

Bible Readings and reflections to sustain and encourage during the days of lockdown

Day 1: I am God's child

Genesis 1: 1, 26, 31

Reflection: God created the heavens and the earth and all that inhabit them. He created us in his image. He created me and I am his child. He made us to live in harmony with all his creation but we failed to listen to him and the harmony was disrupted. But still he seeks us out. I am ready to listen and obey.

Prayer: Help me, Lord, to know that I am your child; created by you, loved by you and sought out by you.

Day 2: He is my Father Galatians 4: 4 – 6

Romans 8:14

Reflection: I am a child of God. God is my Father and all men and women are my brothers and sisters. We are all loved by him and cherished so we should love one another. I reverence and obey my Father

Prayer: Remind me daily, Lord, that I am kin to all your creation and show me the similarities that bind us together rather than the differences that separate us from one another and from you.

Day 3: The Spirit of Creation

Genesis 1: 1 – 2

Reflection: In the beginning the Holy Spirit moved over the face of the earth bringing light and order where there was darkness and chaos. The Holy Spirit moves over us and when invited into our hearts brings light and calm where there has been hatred and despair. The Holy Spirit restores the likeness of God within us and remakes us into the child he intends us to be.

Prayer: Send your Holy Spirit into my heart, Lord, to open it up to your light and bring me to life in you.

Day 4: Obedience to God's voice

Genesis 12: 1 – 3

Reflection: Abraham was called to leave all he knew and trusted to step out into the desert in obedience to God. He has become the spiritual ancestor of all those whose faith enables them to ignore the siren call of the world and put their trust in God.

Prayer: Give me the courage, Lord, to step out into the unknown in obedience to your will.

Day 5: I am with you always

Genesis 28: 10 – 15

Reflection: Jacob ran away, escaping the justifiable wrath of his brother, and fell asleep on the hard ground with only a stone for a pillow. In his loneliness and fear he dreamed of God coming down from heaven to stand beside him. God promised he would always be with Jacob. God will always be with us, whatever we have done, however low we feel.

Prayer: Dear Lord, in times of difficulty help me look up and see the ladder stretching from earth to heaven uniting me with you.

Day 6: God is the one who is

Exodus 3: 1 – 6, 11 – 14

Reflection: God cannot be defined by human concepts or named and tamed by us. He is who he is. He is accepted through faith, worshipped, loved and obeyed.

Prayer: Dear God, I cannot fully understand you, I can only worship you and marvel at your greatness.

Day 7: The first and greatest commandment

Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 9

Reflection: Jesus said that this was the first and greatest commandment, that we should love God with every fibre of our being. All other commandments flow from this and without this commandment all others are worthless. If we truly love God we need no other commandments; love for him will inform all that we are.

Prayer: Lord, show me that putting you first is no sacrifice but the way to become more fully the person you intend me to be.

Day 8: Be holy

Leviticus 19: 1 – 2 Isaiah 1: 12 – 17

Reflection: God is holy and so we should be holy. Outward observance to ritual is not enough, speaking pious words is not enough, reading the Scriptures is not enough. What is enough is putting aside wrong thoughts, words and actions and consciously aiming to be Christ-like in all that we are.

Prayer: Lord, show me how to be inwardly holy, turning away from sin and turning towards righteousness.

Day 9: Loving our neighbour

Leviticus 19: 11 – 18, 34

Reflection If we truly love God we will love all our brothers and sisters in the family of God. But sometimes we need help, we need guidelines, we need to be explicitly told what we should not do. Jesus interpreted these rules for us by telling us to love our neighbour as ourselves

Prayer: Lord, make me gentle, courteous and patient with all and teach me to love even those I find difficult to like.

Day 10: We are all guilty

2 Samuel 12: 1 – 9

Reflection: Nathan knew that David was in denial of his guilt and brought him to acknowledgement of it by getting him to condemn the sin in another. Jesus told us that it is easier to see the speck in another's eye than the beam in our own. When we are tempted to condemn sin in others we should first examine our own words and actions.

Prayer: Dear Lord, forgive me all my sins; the things I have said and done and thought as well as the things I have not said or done. Forgive me especially the sins I condemn in others but have failed to see in myself and teach me to be more self-aware in future.

Day 11: The inner voice

1 Kings 19: 9 – 16

Reflection: We know the power of God and expect to see his hand in the irresistible forces of nature. We feel he should show himself in the midst of the disasters we bring upon ourselves. We cry out, "where was God in this" expecting his intervention. We do not find him in the places he is because we do not look. But he speaks in the quiet and stillness of our hearts if only we would listen.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to be still and quiet so that I can hear your voice speak words of wisdom.

Day 12: The vision of God's glory

Isaiah 6: 1 – 8

Reflection: How can we bear to see God in all his glory, in his holiness, in his majesty? The contrast between him and us is too great, the knowledge of our sinfulness overwhelming and yet he reaches out to forgive and cleanse. He trusts us, even us, with his message of love and hope. How can we refuse the task he has readied us for?

Prayer: Lord, cleanse and strengthen me then send me out to do the work you have set aside for me.

Day 13: A new covenant

Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34

Reflection: This is not the old covenant made with Abraham and his descendants nor the one made with the house of David but a new one, one for all time. This new covenant, initiated by God, was fulfilled in Jesus, sealed in his death and brought to fruition in the Holy Spirit which lives within us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you sent your son Jesus to teach us all your law of love. Write this law on my heart where I can never forget it.

