

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service with Holy Communion
10:30AM 18 January 2026
Selina Chan leading & Rev. Dr. Zoltan Biro preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



Reading the Bible: Growing in the Word

Joshua 1:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. Today we shall continue to learn about Spiritual Habits, or Holy Habits. It is about how we grow what God has already planted in us.

As mentioned in his last week's sermon, Zoltan will focus his preaching today on **Inward Habits: Growing where No One See**. For the time being, let's be quiet and be prepared to dedicate our best worship to our Lord.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Today we come before God just as we are —
with busy minds, troubled hearts,
hopes, doubts and fears.
God said to Joshua:
“Be strong and courageous...
Do not turn from my Word,
but think about it day and night.”

HYMN (BPW 20/MP650)

The King is among us,
His Spirit is here!
Let's draw near and worship,
Let songs fill the air.

He looks down upon us,
Delight in His face,
Enjoying His children's love,
Enthralled by our praise.

For each child is special,
Accepted and loved,
A love gift from Jesus
To His Father above.
And now He is giving

Paul reminds Timothy — and us —
that the Scriptures come from God
and shape who we are becoming.
Let us quiet our hearts and listen,
for God desires to speak to us.
**Speak, Lord,
we are listening. Amen.**

His gifts to us all,
For no one is worthless
And each one is called.

The Spirit's anointing
On all flesh comes down,
And we shall be channels
For works like His own.

We come now believing
Your promise of power,
For we are Your people
And this is Your hour.

GRAHAM KENDRICK GRAHAM KENDRICK © 1981 KINGSWAY'S
THANKYOU MUSIC.

FAMILY TIME (**An offering will be taken during the following song, after which teenagers and children will leave for their groups*)

HYMN

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Read your Bible. Pray every day (repeat 3 times).
Read your Bible. Pray every day.
And you'll grow, grow, grow x2

Leave your Bible. Forget to pray (repeat 3 times).
Leave your Bible. Forget to pray.
And you'll shrink, shrink, shrink x2

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Loving and faithful God,
we praise You not only for what You do,
but for who You are.
You are our God who walks with us as we grow —
from childhood to adulthood,
from doubts to trust,
from fear to courage.

**We thank You for Your Word,
which does not just give us information,
but forms our hearts,
guides our choices,
and leads us closer to You.**

You are patient with our learning,
gentle in Your teaching,
and faithful in Your love.

**We praise You,
for You are always at work within us.
Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Dear Lord,
we offer ourselves to You —
our minds as we learn,
our hearts as we grow,
and our lives as we serve.

**Help us to be strong and courageous
not by trusting ourselves,
but by trusting You.**

As we read and hear the Scriptures,
let Your Word take root within us.

May it teach us, correct us,
and gently shape us into people
who reflect the love of Jesus.

**Form us day by day —
so that our lives may honour You
and bless others.
We place ourselves in Your hands.
Amen.**

BIBLE READING 1: Joshua 1: 7&8

BIBLE READING 2: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

HYMN MP 988

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss —
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life —
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart —
His wounds have paid my ransom.

STUART TOWNEND © 1995 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

SERMON

Reading the Bible: Growing in the Word

Joshua 1:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Good morning, everyone. Today we start the first part of our series on Spiritual Habits. This part will focus on the inward habits which include: regularly reading the Bible, praying, fasting and reflecting on our actions.

So, the habit we are going to focusing for the next 20-25 minutes will be about growing in the Word of God, but before we dive into this important routine, let me remind you why is it important to practice these Spiritual activities regularly.

How many of you ever been in a Gym? How many of you ever had a Gym membership? And honestly... How many of you paid gym membership, but stopped actually using the Gym for a month, before cancelling the membership. Well let me tell you, you are not alone! Apparently, 9th of January is IQD (International Quitters Day) ...

Many people start paying for a gym membership from the 1st January, wear workout clothes, and talk about getting fit, but once they go back to work, their big plans go out of the window, and never actually exercise. The equipment is there, the access is there, but without regular use, nothing changes.

It is similar with many Christians who *own* a Bible and even carry it to church, or maybe they have a Bible app on their phone. They actually believe it is God's Word but rarely open it. Spiritual growth requires more than ownership; it requires engagement, it requires action and it requires regularity.

I. What Is the Bible?

Some of you may ask... Zoltan, what is the big deal about the Bible. I can listen to podcasts, or read blogs are they not enough? I would like to give you 4 illustrations what the Bible is. I Some of these illustrations will resonate with some of you more than others.

1. The Bible as an instruction manual

Have you seen any of these?

What happens if you do not follow the Instruction manual? Worst case: you get confused, or cause unnecessary damage, best case you miss out on the full potential of your equipment. Now, the Bible is God's instruction manual for life. Ignoring it often leads to confusion, frustration, unnecessary damage, or missing out on our full potential.

The Creator knows best how His creation should live.

2. The Bible as spiritual food

Let me give you another example. Imagine eating only once a week and expecting to stay healthy. You might survive, but you would be weak, irritable, and tired.

Many believers do this spiritually, one "meal" on Sunday and nothing the rest of the week. The Bible is our spiritual daily bread, not a weekly snack.

3. The Bible is a Love Letter from God

What happens if someone receives a love letter but never reads it? How do you think the relationship work between these people... The relationship will suffer. The Bible is God's love letter. When we neglect it, we miss His encouragement, correction, and reassurance.

4. The Bible like tea (*infused in Hot Water*)

The water doesn't change instantly—but over time, the tea infuses the water with flavour and colour. The Word of God changes us gradually. Regular time in Scripture leads to quiet but powerful transformation.

II. What is the benefit of regular Bible reading?

At this point I hope most of us are on the same page and acknowledge that reading the Bible is indeed important. But just like with gym membership, Bible ownership does not produce a lasting habit. We need to be motivated to continue, when we feel tired or busy or even lazy. So let me give you four benefits of doing it even when we don't feel like it.

1. The Bible Provides Direction for Life

In Joshua 1:7 we read that "Do not turn from it to the right or to the left..." What we read here is that the Bible is our spiritual map. Driving without map in an unfamiliar city often leads to getting lost. Without the Bible, we guess our way through life and at times may get lost. When we moved to Reading in the summer, I had to use a GPS to tell me how to get from our home to the Church, the Swimming pool, to the shops. The more I used it the more confident I became to making the right turns, being in the right lane at a roundabout.

Without the Bible we can struggle to make the right moral decisions or set up healthy priorities in life.

2. The Bible produces spiritual growth

Living organisms grow best with regular care: feeding, watering, sunlight, and attention. 2 Timothy 3:14 tells us that "Continue in what you have learned..." Spiritual growth doesn't come from occasional attention. How many of you been in beautifully maintained Parks or Gardens... You know what I noticed when I visited them? Somebody always does something in

those gardens: planting, weeding, pruning, or watering. Consistency in the Word leads that to maturity. The Word nurtures faith the way water nourishes roots.

3. The Bible Shapes Our Character

2 Timothy 3: 16 “All Scripture... is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”. In other words, the Bible shapes our character, it teaches, corrects, and trains us in righteousness... In the previous verse Paul tells Timothy this: “how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise”.

Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge, experience, understanding. It gives us the ability to make sound judgments and decisions, especially about important or complex life matters.

4. The Bible equips us for God’s work

2 Timothy 3:17 “so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” In other words the bible prepares us to live out our faith effectively. The Bible is not an academic text book, it is a practical guide about how to love, forgive, respect and serve each other in the world

III. Practical application: When and How Should We Read the Bible?

1. The Chair Principle

A chair is strongest on four legs. Remove one, and it becomes unstable. For any action to become a habit we need 4 “legs” to stand on: **a time, a place, a plan, a commitment/support** Your Bible-reading habit needs: A time and a place. It can be in the morning or in the evening or any time when you are less likely disturbed. A place where you are less likely to be distracted. I am afraid I can’t help you with these two

But without structure, consistency collapses... Now the Church can help you with that: Let me offer you two structures... They are like the spoon and the shovel or the microscope and the telescope.

2. Navigators 5×5×5

Sometimes trying to read too much too fast can be overwhelming. The 5×5×5 method uses a **spoon**, not a shovel. You will read the Bible in small, manageable portions.

5×5×5 means: 5 minutes, 5 days a week, 5 methods used: read, think (meditate), memorize, study, apply

3. Bible-in-a-Year

The Bible-in-a-Year plan helps us see the big picture in the Bible. It is like using a telescope to see **God’s full story**. You spend each day reading about 20-25 minutes, 3-4 chapters, and have a short period of time for reflection.

Any of you like photography? These two methods are like two lenses. A micro lens helps you see close; while a wide-angle lens helps you see far and wide. **5×5×5** is the close-up lens, while **Bible in a Year** is a wide-angle lens. These two complement each other, so you can use whichever suits you the best or both if you are ambitious.

4. Supporting each other

The fourth leg of the chair is commitment and support.

When we try to set up a habit it is important to know from the beginning that there will be times when we will slack or drop our chosen activity. But that doesn’t mean you have to stop altogether. This is why it is important to have a support group. Connect groups or Bible study groups or even friendship groups can provide an environment where we can encourage each other to continue the plan.

When learning to ride a bike, falling doesn’t mean quitting, it means getting back on, and often someone is supporting us (running along the bike) while we finally can do it without even thinking.

Missing days in Bible reading is not failure. The habit continues when we restart. So, I would like to invite you to start or renew our commitment today to regular Bible reading. Amen.

HYMN MP 111

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise (x2)

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee (x2)

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love, (x2)

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace (x2)

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm (x2)

LYRICS BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER. TUNE BY SIR
HUBERT PARRY, 1888

HOLY COMMUNION

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Mt 11.28–30
Come to this table, not because you must
but because you may,
not because you are strong,
but because you are weak.
Come, not because any goodness of your own
gives you a right to come,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come, because you love the Lord a little
and would like to love him more.
Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.
Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body.

Communion Prayer

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Institution

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper: For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving

Loving God, we praise and thank you for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ.
We thank you for his life and ministry, announcing the good news of your kingdom
and demonstrating its power in the lifting of the downtrodden,
and the healing of the sick, and the loving of the loveless.
We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross for the redemption of the world,
and for your raising him to life again, as a foretaste of the glory we shall share.
We give you thanks for this bread and wine,
symbols of our world and signs of your transforming love.
Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, that we may be renewed
into the likeness of Jesus Christ and formed into his Body.
This we pray in his name and for his sake. **Amen.**

Sharing the Bread

So, when we take and eat the Bread let us remember,
that Christ died for us and feed on him in our,
heart by faith with thanksgiving.

Sharing the Wine

Drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

HYMN MP 22

All the way my saviour leads me:
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
who through life has been my guide?
O what heavenly peace and comfort
here by faith in Him to dwell!
For whatever may befall me, X2
Jesus will do all things well X2

All the way my Saviour leads me:
cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for every trial,
feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary feet may stumble
and my soul may thirsty be,
pouring from the rock before me, X2
there a spring of joy I see X2

All the way my Saviour leads me:
O the fulness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed, immortal,
flies to heaven's eternal day,
this my song through endless ages, X2
'Jesus led me all the way!' X2

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Angel Yu)

BP&W 406

Church of God, elect and glorious,
holy nation, chosen race;
called as God's own special people,
royal priests and heirs of grace:
know the purpose of your calling,
show to all his mighty deeds;
tell of love which knows no limits,
grace which meets all human needs.
God has called you out of darkness
into his most marvellous light;
brought his truth to life within you,
turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you
that God's name be glorified;
and all find fresh hope and purpose
in Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people,
strangers to God's heart of love;
but he brought you home in mercy,
citizens of Heaven above.
Let his love flow out to others,
let them feel a Father's care;
that they too may know his welcome
and his countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy,
be the people he intends;
strong in faith and swift to answer
each command your master sends:
royal priests, fulfil your calling
through your sacrifice and prayer;
give your lives in joyful service –
sing his praise, his love declare.

JAMES E. SEDDON (1915-83) BASED ON 1 PETER 2:9-11

BENEDICTION

Go now,
not just knowing God's Word,
but carrying it in our heart.
May God give us courage to choose what is right,
patience as we learn and grow,
and wisdom shaped by Scripture.
May the Lord who began a good work in us
continue to shape us and guide us,
today and always. Amen.

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.

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Events to highlight next week:

Wednesday 21 st	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15	Bible Study
	2.00	iCaf 3
Thursday 22 nd	10.30	Bible Study
	10.30	Toddlers
Friday 23 rd	5.00	Table Tennis Club

No Zoom prayer meeting on Tuesday.
Instead, we will join **Turn the Battle** meetings from Wednesday to Friday:
Mornings 7.45 for 30 minutes
Evenings 7.45 for 30 minutes on Wednesday and Thursday. See the link below.

Sunday 25th

10.30

Worship

Conversing with God:

Regular Prayer

(Matthew 6:5-13; Philippians 4:6-7)

Turn the Battle link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/671220084?pwd=QzlvMSsrZFF3QjVIQlJjMCtLaDJIQT09>

QR Code for Financial Offering:

