that your future is secure?
- Learn this next line of the Creed today.

Pray

"Lord Jesus, help me to know you better – to know more of your promises, your love, and your incomparably great power. Amen"

Day 13: 'Seated at the Right Hand...'

It's not just Jesus who is in the heavenly realms right now...

Read Ephesians 2 v 4-7

- What words here show how much God loves us?
- Where is Jesus seated now (v 6)?
- Who else has God raised to be there with him (v 6)?
- What is Jesus going to spend the rest of eternity doing for us (v 7)?

Apply

When we trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit unites us to him. So now everything that is true of Jesus is spiritually true of you too. By the Spirit, you are seated with Jesus in heaven already – you just can't see it yet! The best is yet to come!

- How will you remember that this is true?
- How does this change the way you think about your worth and value?
- Memorise this line of the Creed today.

Pray

Praise God for his great love, his mercy, his grace and his kindness in raising you up and seating you with Jesus.

Day 14: 'Judge the Living and the Dead'

Jesus won't stay in heaven forever. On Judgement Day, he'll return to set everything right on earth forever.

Read Acts 17 v 30-31

- Who has decided when this day will be (v 31)?
- How do we know who the judge will be (v 31)?
- What sort of judge will Jesus be (v 31)?
- How should we respond (v 30)?

Jesus will get the last word on everything. Whoever follows him will end up on the right side of history.

Apply

Christians can look forward to Judgement Day without fear, because we know Jesus died to pay for our sin. But it still gives us a powerful motive to please him.

- How would your life change if you remembered that Jesus the Judge sees everything you think, say and do?
- Learn this line, and revise the first two sections of the Creed.

Pray: Praise Jesus that he is the Judge who was judged in our place.

For tomorrow: find out what Bible verses are being preached on in your next Sunday service. It might be on your church website or text someone who will know.

Day 15

Today we're taking a pause from the Apostles' Creed. Instead we're preparing for the coming Sunday service. You always get more from a sermon when you've thought about the Bible verses in advance. Jesus says that the more you put in to listening to the Bible, the more you get out of it (Mark 4:24).

First, find out what Bible verses are being preached on in your upcoming Sunday service. It might be on your church website or ask someone who knows.

Read those verses

- What do they teach you about God?
- What do they teach you about us human beings?
- What do they teach you about relating to God?

Apply

- What might God want to change in your life through these verses? It might be some of your actions, thoughts, desires, beliefs...

Don't worry if you don't feel you're totally there. This is only part 1! You'll hear more in the sermon.

- What questions do you have from these verses?

Pray: for your preacher to understand these verses well and to be changed by them. Then pray the same for yourself.

Day 16: 'The Holy Spirit'

We've seen what we believe about the Father and the Son. The third section of the Creed tells us about the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14 v 15-21

Jesus is talking to his disciples the night before he was killed.

- Who will he send to be with us for ever (v 16-17)?
- What difference will he make (v 18-20)?

When you first trusted in Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to live in you. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is always with you and in you, so that his life is in us.

Apply

- How is it good news...
 - ...that Jesus is with you by his Spirit?
 - ...that Jesus gives you new life by his Spirit?
 - ...that Jesus can change you by his Spirit?
- Learn this next line of the Creed.

Pray

"Thank you Jesus that you are always with me. Help me to keep in step with your Spirit as he helps me to follow you."

Day 17: 'The Holy Catholic Church'

The Holy Spirit creates and sustains the Church. The Church is not a building, an event or an institution – it is the company of everybody who follows Jesus.

Read 1 Peter 2 v 9-10

- What different words does Peter use to describe the church (v 9-10)?
- What is the great purpose of the church (v 9)?

Apply

Christians don't go to church – we are the church! The church is "holy" – it belongs to God and is set apart to serve him. The church is "catholic" – that has nothing to do with the Pope, it means "universal": all Christians and all true churches are part of Jesus' one church.

- How does this make you glad to be part of Jesus' church?
- How can you serve your church and help it grow?
- Memorise this next line of the Creed today.

Pray

Pray for your church to be holy, united, and to declare God's praises.

Day 18: 'The Communion of Saints'

In the Bible, every Christian is a “saint” – set apart for God. All Christians, on earth and heaven, have communion with God and with each other. Relationships matter!

Read Colossians 3 v 12-14

- What does this passage say about who we are (v12)?
- What does this passage say about how we can be who we are as a church (v12-14)?

Apply

Be who you are! We are God’s chosen people – so live as God’s chosen people. We are holy – so be holy. We are dearly loved – so love each other. We are forgiven – so forgive.

- How does this change the way you see your church?
- How does this change the way you relate to other people at church?
- Learn this next line of the Creed today.

Pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which of these virtues you need to put on, and ask him to help you.

Day 19: 'The Forgiveness of Sins'

The Holy Spirit gives us assurance that Christ died for us and our sins really are forgiven.

Read Ephesians 1 v 7 (the "him" is Jesus)

- What great privileges do we have in Jesus?
- What happened to give us these privileges?

These are blessings that are ours "in Christ" – because when we put our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit unites us to him.

Apply

God does not want us to feel guilty as Christians, but to know that we are forgiven. We don't start each day thinking "I've got to be good enough" or "I've got to pay God back". Instead we think "I'm already loved and forgiven, so I'm free to love God and love others today".

- How does this verse help you not to feel guilty?
- Learn this line of the Creed today.

Pray

Ask the Spirit to give you total assurance that all your sins have been forgiven in Christ, so you can be free from guilt.

Day 20: 'The Resurrection of the Body'

Christians have a unique belief about life after death. Some believe we cease to exist, others that we are reincarnated, yet others that our souls float around in heaven. Only Christians believe that our bodies will be raised.

Read Philippians 3 v 20-21

- What are we waiting for (v 20)?
- What will happen to our bodies when Jesus returns (v 21)?

Apply

When Jesus returns, our souls and bodies will be reunited. What God did for Christ, he will do for Christians. We will be given resurrection bodies that will never sin, suffer or die. We will be new creations in the New Creation. The best is yet to come! You are a shadow of your future self!

- How does this excite you?
- What does this mean for how we should treat our bodies now?
- Learn this line of the Creed today (just one to go!)

Pray

Ask Jesus to fill you with anticipation for his return.

Day 21: 'The Life Everlasting'

Fairy stories end with "happily ever after". We all have a longing for life to have a happy ending – because that is how God's story ends...

Read Revelation 21 v 1-5

- How will this "new creation" be a happy ending...
 - ...for the earth (v 1)?
 - ...for the church (v 2)?
 - ...for Christians (v 3)?
 - ...for our bodies (v 4)?

Apply

The Narnia stories call this "the Great Story... which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before." Everything sad will come untrue! We will live with God forever as new creations in his New Creation!

- If this is how the story ends, how does that help now?
- Memorise this last line, and you've learned the whole Creed!

Pray: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22 v 20)

For tomorrow: find out what Bible verses are being preached on in your next Sunday service. It might be on your church website or text someone who will know.

Day 22

We've finished the Apostles' Creed! Before we start the Lord's Prayer, we're going to prepare for the coming Sunday service.

First, find out what Bible verses are being preached on in your upcoming Sunday service. It might be on your church website or ask someone who knows.

Read those verses

- What do they teach you about God?
- What do they teach you about us human beings?
- What do they teach you about relating to God?

Apply

- What might God want to change in your life through these verses? It might be some of your actions, thoughts, desires, beliefs...

Don't worry if you don't feel you're totally there. This is only part 1! You'll hear more in the sermon.

- What questions do you have from these verses?

Pray

Pray for your preacher to understand these verses well and to be changed by them. Then pray the same for yourself.

Day 23: 'Our Father'

The Creed reveals our faith – it tells us what to believe. The Lord's Prayer reveals our hope – it tells us what to want, and so it shows us how to pray. To learn to pray, you don't need a technique – you need faith that God is your Father.

Read Luke 11 v 1-4

- When we pray, what can we call God (v 2)?

Read Luke 11 v 11-13

- If God is a good and loving Father, what can we be sure of when we ask him for good things?

Apply

Prayer is talking to God. To pray well, you just need to trust that God is a generous Father who loves to give good things to his children (if we ask for wrong things, he loves us too much to say yes – phew!).

- How would trusting this change the way you pray?
- Learn the first line of the Lord's Prayer (on the back cover)

Pray

Thank God that you can call him "Father" when you pray.

Day 24: 'In Heaven'

The key to prayer is faith. First, faith that God is a loving Father who wants to give you good things. Second, faith that God is a powerful King who can answer your prayers.

Read Ephesians 3 v 20-21

- What is God able to do (v 20)?
- What should be the motive behind all our prayers (v 21)?

Apply

You can never pray a prayer that is too difficult for God to answer! So don't just pray small prayers for parking spaces and better health. Pray big prayers, because they honour our big God!

- How big are your requests to God?
- What would you pray for if you knew in your heart that God was able to do more than you can imagine?
- Keep learning the first line of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray

Pray some big prayers to God! (And keep praying them until he's answered, or shown you why it's not what to ask for).

Day 25: 'Hallowed be Your Name'

The Lord's Prayer is a series of six requests (like a shopping list!). But the first three requests aren't about us at all – they're all about God: his name, his kingdom, and his will.