Day 14: A vision of Peace

Micah 4: 1 – 4

Reflection: Who would not be moved by this vision where weapons of war are repurposed as tools for agriculture, where nations settle their differences without recourse to violence and where God's law is respected everywhere. So why are we still beset on all sides by conflict between countries, between races and between peoples?

Prayer: Lord, I long for peace throughout your world. Show me how to assist in its promotion.

Day 15: Visions and dreams

Joel 2: 28, 29

Reflection: The Holy Spirit is there for everyone, not just for the elites, the powerful, the establishment figures. Young and old, men and women; all will be filled with the Spirit which will move them to realise a better world.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, fill me with light and life and give me the power to realise the dreams and visions you have planted in me.

Day 16: The turning point

Luke 2: 1 – 7

Reflection: This is when it happened, when God himself took our form upon him, not in power and might but as a baby born to a young mother far from home. How easily it might have gone wrong, how nearly it did but Jesus' very vulnerability brought out the best in those close to him.

Prayer: Lord, you made yourself vulnerable to help us approach you. Show yourself to me in the vulnerable and marginalised and teach me to be humble.

Day 17: The mission

Luke 4: 16 -21 Isaiah 61: 1 – 2

Reflection: Isaiah's text perfectly encapsulates the mission that Jesus willingly undertook. He came to heal those who were broken physically and emotionally, by circumstances and by their own sinful choices. All who sought him out were healed and sent on their way rejoicing. Jesus proclaims liberty to us all, for all time.

Prayer: Lord, send me out to continue your mission to those who have been broken and neglected.

Day 18: Respite from labour

Matthew 11: 28 – 30

Reflection: When ploughing or pulling a load a young animal is paired with an older, more experienced one who takes the greater part of the burden as he teaches the youngster. Jesus has experienced all of life's difficulties; the temptations, the loneliness, the doubt, the fear and the grief. Who better to show us the way through our darkest hours?

Prayer: Lord, you know the burdens I bear better than I do myself. I know that you will walk beside me, easing the load and giving me rest.

Day 19: The way, the truth and the life

John 14: 1 – 6

Reflection: We do not know the way from our own knowledge but we don't need to, we have Jesus to show us. If we trust him and follow him we will come to God, to that place that has been prepared for us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to know and trust that you are the way, the truth and the life.

Day 20: Spiritual food

John 6: 31 – 35

Reflection: We know that our bodies need food and drink. Hunger and thirst usually remind us of our physical needs but sometimes it is only when we eat and drink that we realise the need was there. We also have spiritual needs which we are often less aware of. When we come to Jesus in prayer, and when we take Holy Communion, he feeds the needs we didn't know we had.

Prayer: Feed me Lord, with your Holy Scripture, the insights of those who have studied your word and with your body and blood in the celebration of Holy Communion.

Day 21: Lighting the path

John 8: 12 1 John 1: 5 – 7

Reflection: When the path ahead is shrouded in darkness and full of hidden hazards we need a light to keep us safe and to lead us to our destination. Jesus is the light that guides us through the pitfalls of this life, bringing us to eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, when I cannot see the way out of my present difficulties guide me step by step by lighting the path in front of me.

Day 22: The vine which sustains

John 15: 1 – 5

Reflection: The vine taps deep into the ground and draws strength upwards to sustain the branches which then go on to bear the fruit. Jesus draws on limitless sources to maintain us and make us fruitful. Just as branches that are cut from the vine wither and ultimately decay so we can't flourish cut off from him.

Prayer: Lord, sustain and nourish me and enable me to bear your good and abundant fruit.

Day 23: Living in Christ

John 11: 20 – 27

Reflection: Christ lives on after death and this is his promise to us; that though we die, as we all do, we will live on in him. Death does not mark the final end of life, but the beginning of a new, different, life.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to fear death, and bring peace when the time comes to leave this life.

Day 24: Death is the price of the harvest

John 12: 20 – 32

Reflection: In order to get a harvest the seed must die yet in dying it is multiplied many times over. Jesus is the seed whose death has enabled the harvest of souls. God's love for us could have no greater expression than his sacrifice on the cross.

Prayer: Lord, you died for me. I know I am not worthy of your sacrifice but help me to grow strong and true.

Day 25: The sending out

John 20: 19 – 23

Reflection: The risen Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into his disciples, sending them out to proclaim the forgiveness he had bought on the cross. We are his disciples too and we also receive the Holy Spirit. Our mission is to make Christ known in the world.

Prayer: Lord, send me out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Day 26: Confidence in Christ

Hebrews 4: 14 – 16

Reflection: Jesus is our high priest. He is no remote figure whom we fear to approach but one who understands our human frailty through sharing all that we can experience. This gives us confidence to follow him into the very presence of God

Prayer: Lord, you know my weaknesses and my temptations, help me to resist and turn away from evil and towards you.

Day 27: The fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5: 16 – 24

Reflection: Our human nature will lead us into all kinds of vice but if we take the Holy Spirit into ourselves, fully and without reservation then we will find the virtues follow more easily. There is no law against love, joy, peace and so on because they are so self-evidently good.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, shower on me your gifts and grow in me your fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Day 28: The knock at the door

Revelation 3:20

Reflection: What thoughts go through your mind when you hear a knock at the door? Do you imagine it is trouble calling; someone trying to sell you what you neither want nor need, someone with bad news you would rather not hear, someone about to make demands on your time and energy or do you go to the door ready to welcome the friend or the stranger with equal joy?

Prayer: Lord, you are welcome in my heart, come and dwell in me.