

Weekly Newsletter: 22nd August 2023

Reflection: Read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow...

By Jonathan Gemmell

The age-old adage goes, "Read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow..." Yet, if we're honest, maintaining personal devotions can often be a struggle. This sentiment resonates with me, and I'm sure many of you can relate. The challenge of carving out time for, and truly relishing, moments in God's Word can frequently be overshadowed by life's demands. In the sea of advice flooding books, blog posts, and podcasts, all aimed at cracking the elusive enterprise of consistent personal devotion, I'd like to offer some encouraging insights. I hope these tips might be helpful as we seek to establish fresh life rhythms after the summer.

The first thing to say is that **nobody has it cracked**. No wonder that in a spiritual battle no end of distractions come against us to divert us from reading our Bibles. We find it difficult because it is difficult, but it is worth fighting daily for as being nourished by God's Word over the long haul will bring vitality, life and joy in the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, **some is better than none**. Quite often we set unrealistic targets, get disillusioned and then give up. We buy a new devotional book with a stretching reading plan, do great for three days but then something comes up and suddenly we are two days behind, by the end of the week we need to spend the whole of Saturday catching up, which we don't, and going into the second week we give up altogether. Therefore, set small, achievable, realistic targets. To get going, even just finding ten minutes once a week is a great goal to get going and then building from there.

Thirdly, **never give up beginning again**. Very often we stall and then wait until a landmark in the year (like January 1st) to have another go. To combat this mentality, I want to suggest that you view every Monday as an opportunity to try again. Last week got away from you, well Monday is a chance to begin again. For this reason I am much more a fan of undated devotions than dated ones which are in my experience unhelpful and guilt laden if you get behind.

Fourthly, **read for depth and breadth**. There is a bit of mythology in the Christian community that to be a good Christian you need to read Genesis to Revelation every year. Now please hear me, if that is your practice then I hope it is vivifying. However, I think there is a massive difference between reading for breadth and reading for depth. Charles Wesley had a great phrase, '*The Bible does not yield its treasure to chance enquiry.*' His point being that it is through careful study and searching of the Scriptures that God's voice is more clearly heard. Therefore, I think there is a great merit in focussing on a single Bible book and reading

that consistently, repeatedly and intensely for a period. You will be astonished how many new things you see, how much your understanding increases. It is a great ambition to make something like 1 Peter or Mark's gospel a dear friend, than just taking a cursory glance once a year at passages and books as you whizz along your way to Revelation 22. Also, you will become so familiar with a book by giving it concerted attention that it will continue God's work in you even when you don't have it open because you will begin thinking about it even when it isn't open.

Fifthly, **a new privilege**. Understand the opportunity for personal devotions is a relatively new blessing in the history of the church. For most of the Church's history most Christians would be illiterate and copies of the Scriptures prohibitively expensive meaning that people could not read the Bible for themselves in their own homes. Therefore, I think this is a comfort and an opportunity. Probably in your home you have more copies of the Scriptures than whole villages would have had in the 16th Century, what a privilege. But also, know that generations of Christians have been helped in their pursuit of Jesus through listening attentively to those labouring to teach them God's Word in their churches. This is a fundamental means of grace that we can lean into when personally devotions are a struggle.

Finally, **sanctification is a team sport**. God knowing that perseverance is difficult has given us each other to encourage us along the way. Therefore, making talking about what we are learning in the Scriptures or when we are struggling and making no progress is a great blessing. One of the travesties of our individualistic culture is that my desire to be seen as a godly individual by others is the greatest hurdle in me actually becoming a godly individual. In keeping up the pretence that everything is going great, I completely curtail the opportunity for my brothers and sisters to help me get unstuck.

Friends let's be those who aspire to feast on God's Word daily but understanding that it might take time to build our appetites.

Mission Week 2024 - Put the Dates on Your Calendar!

A team from 1st Baptist Tulsa (in the USA) will be joining HEC for a week of local mission Jan 21-28th of 2024. The basic idea will be that we will have a full week of outreach events targeting different groups in the Montgomery Street area. Each day the church will be open for a Warm Space during the day. In the evenings, there will be a broad menu of special events. The aim of the week will be to boost our missional presence in the local community around the building. The volunteers from Oklahoma will be providing extra hands to make all of this possible.

Our Mission Team is still finalising the details for the week. More information about the plans will be shared in September. For now, put the dates on your calendar and begin to pray for the Mission Team as they lead us in this effort.

Church Fun Day and Worship Service – Saturday 26th August

Joe is speaking at joint Free Churches Worship Service that is being held at Hope Church Blackwood & Kirkmuirhill on Saturday 26th August at 7pm. Neil Longwe is organizing a Church Fun Day beforehand at Chatelherault Country Park from 12 noon, followed by fish and chips at 5pm at Hope Church. Please let Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) know if you're planning to attend.

Summer Appeal 2023

We give thanks to God for the generosity of the church family at Holyrood. The Summer Appeal total came to **£12,561.25** and has been distributed to the three Holyrood missionaries as follows -

- Lorna Ferguson £4532.78
- The Sorsamo Family £6028.47
- James Stewart £2000

The amounts given are based on the budget each missionary has for the coming year. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of the Mission Team.

Women's Ministry Update

We're looking forward to the Ladies' Bible Studies starting again! This term we're hoping to meet on Tuesday evenings from 7-8pm. We'll do six weeks together using Rebecca McLaughlin's 'Navigating Gospel Truth' and will look at Session 2. There is no pre-reading, homework or book to buy – just come as you are!

Our first meeting will be on **Tuesday 29th August at 7pm in person** at the manse and then from **Tuesday 12th September to Tuesday 10th October we'll meet on Zoom**. Hopefully this will allow those who live at a distance or are working to attend.

There will be no Bible study on Tuesday 5th September because Nancy Guthrie is in Edinburgh on **Wednesday 6th September**. She's speaking at Grace Church Leith from 7.30pm – 9.30pm and we'd love as many as possible to attend. We have booked tickets as a group so contact Liz (liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you would like a ticket (cost is £10 or £5 for students) and for more info go [here](#).



We're hoping to have two Ladies' Breakfasts - one in October and another one at the beginning of 2024. We're also planning an afternoon tea in Spring 2024. More details to follow about these nearer the time but there's lots to be praying for and looking forward to!

If you have any questions please speak to Anna Barnard, Aileen Malaczynska, Alison Nelson, Anncri Roberts, Gillian Pickering, Liz Scott or Norma Shippin.

The Saturday Course – Edinburgh Theological Seminary



The Saturday Course at ETS is open to everyone and is an excellent way to learn more about God.

They run one Saturday a month, from September through to April, and three lectures are delivered by visiting speakers. These lectures, which are also available to access online, are specially designed to stretch our minds and deepen our understanding of God's word. Liz and some of the Scott girls are hoping to attend this coming year – come and join us! For more information and to sign up, go [here](#).

Ladies' Breakfast – Saturday 7th October



Save the date! Our next Ladies' Breakfast will take place on Saturday 7th October.

Eleanor Dickson will be our speaker as well as hearing interviews with some of the women in the church family. Please join us for a time of fellowship, teaching and prayer (as well as having our breakfast together!)

Look out for more details next month.

Any questions, please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org)

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday: Baby & Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom.
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Evening Service at 6pm (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.



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