Read John 12 v 27-29

This is Jesus praying in public just before he is crucified.

- What does Jesus not ask for (v 27)?
- What is Jesus' greatest desire in his prayer (v 28)?

God's "name" refers to his character and his reputation. "Hallowed" means "set apart" or "honoured". The first thing we should pray for, says Jesus, is that God is glorified – that people delight in his character and revere him.

Apply

- What could you ask for that glorifies God...
 - ...in your home?
 - ...in your church?
 - ...in your city?
- Learn the second line of the Lord's Prayer today.

Pray

Pray that God would be glorified in every part of life.

Day 26: 'Your Kingdom Come'

People used to believe the sun went round the earth. Now we know that we go round the sun. Before we were Christians, we thought the world revolved around us. Now we know that we orbit God. He is the centre, not us.

Read Luke 12 v 29-32

- What do we not need to set our heart on (v29)?
- What should we seek above all other things (v31)?
- What good news does verse 32 tell us about God's kingdom?

Apply

God's kingdom is when God reigns on earth through his Son Jesus, defeating sin and putting everything right again. His kingdom broke into this world when Jesus lived, died and rose again. When he returns, it will come in its fullness.

- How does this line change what you ask God for?
- Memorise this next line of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray

Pray that Jesus would reign and put things right in areas of your life and the world that are broken at the moment.

Day 27: 'Your Will Be Done'

Prayer isn't about twisting God's arm to get what we want. Instead, we pray that we would all do what God wants.

Read Matthew 26 v 36-42

Jesus is praying the night before he died. The prospect of bearing our sin and guilt overwhelmed him.

- What did Jesus ask for "if it is possible" (v 39)?
- How did he submit his desires to the Father's desires?
- What did Jesus pray for "if it is not possible"?

Apply

"Your will be done, on earth as in heaven" – remember that Christianity isn't about us going up to heaven, but about God coming down to earth. So we pray that people on earth would obey God as joyfully and completely as the angels in heaven do. And that includes you obeying him too!

- Think of a problem you've been praying about: how will asking for God's will to be done change your prayers?
- Learn this line of the Lord's Prayer today.

Pray

Pray the first half of the Lord's Prayer to God.

Day 28: 'Give us Today our Daily Bread'

What are you worried about at the moment? And do you ever worry that your worries are too small to pray about?

Read Matthew 6 v 25-27

- What does Jesus tell us not to worry about (v25, v27)?
- Why don't we need to worry (v26)?

Apply

Our worries are transformed when we remember that God is our heavenly Father. He cares for sparrows and pigeons, so he will certainly care for you, his child. He gives us what we need, when we need it. And no worry is too small to pray about.

- When do you forget that this world is run by your loving heavenly Father?
- What worries and needs do you need to pray about?
- Memorise this line of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray

Talk to God about the things you are worried about, and ask him to provide you with what you need, when you need it.

Day 29: 'Forgive us our Sins'

The first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer centred on God: "your name", "your kingdom", "your will". The last three focus on us and our needs. After praying about our physical needs, we now pray about our spiritual needs.

Read Matthew 6 v 9-15

- What is the next thing Jesus tells us to pray for (v12)?
- On what condition will God answer us (v14-15)?

Apply

Every day we continue to sin. Unless God forgives us, we cannot be his children and know his presence with us. But we can only enjoy forgiveness from God if we show forgiveness to others (see Matthew 18v21-35). Unforgiveness clogs up the pipe of God's grace to us.

- How can you remember to say "sorry" to God each day?
- Learn this next line of the Lord's Prayer today.

Pray

Think about particular sins that are on your conscience, and ask God to forgive you. Examine whether there is anyone you haven't forgiven yet, and ask God's help to forgive them.

Day 30: 'Deliver us from Evil'

When you become a Christian, you entered a battle against spiritual forces far stronger than you. How can you stand?

Read 1 Peter 5 v 8-11

- Who is our main enemy (v 8)?
- What is he doing (v 8)?
- What must we do to stand against him (v 9)?
- What does God promise to do (v 10)?

Apply

Christian prayer isn't like a spiritual spa trip; it's like a walkie-talkie to the artillery on a battle-field. Satan wants to devour us with lies, temptations and accusing thoughts. Only by standing firm in faith and prayer can we resist him.

- What spiritual battles are you fighting at the moment?
- Is prayer your first or last resort in these battles?
- Learn this last line of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray

You've now learned the whole Lord's Prayer! Say it as your prayer to God, and mention any particular temptations and battles you need God to deliver you in.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

The Apostles' Creed

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against
us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer