

# Bible Studies

## Malachi Chapter 1

Malachi means 'my angel' or 'my messenger'. It could be a real name or a pseudonym. Malachi wrote at the very end of the Old Testament period after the Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon. About the time of Nehemiah. Malachi's job is to tell the people some truths about themselves, truths they did not want to hear. You may not want to hear them either.



### **Read Malachi 1v1-5**

"I have loved you," says the LORD. Malachi 1:2  
Perhaps Malachi is thinking of Jeremiah's words:

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. Jeremiah 31:3

**Why do you think the people needed to hear this at this time?  
Do we need to be reminded of God's love?**

**How did the people respond?  
What do you think this response shows?**

Either they did not see God's love for them, or they did not like the way God showed them His love.

**What response should we show to God's love for us?  
What do you think stopped them from seeing God's love?**

Just because they did not feel God's love, does not mean he did not love them, or that He was not demonstrating his love. Perhaps they thought the problems and difficulties they faced proved that God didn't love them. (God seemed to think the problems they faced were due to their disobedience.)



**How does God show that He loves us?  
Is God's discipline an expression of His love? Hebrews 12v6  
What might stop us from receiving or accepting God's love?  
Read 1 John 4v16, 1 John 3v1, Romans 5v8z**

"If you really loved me you would..." **Is this a good attitude to use with God?**

God chooses some strange evidence of His love. *Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated.* Jacob and Esau were Isaac's two sons. Esau is described as worldly and godless.

**Did God really hate Esau?**

**Does God hate people?**

God is not noted for hate. Hate does not quite have the meaning here that we would normally ascribe to it. To understand the meaning compare Luke 14v26 with Matthew 10:37. These record the same words of Jesus.

**How does Matthew explain what hate means here?**

In this passage, to love means, to choose. God chose Jacob over Esau. (this does not mean that God hated Esau, after all He blessed him substantially.) Paul quotes this passage in Romans 9v10-15 and again applies it to God's act of choosing us.

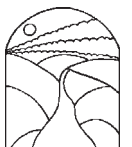
The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you... Deut 7:7

**How does this apply to us?**

To complicate matters, God is not talking about Jacob and Esau, but their descendents Israel and Edom. Edom and Israel were natural enemies. The Edomites had gloated when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and exiled it's people. Psalm 137v7. This was an insult that festered. God is saying, "you may have been destroyed, but look I have reestablished you. Edom is destroyed and however hard they may try they will not be restored." God uses this as an illustration of His ongoing love for Israel.

In a sense God is saying, 'it is the final outcome that will prove my love'. This is true for us. However hard things might be now, however much we suffer, our destiny is God's eternal blessing in heaven.

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When we question God's love for us, we need to lift up our eyes and see the big picture. The first truth Malachi tells them is that their attitude to God is wrong



### **Malachi 1v6-14**

**What is due to a father? What is due to a master? What is due to God?  
What is God's complaint against His people?  
Who has led the way in this?**

#### **What was the peoples response to this truth?**

It is possible that they were so far from where they should be, that they did not even know what that they were doing was wrong. Or maybe they did not want to own up to any more than they had too! It's hard to believe that it was an honest question.

#### **What is the difference between an honest question and an evasive question?**

#### **What were the people doing that showed their contempt for God?**

#### **Why was it wrong to bring defiled animals?**

Firstly the regulations of sacrifice forbade people bringing inferior animals. But secondly it showed the peoples attitude towards God. As if anything would do.



#### **What attitude to God did these offerings show?**

#### **What response would the governor have?**

#### **Will such second rate offerings bring God's blessing?**

#### **Why did Malachi call for the temple to be closed?**

#### **Does this mean that God did not want sacrifices?**

This theme comes up through out the, the sacrifice is only as good as the attitude of the person bringing it. God is not against their sacrifices, He commanded them to be brought, He is against their attitude.

#### **How does all this apply to us?**

#### **Where do we give the Lord second best?**

Through out this passage Malachi has examined the peoples relationship with God by comparing it with human relationships, (father, master, governor.) The way we treat people shows our attitude towards them, how we value them. Yet we deny this in our relationship with God, we say we love God but the things we do paint another picture. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. Titus 1:16

#### **What do your actions say about your attitude to God?**

#### **What do you think Malachi 1v11 predicts?**

#### **What are the 'incense' and 'pure offerings' it refers to?**

'But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled', and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty. "When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD. Malachi 1:12-13

#### **How has this attitude found it's way into church?**

Do I have to pray? Do I have to read my Bible? Do I have to go to Church? What a burden.

#### **What attitude are you showing to the Lord when you say these things?**



Paul accuses the Corinthians defiling God's table in the way they treat each other during communion. 1 Corinthians 11v17-23

If you have a job to do in Church, setting up, teaching Sunday School etc.

#### **Is it a sacrifice or a privilege?**

It is both, the question is which do you see it as being, a burden or a joy?

#### **If your service for God is being done with the wrong attitude, what should you do?**

God and the enemy have an answer to this question. The enemy says 'quit, if you are doing it with a wrong attitude you are better not to do it'. God's answers says "get your attitude right". This is also true in worship, "I do not feel like worshipping the Lord therefore my worship is defiled." Or "I don't feel like worshipping God but I will do so because I honour Him." I believe the latter attitude makes the worship, or the service all the more acceptable.



#### **Will you give God your best, not your second best?**

#### **What will you do that shows you honour God?**

# Bible Studies

## Malachi Chapter 2



**Read Malachi 2v1-9**

Malachi turns his attention to the priests. Who is he talking too? Obviously the priests of his time, but Israel was called to be a priestly nation for the world. Today, you could apply this to pastors, but the Scriptures teach that all believers are priests. 1 Peter 2v9, Rev 1v6. So it also applies to all of us.

**What two things did the priests not do?**

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**How do we listen?**

**How do we set it in our hearts to honour God?**

I suspect listening is more than trying to hear God's voice, I suspect it means obeying what God has commanded. It is not so much a question of seeking personal direction from God as it is studying His word and living by it.

Setting your heart to honour God, is an attitude of heart. It is a way to live, as much as a set of actions.

**What should people see when they look at priests?**

Devotion, dedication, a representative of God. Above all higher standards. People who act differently, people who live differently.



**Read Ezekiel 36v22-23**

Paul paraphrases this by saying As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" Romans 2:24. **How might we do this?**

**When the world looks at us and sees a reflection of itself, what good will it do?**

**When the world looks at us and sees a reflection of Jesus, what good will it do?**

**If we are priests how should we behave?**

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35

If we gossip, if we are half hearted, If we are sinful.

**What will they know then?**

**What will the Lord do because of the way the priests are acting?**

**What would this mean in modern terms?**

**Why will He do this? V4**

As always God's discipline is not to destroy but to correct, that the covenant might continue.

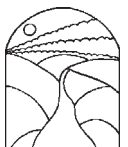
**According to this passage what are the responsibilities of a Priest?**

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V2		
V5		
V6		
V7		

The messenger of the Lord v7, uses the same word from which the book takes it title. cf 3v1

**Do you see two groups of things in this list.**

Listening, reverence and honouring, all relate to God. Teaching and being an example all relate to man. Our priestly function towards men relies on our relationship to God, listening and honouring.



**How do you get an instructed tongue?** Isaiah 50v4

From early times it was the job of the Priest to teach the Law, in order that people would know what God required of them.

**Is this still our job? How should we do it?**

**What happens when the Church teaches things that cause men to stumble?** v8-9

An example of this would be when we lessen God's standards by telling people that what they are doing is OK, when the Bible says it is wrong.

We need to be a people that will listen to God, but we also need to be a people who will honour and revere Him.

**What effect will honouring God have in our lives?**

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10

If the fear of the Lord is not in our lives we will not function as priests.



**Read Malachi 2v10-16**

This section is about breaking faith.

**Why does Malachi emphasis that we have one father and one creator?**

He wants to emphasis our equality before God. That what we do to one another matters, because One God made us all, and we are equally important to Him.

**Who has Judah broken faith with?**

They have gone against God's commands and have married foreign wives. Deut 7v3. If you read Nehemiah you will find this was a major problem.

**Historically what had been the result of marrying foreign wives?**

The reason God forbade intermarriage was that it inevitably led the people into idol worship and unfaithfulness to God. The same problem still exists today. 2 Cor 6v14.

**How did intermarriage desecrate the sanctuary?**



**Why were the people weeping at the altar?**

**Why was God not hearing them?**

**Is this still true today?** 1 Peter 3:7

Obeying God is still more important that sacrifice.

It is possible that some people in Malachi's day, were separating from their wives, so that they could marry younger or richer foreign wives.

**Why do you think God found this abhorrent?**

**How do you break faith with your marriage partner?**

Obviously, this is referring to divorce. But I do not think it is only divorce. Adultery breaks faith, so do hard words and destructive actions. Anything that damages the trust between a couple.

At a marriage we always have witnesses, did you notice that God is a witness to the marriage covenant.



**According to verse 15 what happens when you get married?**

**What are the Godly offspring God is looking for?**

**Why do you think God hates divorce?**

**Do you think God just hates divorce, or does He also hate the things we do that lead to it?**

**What does 'a man covering himself with violence upon his garment' mean?**



**Do you think your relationship with your wife or husband effects your relationship with God?**

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. Malachi 2v16

**How are you going to do this?**

**Why does it say guard yourself in spirit?**

If you are going to act against your wife, it will be because you have first sinned in your spirit. The attitude you hold towards your marriage and towards your wife.



**What attitude did these people have?**

**What attitude should we have?**

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## Malachi Chapter 3

If you are looking for a title to the Book of Malachi, it would have to be honouring God.



### **Read Malachi 2v17- 3v5**

This passages starts with the now familiar statement question formula.

#### **What is Malachi's accusation against the people?**

How do you weary God? God takes the art of patience to it's outer limits, wearying God is the spiritual equivalent of climbing Mt Everest or putting your elbow in your ear!

#### **What do you think would weary God?**

#### **What were the people saying?**



Effectively the people were saying 'God is pleased with people who do evil'.

This is a serious accusation. It is understandable why God would get upset.

#### **Is this accusation true?**

#### **Is it conceivable that the people would really accuse God of being evil?**

At times of great emotional trauma people may make such an accusation. It seems more likely that the question they are addressing is one spoken in different voices and different words throughout the Bible and contemporary society.

#### **If God is good why does He let evil people prosper? Job 21v7, Habakkuk 1v2-4**

God's answers on this matter tend to be evasive and centre around; "Don't worry about them worry about yourself" For example Psalm 73v17-28 or Hab 2v4.

The New Testament gives us a lot more clues about why God sometimes lets the evil prosper.

#### **What answer would you give to this question?**

#### **What answer does 2 Peter 3v9 give?**

This is a Bible study in it's own right. For me, I learned it is foolish to question God's justice. The reason God was wearied, was not the question asked, as much as the people asking it.

#### **From what we have learned so far what spiritual state were the people in?**

It is one thing for the righteous to ask such a question, but these people were far from righteous.

#### **If God judge the wicked, as the wicked, what was likely to happen to them?**

It was the spiritual blindness and hypocrisy that wearied the Lord.

#### **What was the Lord's answer to the people's complaint?**

There are two jobs a prophet fulfils; he forthtells, he tells the people a message from God. And he foretells, he predicts the future. Malachi moves seamlessly from forthtelling to foretelling. See I will send my messenger. The word 'my messenger' in Hebrew is Malachi.

#### **Who is Malachi referring to here? Matthew 11v10**

The messenger is John the Baptist, he will prepare the way before the Messenger of the Covenant,

#### **Who is the messenger of the covenant? Hebrews 12v24, 9v15, 8v6**

#### **Who is speaking? Who is the Lord you seek? Whose temple does he enter?**

God is speaking of the one who is to come, the Messiah, but the lines between the Messiah and the Lord Almighty are blurred. **How do you interpret this?**



The only credible way to explain this, is the belief in a triune God.

#### **What does this passage tell us about when the Messiah would come?**

The Messiah had to come while the temple was standing. It was destroyed 40 years after Jesus ascension.



#### **What was the Messiah to do?**

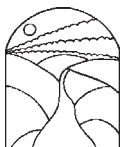
#### **How did Jesus accomplish this? Read John 2v13-25**

God's answer to man's wickedness was to send the messiah as an atoning sacrifice for their sins so that they too might be made righteous. He would come firstly to purify, but then to judge. The outcome would be the kind of sacrifices God wanted. These are in marked contrast to the sacrifices the people were bringing. 1v8-14. It is interesting that ever since the flood, God's actions have been to produce righteousness not to judge sin.

#### **What two images are used to describe this purification?**

#### **How do they apply to us?**

#### **How are metals refined?**





### **Read Malachi 3v6-12**

#### **What was the only thing that kept God from destroying His people?**

The issue was not who they were or what they had done, but who God is and what He has done. God's dealings with Israel are still characterised by this verse. God does not change He is eternal and immutable. It is this that causes Him to act in love and grace.

**Read Romans 11v29, 2 Timothy 2v13**



#### **What will happen if the people return to God?**

This again is a biblical principle, if we return to God he will return to us. God is not the problem, He does not change. It is not his lack of compassion or concern that causes Him to hide his face from people but their sin.

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2  
Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4v8

#### **How were the people to return?**

The issue Malachi addresses is that of tithing, but I think this is given only as an example. It is already clear that this was not the only issue the people had to deal with.

#### **What other issues were there?**

**What is tithing?** Leviticus 27v30 **What are offerings?**

#### **So why did Malachi highlight tithes and offerings?**

It is not enough for the people to return to God in words, their actions must show their commitment.



#### **What attitude does bringing tithe show to God?**

#### **What did God say the people were doing by not tithing?**

#### **Why is not tithing robbing God?**

By tithing the people were showing their respect for God, they were honouring Him, obeying Him, trusting Him, committing to Him and worshipping Him. They were robbing God because everything we have belongs to God anyway. But they were also robbing Him of the things I have listed above, honour, worship etc.

#### **Which of these do we not need to do?**

The tithe, supported the priest, the temple and provided for the poor.

#### **Which of these do we not need to do?**

People often say tithing is an OT principle that is not sustained by the NT. I agree and disagree! It is true that we are not under the Law and consequently not duty bound to tithe. But the reasons to tithe remain the same. In the New Testament, Jesus and Paul taught extensively about the need to give, both to the poor and to the work of the kingdom.



### **Read Luke 11v42**

#### **What were the Pharisees doing that was wrong?**

#### **What were they doing that Jesus said should be done?**

This is interesting because the Law did not require such small things to be tithed. The Pharisees were going beyond what the law required and Jesus commended them for it.



#### **What was the result of the people failing to tithe?**

#### **What will happen if the people tithe?**

The people would be blessed abundantly if they honoured God in this way, He would 'open the gates of heaven'. The implication is that currently they were being *negatively blessed*, they were under a curse, their fields were not even producing what they normally would. God did not curse them, they cursed themselves by their disobedience.

Malachi says that blessing comes from obedience. **Is this still true?**

#### **Do you think the blessing from tithing are just financial?**

#### **Is everything that goes wrong in our lives caused by disobedience?**

No, sometimes stuff just happens. We go through trials and difficulties even though we are obedient. For examples of this, look at the life of Job, or even of Paul.

#### **Can you expect God's blessing if you do not obey Him?**

God is a God of grace and sometimes He blesses us anyway, but we cannot presume upon this.

#### **Should we tithe in order to receive God's blessing or out of obedience to Him?**

#### **Should we tithe?**

#### **Does the Church have the right to demand our tithe or pressure us to tithe?**

I believe we should tithe. But I also believe it is wrong to pressure people, to use guilt to manipulate them, or to treat people differently according to whether they tithe or not. When it comes down to it you stand before God, you must decide for yourself.



# Bible Studies

## Malachi Chapter 4



### **Read Malachi 3v13-18**

#### **What harsh thing had the people said against God?**

The Bible tells us that God's sword 'judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart' Hebrews 4v12. I doubt the people were going around saying; 'It is futile to serve God,' but it did reflect their unarticulated thoughts, attitude, and lifestyle. This is true of most of the other statements the people make in Malachi. The prophet is exercising the message of knowledge/wisdom in his prophecy, revealing the thoughts of men's hearts. 1 Cor 12v8,14v25.



#### **Is it futile to serve God?**

No, it is never futile to serve God, God is our creator and we are obligated to worship Him, we were created for this purpose and fulfilling it, is the most rewarding thing possible.

#### **Why is it not futile to serve God?**

#### **Why might it seem futile to serve God?**

Although it needs to be stated, this misses the point. The statement was harsh but it was also true! This was their experience, this was what they lived, this was all they knew of God. It may be true of your experience too.

#### **How do you serve God in futility?**

"You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners Malachi 3:14

#### **From what we know of the people so far, how well were they serving God?**

It is never futile to serve God, even when on the outside it may appear so, but it is very easy to serve God in futility. I pity these people, but I also empathise with them. I think most Christians have spent time in their camp! They know that faith in God is supposed to bring happiness, blessing and contentment, they see it in others. But for them it seems like a distant joke, always there, but always out of reach. This is very sad but very real for so many. It is also unnecessary.



#### **Lets look at the people's track record.**

They thought God did not love them and had given up on them. They failed to honour or respect God. They treated the Lord's table as a burden and defiled it with bad sacrifices. The priests had gone astray. Family life was a mess. They accused God of being pleased with evil. Their worship was in form not in spirit. And they lived in self-imposed poverty because they would not put God first.

#### **Why was it futile to serve God?**

Their faith was a total mess – no wonder it was futile. Futile is all it could be!

The reason it was futile to serve God was because they were not serving Him!

They saw serving God as a burden, The psalmist, faced with the same set of requirements said 'I delight in your decrees' Psalm 119v16. He knew they bought life and happiness. They lived under the law and the law served as a wall to keep them from God. Jesus is the door. If you treat the Christian life as a series of things Christians are *not allowed to do*, and a series of things they *must do*, then your experience of God is likely to be futile.

#### **What basic misconception about serving God is found in verse 14?**

They were serving God for what they could gain. Not out of love or even duty. For them it was a straight business deal. We serve God, He blesses us. God was never going to play this game.

#### **When there seems to be no reward for serving God, should we still serve Him? Why?**

#### **What makes our service futile?**



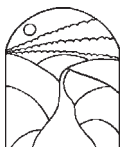
A half hearted faith will be a futile faith.

A lukewarm, indecisive, fence sitting, Sunday faith is only going to be futile.



A short term faith is going to be a futile faith.

A coke machine, Santa Claus, faith is going to be futile.



3

A sin riddled faith is going to be futile.  
You will hit a 'glass ceiling' and you will not proceed until you deal with the sin.

4

A reluctant or cynical faith is going to be futile.  
Serving God out of duty not love, God wants sons not slaves.

5

A faith exercised for gain will be futile.  
God does not owe you anything, you owe Him everything.

6

A legalistic faith is going to be futile.  
If I do this ... then God must do this... God is a God of grace not legalism.

7

A disobedient faith will be futile  
If we will not obey Him how can our faith be rewarding?

8

An unfulfilled faith is going to be futile  
One that is not put into practice – a 'low impact' faith.

**What answer does God give to the peoples accusation?**

Three empty rectangular boxes for writing an answer.

**What does 'those who feared the Lord spoke together' mean?**

**When will God spare them?**

**What distinction will God make?**

It is interesting that God does not answer this accusation with a promise of blessing. Those who serve the Lord are going to go through hard times. But it is worth it for all that God has in store for us.



**Read Malachi 4**

This is a straight continuation of the above point.

**What day is Malachi talking about?**

This is the day of Christ's return and the day of judgement. It is then that the righteous will be fully vindicated and receive their reward. On that day no one, sinner or saint, spiritual giant or whitebait, will say "it was futile to serve the Lord". However hard our Christian experience may have been, however much God may have required of us, this day will make it all worthwhile.

**What distinction does God make between the righteous and the unrighteous?**

But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Malachi 4:2

**Who is the sun of righteousness?**

Do you see the contrast, instead of going around like mourners they will leap like calves released from the stall.

**If you refuse to serve the Lord now, what will the end result be?**

**What does Malachi 4v5 speak about?**

It is fitting that the OT ends with a prediction of the opening of the NT. Like many of the Old Testament predictions, it contains elements of Jesus first and second coming.

**How did Zechariah understand this passage?** Luke 1v17

**How did Jesus understand this passage?** Matthew 17v10-13

It is as if Malachi identifies Jesus as the solution to the peoples futile faith and all their concerns about the wicked prospering. Jesus is God's provision of righteousness for His people. He is the instrument of God's grace and His judgment.

**Do you think serving the Lord is futile?**

**In light of all this will you serve the Lord?**

# Bible Studies

## Malachi Chapter 4



**Read Malachi 3v13-18**

**What harsh thing had the people said against God?**

The Bible tells us that God's word 'judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart' Hebrews 4v12. I doubt the people were going around saying; '*It is futile to serve God,*' but it did reflect their unarticulated thoughts, attitude, and lifestyle. This is true of most of the other statements the people make in Malachi. The prophet is exercising the message of knowledge/wisdom in his prophecy, revealing the thoughts of men's hearts. 1 Cor 12v8,14v25.



**Is it futile to serve God?**

No, it is never futile to serve God, God is our creator and we are obligated to worship Him, we were created for this purpose and fulfilling it, is the most rewarding thing possible.

**Why is it not futile to serve God?**

**Why might it seem futile to serve God?**

Although it needs to be stated, this misses the point. The statement was harsh but it was also true! This was their experience, this was what they lived, this was all they knew of God. It may be true of your experience too.

**How do you serve God in futility?**

"You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners Malachi 3:14

**From what we know of the people so far, how well were they serving God?**

It is never futile to serve God, even when on the outside it may appear so, but it is very easy to serve God in futility. I pity these people, but I also empathise with them. I think most Christians have spent time in their camp! They know that faith in God is supposed to bring happiness, blessing and contentment, they see it in others. But for them it seems like a distant joke, always there, but always out of reach. This is very sad but very real for so many. It is also unnecessary.



**Lets look at the people's track record.**

They thought God did not love them and had given up on them. They failed to honour or respect God. They treated the Lord's table as a burden and defiled it with bad sacrifices. The priests had gone astray. Family life was a mess. They accused God of being pleased with evil. Their worship was in form not in spirit. And they lived in self-imposed poverty because they would not put God first.

**Why was it futile to serve God?**

Their faith was a total mess – no wonder it was futile. Futile is all it could be! The reason it was futile to serve God was because they were not serving Him!

They saw serving God as a burden, The psalmist, faced with the same set of requirements said 'I delight in your decrees' Psalm 119v16. He knew they bought life and happiness. They lived under the law and the law served as a wall to keep them from God. Jesus is the door. If you treat the Christian life as a series of things Christians are *not allowed to do*, and a series of things they *must do*, then your experience of God is likely to be futile.

**What basic misconception about serving God is found in verse 14?**

They were serving God for what they could gain. Not out of love or even duty. For them it was a straight business deal. We serve God, He blesses us. God was never going to play this game.

**When there seems to be no reward for serving God, should we still serve Him? Why?**

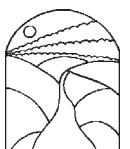
**What makes our service futile?**



A half hearted faith will be a futile faith.  
A lukewarm, indecisive, fence sitting, Sunday faith is only going to be futile.



A short term faith is going to be a futile faith.  
A coke machine, Santa Claus, faith is going to be futile.



3

A sin riddled faith is going to be futile.  
You will hit a 'glass ceiling' and you will not proceed until you deal with the sin.

4

A reluctant or cynical faith is going to be futile.  
Serving God out of duty not love, God wants sons not slaves.

5

A faith exercised for gain will be futile.  
God does not owe you anything, you owe Him everything.

6

A legalistic faith is going to be futile.  
If I do this ... then God must do this... God is a God of grace not legalism.

7

A disobedient faith will be futile  
If we will not obey Him how can our faith be rewarding?

8

An unfulfilled faith is going to be futile  
One that is not put into practice – a 'low impact' faith.

**What answer does God give to the peoples accusation?**

Three empty rectangular boxes for writing an answer.

**What does 'those who feared the Lord spoke together' mean?**

**When will God spare them?**

**What distinction will God make?**

It is interesting that God does not answer this accusation with a promise of blessing. Those who serve the Lord are going to go through hard times. But it is worth it for all that God has in store for us.



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# Bible Studies

## Malachi 1 & 2 Questions



### *Malachi 1v1-5*

*What does Malachi mean?*

*What were God's first words to the people?*

*Who was Esau's brother?*

*Who did God love?*

*Who did he hate?*

*Which nation did God associate with Esau?*

*What did they want to do?*

*What did God say He would do?*

*What did God call their land?*

*What would the people say about God's judgement of Edom?*



### *Malachi 1v6-14*

*What is due a father?*

*What is due a master?*

*What did the people show towards God?*

*Who led the way in this sin?*

*What were the people doing that was wrong?*

*What kind of animals were the people bringing? X3*

*Who would not be happy with a defective gift?*

*What does God call to be done to the temple doors*

*Where will God's name be great?*

*What will be brought to Him in every place?*

*What did the People say about the Lord's table?*

*What will happen to the person who reneges on his offering?*

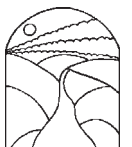
*What is this kind of person called?*

*What kind of king is God?*

*What things does God say to the People in this chapter*

*What relies do the people Give to God in this chapter*

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### ***Malachi 2v1-9***

***Who is this chapter aimed at?***

***What two things are these people not doing?***

***What will God do to their blessings?***

***Who is the covenant with?***

***What does the covenant consist of?***

***What did the covenant call for?***

***What should be in a priests mouth?***

***What should not be on a priests lips?***

***What preserves knowledge?***

***Whose messenger is the priest?***

***What happens when the priest teaches incorrectly?***



### ***Read Malachi 2v10-16***

***What were the people doing that was wrong?***

***What would happen to such a person?***

***What had Judah broken?***

***Who were the people marrying?***

***What were the people doing by the altar?***

***Why was God not listening to them?***

***Who is a witness to marriage?***

***How had the people mistreated their wives?***

***In what two ways are a married couple the Lord's?***

***What does the Lord do when people get married?***

***What is God looking for as a result of the marriage?***

***Where must we guard ourselves?***

***What does God hate?***

***What can a man wear like a garment?***

# Bible Studies

## Malachi 3&4 Questions



### *Read Malachi 2v17-3v5*

*How did the people wear the Lord out?*

*What did the people say the Lord was pleased with?*

*Where is the God of \_\_\_\_\_?*

*Who suddenly appears? Where?*

*What is he a messenger of?*

*What two things will the Lord be like?*

*Who will he purify?*

*What will they bring?*

*What people brought offerings in the past?*

*What groups with the Lord judge? x7*



### *Read Malachi 3v6-12*

*Why haven't the people been destroyed?*

*What had the people done to God's laws?*

*What happened in the time of their forefathers?*

*What did the people have to do to get God to return to them?*

*How were the people to return?*

*What were the people doing by not tithing?*

*What percentage is the tithe?*

*What were the people to bring apart from tithes?*

*What was the nation under because the people were not tithing?*

*Where were the people to bring the tithe?*

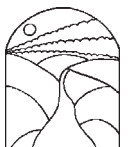
*What would be in God's house?*

*What did God promise to open?*

*What two things would God do?*

*Who would talk about how God had blessed them?*

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### **Read Malachi 3v13-18**

*What harsh thing had the people been saying?*

*Who do the people say are happy?*

*Who do the people say were mourning?*

*Who succeeds?*

*What happen to the people who tested/challenge God?*

*What did the righteous do?*

*Where did God record their names?*

*Who did He record?*

*Where was it recorded?*

*What did God say he would do for the righteous?*

*What did He liken them to?*

*What groups of people would God show a distinction between?*



### **Read Malachi 4v1-6**

*What will the day of judgement be like?*

*What will the evil doer be like?*

*Who will the sun of righteousness arise on?*

*What is in his wings?*

*What will the righteous be like on that day?*

*What will the wicked be like?*

*What were the people to remember?*

*Where was it given?*

*Who comes before the day of the Lord?*

*What will he do?*



# Bible Studies

## The Lord's Prayer



### **Read Luke 11:1-4**

Both Luke and Matthew record this teaching of Jesus. More accurately we should call it 'the disciples prayer' as they were the ones to pray it. Matthew places it in a teaching Jesus gave, which is sometimes called the *Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew 5-7 Luke puts it in response to a request one of the disciples made.

#### **What was the request?**

#### **Why do you think the disciple asked this?**

One reason is given and one is implied. John the Baptist obviously taught prayer as a priority. It also says that Jesus was praying in a certain place. Therefore we assume that the disciples knew how important prayer was, they had seen it in the life of Jesus and John's disciples, and they knew it was missing in their own lives. They were missing out because they did not know how to pray.

This also tells us something else. Prayer is a learned activity. Many of us struggle with prayer, because we are not very good at it we conclude 'it's not my ministry', 'it is for others but not for me'.

#### **How would you answer a statement like that?**

#### **How will you miss out if you don't know how to pray?**

Just like the disciples we need to acknowledge our inability and ask Jesus to teach us. The reason that Jesus gave this example of a prayer, was not so that we could institutionalise it as a liturgy, but in order that we would learn how to pray. This prayer was never intended to be recited, it was intended to be a learning aid.

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### **Read Matthew 6:5-8**

#### **How should we not pray?**

#### **What was wrong with the way the Pharisee's prayed?**

#### **What does Jesus mean when He says go into your room and close the door?**

The Pharisees were praying to men not to God! Prayer does not have to be public to be effective. The KJV calls this room a *closet*, thus the term, 'prayer closet', entered christianise.



#### **Is Jesus speaking literally?**

#### **What does this mean for us?**

#### **Where might you choose to pray?**

Did you notice that it says your fathers sees what is done in secret, not hears. God is not just listening to what we pray, but observing the fact that we do pray. Praying is more than words, it is also listening, it is an attitude before God.

#### **Does prayer have to be out loud? Genesis 24v45**

The kind of prayer that Jesus describes here is solitary and preparatory, (it happens in quiet before you face a problem.)

#### **What other kinds for prayer are there?**

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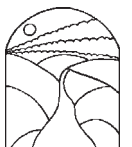
If we are not to pray like the Pharisees we are also not to pray like the pagans.

#### **How did the pagans pray wrong?**

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It is not the length of prayer that is important, or finding the right words or formula that will force God to answer. It is about a relationship with God.

We do have set formulas in prayer, we pray in the Name of Jesus, John 15v16, we say Amen. Jesus told us to pray 'Our Father'. But these are not the things that are going to get our prayers answered. Prayer is about relationship with God.



***Do you think our eloquence changes the effectiveness of our prayer?  
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Sometimes we need to be persistent in prayer. Luke 18v1-5. We need to keep praying until we receive an answer. But we must remember it is not for our many words that God hears us. Jesus had only criticism for those who made a show of long prayers. Mark 12v40

***What do you think is important in prayer?***



***Read Luke 18v9-14*** (also consider the Lord's prayer passage)  
***Contrast the way we should pray with the way the Pharisees prayed***



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If you face a situation, having prayed for it, your attitude is going to be different. You are going to have faith that God is going to move. Therefore you are going to have confidence. Fear is going to be minimised. Because we have prayed, we are more likely to be aware of God's presence and sensitive to His leading.

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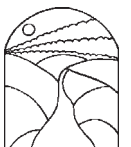
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*Our prayers get answered.*

*A relationship with God gets established.*

*We have confidence for the situations we face.*

*There is power in our lives*

*Is going to build our faith.*

*It is going to build us spiritually.*

*You are going to hear from God.*

*We are going to have spiritual insight.*



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# Bible Studies

## Our Prayer



### **Our Father in Heaven**

There are many prayers recorded in Scripture, most of them start by saying 'O Lord,' 'O Lord Almighty', 'Ah Sovereign Lord' or 'O My God'. Dan 9v4, Isa 37v16, Jer 32v17, Ezra 9v6; Salutations are a part of language, but these are more, they tell us how the people concerned understood God.

#### **What do the above salutations emphasis?**

Jesus, by contrast, frequently opened His prayers with the word 'father'. Matthew 11v25, 26v39, Luke 23v34. He taught us to do the same.

#### **What does the phrase 'Our Father in heaven' emphasis?**

Our, emphasises community. Father emphasises relationship and compassion. In heaven emphasises power, glory and authority.

#### **How does Jesus want us to approach God when we pray?**

#### **Do you think this is intended to build our faith?**

This opening line is intended to put us in perspective with God. Think for a moment of God in all His glory. Now think of you with all your failings. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to open the way between God and us. Heb 10v20. When we say 'father', we are entering God's presence. We have His full attention and what we pray is heard in heaven. Rev 8v3. This line is as much about understanding who God is and who we are than it is about praying.



**Hallowed be Your name.** Hallowed means holy or honoured.

#### **What should mark our prayers?** Philippians 4v6, Ephesians 5v19

When you read the prayers of the OT, they frequently start with worship to God.

#### **Why do you think our prayer should start with worship?**

There are many reasons; it builds faith, it gets our eyes off our problems and onto God. It stops our prayers being need orientated instead of God orientated. It helps put us in the right frame of mind for prayer. It also gives us a chance to become spiritually alert and able to hear from God. It enables us to leave behind the pressures of the day. The list could go on. But above all it is right for us to worship God and God is pleased with our worship.

#### **Do you think worship attracts God's attention?**

#### **Do you think worship makes God more likely to answer our prayers?**

God is always attentive to us and you cannot bribe God, or manipulate Him.

#### **If we only come to God with requests, what kind of attitude does it show to Him?**



### **Your kingdom Come**

#### **When we pray for God's kingdom to come, what are we praying for?**

A simple definition of the Kingdom of God is, where ever Jesus is reigning.

#### **How does God's kingdom come in our lives?**

#### **How does God's kingdom come in the world around us?**

#### **What practical application does it have for us to pray this?**

When we pray this we are committing ourselves to work as an agent of the kingdom.

#### **What part do we have to play in God's kingdom coming?**



### **Your will be done**

This sounds a bit vague. There is a danger that we will misinterpret it to mean that all we have to do is pray for God's will to be done and everything will just work out.

#### **Where might God's will need to be done? Who is going to do it?**

When we pray this we are committing ourselves to do God's will. This line means, 'Father may I know what your will is and may I have the strength to do it.'

#### **How is God's will done in heaven? How is it going to be done on earth?**

Jesus prayed this prayer Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane 'yet not my will, but yours be done'. Luke 22v42 For Jesus, this prayer was a submission to the will for God. It should be for us also.

#### **What happens if we cannot submit our will to God when we pray?**

Sometimes, when we do not know what to pray all we can say is 'Father your will be done.'

#### **Is it significant that the first things we pray for are God's kingdom and His will?**

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Mat 6v33

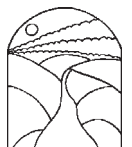


### **Give us today our daily bread**

This has a physical and spiritual application.

#### **On a physical level what is our daily bread?**

Our daily bread is the simple, everyday things that we need to live; food, clothes shelter.



**What attitude does Matthew 6v25-34 say we should have to these things?**

We are not to worry about them, but we are to pray for them.

**What relationship do you think praying and worrying have?**

**Do you think it is wrong or selfish to ask God for our needs?**

When it comes down to it, it is God who supplies our needs. We must remember this

**On a spiritual level what is our daily bread?** Matthew 4v4

Just like we need vitamins, carbohydrates and fibre in our diet, we need spiritual nutrition too.

**What will happen if we do not get our spiritual daily bread?**

**Where are we going to get our spiritual daily bread?**

**Why does it need to be daily bread?**



**Forgive us our debts**

The word debts here means sins. When you read the OT prayers you will find many of them had to do with confession, repentance and forgiveness.

**Why do you think repentance and forgiveness need to be part of our prayer life?**

**What happens if we do not confess our sin?** Psalm 66v18

It seems that the Lord's prayer is a daily prayer. The things it describes, are things we need to do on a daily bases.

**What is God's promise to those who ask for forgiveness?** 1 John 1v9



**As we have forgiven our debtors**

**What do you think this means?**

Jesus expanded on this at the end of the prayer. It is very important.

**Read Mat 6v14-15** **What happens if we do not forgive those who sin against us?**

Jesus taught extensively on this subject in Matthew 18, the parable of unmerciful servant. If we expect God to forgive the very serious things that we do against Him, how can we not forgive the much smaller things other do to us. It show a misunderstanding of and contempt for God's grace. It puts us in a position where we are not able to appropriate God's forgiveness.

**What effect is not forgiving others likely to have on our prayers?**



**Lead us not into temptation**

This verse has caused a problem for generations of Christians. **Why?** James 1v13  
It seems strange to ask God not to do something He has promised He won't do!

Temptations here does not necessarily mean to sin, the same word is used for test. So you could translate this, 'do not test our faith.' It could also mean suffering or trial.

**Can we avoid the testing of our faith?** 1 Peter 1v6-7, James 1v12

**Can we avoid suffering and trials?**

These things actually help us, they make us stronger. There is a line where if they are too intense, instead of making us stronger, they destroy us. In our trials, God's aim is to strengthen us, the enemy wants to destroy us.

This verse is best understood by comparing it with something Paul wrote;

**Read 1 Corinthians 10v13**

Perhaps what we are praying for here, is that we will not be tempted beyond our limits.

**How did Jesus pray this prayer?** Luke 22v32

**What connection is their between prayer and temptation?** Matthew 26v41

The real key to this prayer is found in the last part of 1 Cor 10v13. God has promised us a way out so that we can stand up under it, We need to ask God for strength in time of temptation, and for the wisdom to find the way out. Prayer is vital in overcoming temptation.



**Deliver us from evil.** (Or deliver us from the evil one.)

**Why do you think we need to pray this?**

**Did Jesus pray this?** John 17v15

**What evil might we need to be delivered from?**

**What does the enemy want to do to us?** John 10v10

The truth is we are in a battle, the enemy wants to obstruct us, divert us and destroy us. We must triumph over him. We need God's protection, we cannot take it for granted, we need to ask for it. I wonder how often we come under attack from the enemy because we have not asked God for protection?

Our key weapon against the evil one is prayer. Spiritual warfare is sometimes called prayer warfare, binding and loosing, taking authority, using the name of Jesus, resisting the enemy are all done in prayer. Paul's classic passage on standing firm against the enemy is found in Ephesians 6, the armour of light.

**How does Paul conclude this passage?** Ephesians 6v18

These are the basic things we should cover in our prayers, both for ourselves and others. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

# Bible Studies

## The prodigal son

If you are going to interpret the parables of Jesus then you will need to understand two important elements; The cultural background, for example in this parable, Jews despised pigs and were prohibited from keeping them. Secondly; the human element, why the people behaved the way they did. The former is often stressed over the latter. The prodigal son is a human interest story, if you are a teenager or you have teenagers you will identify with the characters.



### **Read Luke 15v11-24**

Prodigal means wasteful or lavish, to give prodigally is to give generously, it comes from the same root as prodigious.

### **What did the younger son request of the father?**

This was acceptable practice, the estate could be divided before the death of the father. In accordance with Deut 21v17, the oldest son would probably have received two thirds and the younger a third. The heirs could sell the land, but it would not change hands until the father died. In the mean time, the father received the income from the property. In the parable, the son ended up with a sum of money, he may have sold his share in the property, or it may have come from the capital within the estate.



### **Why did you do think he asked for this?**

### **What characteristics did it show in his life?**

### **What did he have in mind to do?**

Was the young man greedy, impatient? Clearly he was not content. Clearly he wanted out.

### **How do you think he felt at home?**

It has been said that by asking for the inheritance the younger son was effectively telling his father he wished he would hurry up and die. Dividing property was part of the culture, and was often initiated by the father. It is unlikely he wanted his father dead, he just wanted to get away, be free, be an adult.

### **Do you think he hated his father? What was his attitude to his father?**

### **What did the younger son do next? v13**

The next thing he did was to leave home. He went to a distant country and lived it up.



### **Why was the time frame short? (not long after)**

### **Why did the young man want to leave home?**

### **Why a distant country?**

### **Why did he adopt such a lavish lifestyle?**

He wanted to be free and he wanted to have fun. He wanted to find his own life. He felt he was missing out, that his father was too old fashioned, too frugal.

### **Do teenagers still experience this?**

The father must have had an idea of what his son had in mind and what was likely to happen if he got his hands on the money.



### **Why did the father give him the money and let him go?**

### **What alternatives did he have?**

### **What would you have done?**

### **What might have happened if the son had stayed?**

### **What risks did the father take?**

### **How do you think the father felt letting him go?**

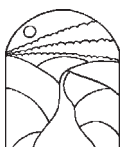
The father in the story is wise, he is after all a type of God! He loved his son, he had seen the frustration build in his life, and he knew that the only way he could keep his son was if he let him go. **(What else could he have tried?)**



### **What happened next? v14-16**

Your going to say he ran out of money and a famine (economic recession) occurred and he was left penniless, alone and miserable, a long way from home. But that is not what happened next. It took him a while to get through his money and life was good! Everything he expected happened, and it was great. He had been right all along. His fathers morality and lifestyle were repressive and found wanting. This was the way to live!

### **Read Hebrews 11v24-26**



**What choice did Moses make? Why?**  
**What choice did the lost son make? Why?**  
**What does this passage tell us about sin?**

Part of our Christian heritage is to tell people, 'sin is no fun, you won't enjoy it.' Its continuing popularity would prove otherwise. There is pleasure in sin, but it is short lived. It is the end results that prove the point. Sin leads to misery and death, righteousness to happiness and life. The question is not, 'will I enjoy myself' but 'in the long term, where is this going to take me'. The prodigal son was a victim of his own choices.

And he began to be in need.

**What were his needs?**

As a good Jewish lad, feeding pigs in a foreign country, was the ultimate low. It could not be worst. His lifestyle led him in to servitude.

No one gave him anything.

**What contrast is being made?**

**How do you think he felt?**



**What happened next? What was the plan? v18-19**

**When he came to his senses what did he realize?**

**On who's terms was he going to return home?**

**Why did he plan to return home, not go somewhere else?**

**How did his actions reflect this Fathers influence?**

**Who had he sinned against?**

**How had he sinned against his father?**

**Why did he only realize this now?**

**How had he sinned against God?**

God is creator, owner, lawgiver, and the moral standard of the universe. All sin is primarily against God. **Read Psalm 51v4**



**What happened next?**

One of the consistent criticisms of this parable is that it contains no theology of atonement. (it is just a parable, you cannot fit everything into a story).

However the sons actions are consistent with repentance. He acknowledged his sin, he confessed it, he returned to the father and asked to be taken back.

**How do you think the son felt walking home?**

**How did the father see him a long way off?**

We can only conclude that the father had been watching for his return. This was the day he had been living for ever since he divided the land.



**What did the father do? v20 Why did the father behave this way?**

The vision of an old, respectable father, running down the dusty road to embrace an emaciated youth, dressed in rags, is the heart of the gospel. It is interesting that the son never got to finish his carefully prepared speech.

**Was what he said true? v21**

**What did the father do?**

**What did this mean?**

**What do you think these things symbolized?**

It meant he accepted him back as a son, he forgave him and planned to be generous towards him. The son no longer had a share in the estate but it is clear from the fathers actions that he intends to provide for him. It is the father in this story who is truly prodigal!



**What did the father mean by, 'he was dead but now he is alive'?**

**How did the father feel on his sons return?**

**Did the father ever give up on his son?**

**How did the son feel?**

**Do you think it was what the son expected?**

**On who's terms was the son taken back?**

**What was the fathers greatest attribute?**

**Why did the father behave the way he did? How else could he have acted?**

To be honest and put yourself in the fathers position, would you acted like this? What would you have said? Ah so you've come crawling home have you, you're a disgrace. Dead right your not worthy to be my son, don't you realize the damage you have done. You are going to work as a servant and you will pay back every penny you wasted. And if you ever so much as put a foot wrong you are out on your ear.



**What was the final outcome?**

**How had the son changed?**

**How had the father changed?**

**What changed in their relationship?**



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- Why did you do think he asked for this?**
- What characteristics did it show in his life?**
- What did he have in mind to do?**

Was the young man greedy, impatient? Clearly he was not content. Clearly he wanted out.

**How do you think he felt at home?**

Frustrated, inhibited, bound, bored,

It has been said that by asking for the inheritance the younger son was effectively telling his father he wished he would hurry up and die. Dividing property was part of the culture, and was often initiated by the father. It is unlikely he wanted his father dead, he just wanted to get away, be free, be an adult.

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**What was the fathers greatest attribute?**

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**What was the final outcome?**

**How had the son changed?**

**How had the father changed?**

**What changed in their relationship?**

saw,  
compassion,  
ran, hugged  
kissed

# Bible Studies

## From the pigsty to the banquet



### **Read Luke 15v11-24**

This is a story about us and God. God is the father, at this stage we are the prodigal.

***What do you think this parable is intended to illustrate?***

***Is the prodigal a backslider or someone yet to be saved?***

***Why do we want to leave home?***

***What do you think the inheritance God gave us is?***

***How do we waste the things God gives us?***

***Why did God let us?***

***What does this illustrate?***

***When did God give us our freedom?***

***Why did he do this?***

***What did God hope to achieve?***

***What were the alternatives?***

***What dangers are there in this, for God and for us?***

***Why do we need to assert our freedom and run away?***

***Why do we always want what is prohibited?***

***Why do we run after the things that damage us?***

***Is running away and returning inevitable?***

***Why doesn't sin bring us the results we want?***

***What was the foreign land?***

***What was the famine?***

***What was the pig sty?***

***What were the needs we, 'began to be in'? v14***

***What was the equivalent of; 'no one giving us anything'? v16***

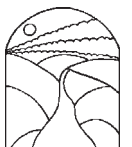
***What is the servitude we end up in? v15 (John 8v34)***

***If we had to 'come to our senses', what were we before we repented?***

***How do we return home?***

***What do we need to do in returning home?***

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***What kind of a change in attitude does it require?***

***On what terms do people want to return home?***

***What are the fathers terms for returning?***

***Why is it so hard for many to do?***

***What does this tell us about the father?***

***What does this tell us about ourselves?***

***In what way was the father watching for us?***

***In what way did the father run out to meet us?***

***What welcome do we get when we repent?***

***What is the father's attitude to penitent sinners?***

***What is the father's attitude to non penitent sinners?***

***What conditions does the father put on us when we return?***

***What are the equivalents of the ring, the robe and the sandals?***

***What is the equivalent of the banquet?***

***What does this passage tell us about the way that we should forgive?***

***What attitude should we take to those who walk away?***

***Does God ever write people off?***

***Do we? Should we?***



***Who did Jesus want us to understand when He told us this parable?***

***How does He want us to act as a result?***

This parable is one of three that occur in Luke 15 and speak about things that were lost.



***Read Luke 15v3-7***

***Read Luke 15v8-10***

***what were the three things that were lost?***



***What elements do all three parables have in common?***

***What is found in the first two that is missing in the third?***

Our father was not content to wait at home, on the off chance that we would return. He came out looking for us.

***How did he do that?***

Returning home, is a great way of describing the act of repentance and salvation.

***What does it imply?***

We are going back to where we belong, where we were always supposed to be.



***On what bases can we return home?***

# Bible Studies

## From the pigsty to the banquet



### **Read Luke 15v11-24**

This is a story about us and God. God is the father, at this stage we are the prodigal.

### **What do you think this parable is intended to illustrate?**

Repentance, why God lets us sin, God's attitude to sinner, the folly of human nature etc

### **Is the prodigal a backslider or someone yet to be saved?**

### **Why do we want to leave home?**

We did not like all of God's rules we wanted to do what we wanted not God's will, we had the idea that God was keeping us from enjoying ourselves.

### **What do you think the inheritance God gave us is?**

Our life, our free choice, the world around us, love, abilities, time

### **How do we waste the things God gives us?**

By using it in sin, for ourselves and not for God

### **Why did God let us?**

Because God wanted us to serve Him freely not out of compulsion. He knows we will never truly belong to Him unless we make the choice to serve Him

### **What does this illustrate?**

Why God allows us to sin. He respects our choices.

### **When did God give us our freedom?**

The Garden of Eden and every day of our lives.

### **Why did he do this?**

Our freedom is very important to God. He did not want to make us as robots.

### **What did God hope to achieve?**

Our return to Him freely

### **What were the alternatives?**

To give us no ability to sin, make us slaves

### **What dangers are there in this, for God and for us?**

The danger is that we will not come to our senses and return, that in using our freedom we will destroy ourselves

### **Why do we need to assert our freedom and run away?**

Fallen human nature, inquisitive. Temptation of the enemy

### **Why do we always want what is prohibited?**

### **Why do we run after the things that damage us?**

### **Is running away and returning inevitable?**

It depends on how you interpret the parable, if you apply it to a youngster growing up in a Christian home, inevitably backsliding so that he can return all the stronger, then no. Personally all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God. We have all done it.

### **Why doesn't sin bring us the results we want?**

We were not created to sin, obedience to God brings fulfillment. The wages of sin are death. How can going against our creator and what we were created for ever end in good.

### **What was the foreign land?**

Sin going away from God, doing our own thing.

### **What was the famine?**

The trial and grief's that everyone faces in life

### **What was the pig sty?**

The consequences of our sins

### **What were the needs we, 'began to be in'? V14**

Holiness, communion with God, peace, satisfaction etc

### **What was the equivalent of; 'no one giving us anything'? V16**

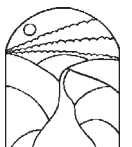
In the end the world and the enemy do not have the things we need and would not give them to us even if they could.

### **What is the servitude we end up in? v15 (John 8v34)**

### **If we had to 'come to our senses', what were we before we repented?**

Realize what we have done, our sin, how foolish we have been, see what makes us happy and how sin makes us miserable. See life how it really is not the way the enemy wants us to see it.

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**How do we return home?**

Turn to God, turn from sin, obey God, do what is right.

**What do we need to do in returning home?**

Repent.

**What kind of a change in attitude does it require?**

Humility, acknowledging we were wrong, willingness to change.

**On what terms do people want to return home?**

I promise to be good, good works, will serve God, won't do it again.

**What are the fathers terms for returning?**

The Cross

**Why is it so hard for many to do?**

**What does this tell us about the father?**

He is only too eager to see us return and so ready to forgive. He is waiting for us to be sick of sin and this world.

**What does this tell us about ourselves?**

**In what way was the father watching for us?**

God is always watching us to see when we will return

**In what way did the father run out to meet us?**

Jesus came

**What welcome do we get when we repent?**

**What is the father's attitude to penitent sinners?**

Open arms

**What is the fathers attitude to non penitent sinners?**

Waits patiently for them, send the famine

**What conditions does the father put on us when we return?**

Yes we need to repent, yes we need to obey, but there are far less conditions than many of us want to tell people there are. God has made it as easy as He possibly could for us to return

**What are the equivalents of the ring, the robe and the sandals?**

Ring authority. Robe righteousness. Sandals security  
really these thing talk about God's attitude to us rather than specifics.

**What is the equivalent of the banquet?**

God's blessing and acceptance

**What does this passage tell us about the way that we should forgive?**

Just like the Father, freely unconditionally and without recriminations

**What attitude should we take to those who walk away?**

Don't write them off, look for them to return welcome them back.

**Does God ever write people off?**

Never

**Do we? Should we?**



**What did Jesus want us to understand when He told us this parable?**

God's amazing forgiveness and readiness to welcome us back

**How does He want us to act as a result?**

Return to our Home

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# Bible Studies

## The Older Brother

The parable of the lost son splits conveniently into two parts. The first part is centered around the younger son. It is heart warming and inspiring. The second, is about the older brother and is challenging, perhaps a little to close to home. So convenient is this split that the second part is often ignored, or mentioned only in passing. Reading the parable in context we discover that the first part is really a preparation for the second, it is the second part that contains the message Jesus wanted His hearers to understand.

So what did Jesus want to say to His hearers? His primary meaning that has not come out in the previous two studies. It comes as a shock to discover that many of us are not the prodigal but are in fact the older brother.



**Read Luke 15v28-32**

**Read Luke 15v1-2**

**On the bases of these verses who are the parties in the parable?**

The three parables of Luke 15 are told in response to the Pharisees criticism of Jesus. The Pharisees are the older brother and the sinners, that Jesus eat with, are the prodigal.

Jesus concluded a similar parable by warning the Pharisees; "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. Matthew 21:31

**What did Jesus want the Pharisees to understand?** Luke 19v9, Math 9v12

**Why did Jesus associate with sinful people?**

**How did they respond to Him?**

**Why did the Pharisees have a hard time with this?**

Were the Pharisees frightened that Jesus was lowering the standard?

**Not the fatted calf!**

**What was the character of the older brother?**

**Was he good or bad? Reliable or unreliable? Considerate or inconsiderate?**

It would be easy to turn the older brother into the bad guy. He wasn't. He was everything a son should be. He loved his father and cared about him, he worked hard, obedient and faithful. Quite the opposite of the younger!

It would be easy to read into the story an animosity between the brother that predated the prodigals misadventure. If it was there Jesus is silent about it.

The older brother acts like someone who has been hurt, genuinely offended.

**How was his character in comparison with his younger brother?**

**How had the prodigal wronged his older brother?**

**How did the older brother react when his brother returned?**



**Was the older brother angry that the prodigal had return?**

This is interesting we don't know how he felt about his brothers return! When talking to his father, he referred to him as 'this son of yours', not 'my brother' The father pointedly corrects him 'this brother of yours'. v32.



**What accusations does he make against his younger brother? v30**

He certainly wasted the money, but while it was the fathers money it had been given to him. About the prostitutes? We don't know and neither did the brother. No doubt rumors abounded. He was quick to assume the worst.



**Did the older brother stand to loose out from the prodigals return?**

No, the property was divided and remained his, (as his father pointed out to him, v31) The interest belonged to the father and was his to do with as he wished.



**What did the older brother get offended at?**

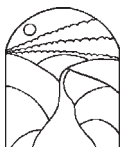
His problem was not his brothers return, but the way his father handled it. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Luke 15v2

**How did his father handle the return?**

**What accusation did he make against his father?**

He was unjust in his dealings.

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**How would the older brother have wanted his father to handle it?**

“Accept him back, sure, he is family after all. There should have been punishment, conditions, trial periods. Why not let him come back as a servant at least to start with. He should be made to learn from his mistakes. We should be justified and at the bottom line he should be just like me.”

**How should the older brother have responded?**

**Why did the father and son react so differently?**

**What was the older sons problem? Did he understand his father?**

**What was his labour motivated by? (what word does he use to describe his work)**

The older brother understood; discipline, duty, responsibility and obedience. He did not understand, his younger brother, mercy, grace, love or most of all his father. In verse 28 it is interesting that the older brother's indignation and self-righteousness kept him outside the father's house. He did not understand repentance, what it meant to be a son, or more importantly a father. He did not understand why his father behaved the way he did, or his continuing love for such a son. He thought everything came from merit and hard work.

**Were James and John right? Luke 9v54**

**What did Jesus want the Pharisees to understand by telling them this parable?**

**How does it apply to us?**

**How were the brothers different? How were they the same?**

Of the two sons one was unrighteous, the other was self-righteous, both rebelled, both broke their father's hearts, both ended up in a distant country (one physically the other spiritually and emotionally). Both wasted their inheritance. The Father had to come out to both of them and they both received his love.

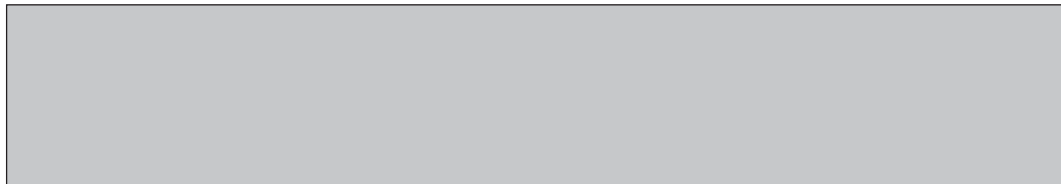
**How did the older son rebel? How did the older brother waste his inheritance?**

He rebelled because he disagreed with his father's actions and refused to enter the house, despite his father's pleading. It was a very different rebellion, but a rebellion it was. He wasted his inheritance by thinking of himself as a slave.

**How do each of them need to receive the Father's love?**

The prodigal needed to receive the father's love by changing his ways. The older brother needed to change his attitude to his brother and his father.

**We act like the older brother when:**



**The Father's reply to his son.**

The older brother's biggest failure was to appreciate what he had.



**What did he have?**

**Read Luke 15v29b What was wrong with this statement?**

**What kind of thinking did this show?**

The brother believed he should receive special treatment because of his hard work. The Pharisees felt the same. **Do you?**

My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' Luke 15v31-32

**What two things did the father tell him?**

**How do these apply to us?**



**Read 1 John 3v1-2 Who are we?**

**What is our position in Christ?**

Romans 8v16

**What do we have?**

It is amazing that God should call us His children, that He should promise to be with us all the time and should tell us that all that He has is ours. We need to live in this security. The older son's attitude caused him to miss out on all the father had for him.

God's estate is very big we have nothing to lose. We have no reason to be petty or jealous. Everything God has is ours, we need to be aware of our inheritance. Our position in God gives us the ability to be magnanimous.

The challenge; to love how God loves; to forgive how God forgives; to accept how God accepts. We need to join the Father's celebration.



# Bible Studies

## The Older Brother

The parable of the lost son splits conveniently into two parts. The first part is centered around the younger son. It is heart warming and inspiring. The second, is about the older brother and is challenging, perhaps a little to close to home. So convenient is this split that the second part is often ignored, or mentioned only in passing. Reading the parable in context we discover that the first part is really a preparation for the second, it is the second part that contains the message Jesus wanted His hearers to understand.

So what did Jesus want to say to His hearers? His primary meaning that has not come out in the previous two studies. It comes as a shock to discover that many of us are not the prodigal but are in fact the older brother.



**Read Luke 15v28-32**

**Read Luke 15v1-2**

**On the bases of these verses who are the parties in the parable?**

The three parables of Luke 15 are told in response to the Pharisees criticism of Jesus. The Pharisees are the older brother and the sinners, that Jesus eat with, are the prodigal.

Jesus concluded a similar parable by warning the Pharisees; “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. Matthew 21:31

**What did Jesus want the Pharisees to understand?** Luke 19v9, Math 9v12

**Why did Jesus associate with sinful people?**

**How did they respond to Him?**

**Why did the Pharisees have a hard time with this?**

Were the Pharisees frightened that Jesus was lowering the standard?

**Not the fatted calf!**

**What was the character of the older brother?**

**Was he good or bad? Reliable or unreliable? Considerate or inconsiderate?**

It would be easy to turn the older brother into the bad guy. He wasn't. He was everything a son should be. He loved his father and cared about him, he worked hard, obedient and faithful. Quite the opposite of the younger!

It would be easy to read into the story an animosity between the brother that predated the prodigals misadventure. If it was there Jesus is silent about it.

The older brother acts like someone who has been hurt, genuinely offended.

**How was his character in comparison with his younger brother?**

**How had the prodigal wronged his older brother?**

**How did the older brother react when his brother returned?**

Angry, resentful, jealous, bitter, hard done by, wronged, sense of injustice.



**Was the older brother angry that the prodigal had return?**

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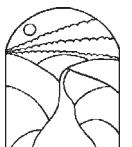
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**How do each of them need to receive the Fathers love?**

The prodigal need to receive the fathers love by changing his ways. The Older brother needed to change his attitude to his brother and his father.

**We act like the older brother when:**

We get jealous of what God does for someone else.  
We put conditions on people’s faith that God does not.  
We think our efforts deserve God’s reward.  
Get bitter about our position before God.  
We get into legalism. We act like God’s slave.  
We refuse to accept people back the way God does.

**The Father's reply to his son.**

The older brother biggest failure was to appreciate what he had.



**What did he have?**

**Read Luke 15v29b What was wrong with this statement?**

**What kind of thinking did this show?**

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The challenge; to love how God loves; to forgive how God forgives; to accept how God accepts. We need to join the Fathers celebration.

# Bible Studies

## The Good Samaritan



### **Read Luke 10v25-37**

Jesus parables were usually told in response to an incident or a question. The incident gives us the meaning Jesus intended us to grasp. In this case an expert in the Law, that is the Torah (first five books of the Bible) and the oral law, a set of traditions believed to have come from Moses, asked Jesus a question.

**What question did he ask Jesus? Is this a reasonable question?**  
**Why do you think he asked it? How would you answer this question?**

You do not do anything to inherit eternal life, it is not achieved by works. The lawyer's whole question was flawed. Eternal life is God's gift to us. We receive it by believing in Jesus Christ and making Him our Lord and Saviour. Jesus answered the lawyer's question with another question, He wanted to know what the lawyer thought. This is a good technique to use when people ask us questions about God. **How did he answer?**

This is a quotation for the Law, Deut 6v5 & Lev 19v18. Within Judaism of the day, this was the right answer. It is also consistent with what Jesus Himself taught. Matthew 22v37, Mark 12v30-31. Jesus first agrees with him and then tells a story that turns the man's whole world view on its head.



### **Read Matthew 19v16-21, Mark 12v28-31**

#### **What did this young man need to do to inherit eternal life?**

There are similarities in this account but here Jesus adds the need to follow him. The lawyer and Jesus probably had quite different understandings of what it meant to love God. For the lawyer it meant to obey the commands, for Jesus it meant to commit yourself to God wholly and from the heart. This is the basic requirement of salvation. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19v18

#### **Why did the lawyer ask who his neighbour was?**

It says he wanted to justify himself. This means he wanted to look good, but it also means that he sought to be justified by obeying the Law. Something the New Testament tells us is impossible. Perhaps he also wanted to avoid doing anything he did not need to.

#### **Why did Jesus tell this parable?**

He wanted the lawyer to expand his idea about who he should show love to.



### **The Story**

Jerusalem is in the high country and Jericho in the Jordan valley. It was a long, winding, descent of about 20km though hilly, arid terrain. Ideal country for bandits. Wadi Kelt, with an all year stream flows from Jerusalem to Jericho. People could follow the wadi or a road that ran parallel to it some distance away. It is interesting that this is not referred to in the Bible as a parable, it could well have been based on a recent event. It is unlikely such an event featured a Samaritan as its hero.

#### **What state was the man left in by the bandits?**

#### **Who were the three men that followed down the road?**

#### **Why did Jesus choose these people to pass by?**

The first two were a Priest and a Levite. The Levites were responsible for the upkeep of the Tabernacle/Temple. After the time of the Exile the distinction between the two groups diminished greatly. Both were greatly respected people, just the kind of people you would have expected to be the first to help. Jesus is not directly criticising the priests.

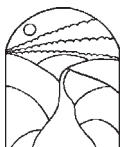
It has been speculated that they avoided the man because they thought he was dead or was about to die and would therefore make them ritually unclean and could have stopped them performing their priestly responsibilities, Numbers 19v11. (They were going AWAY from Jerusalem.)

#### **Was this a good reason not to help the man? Why didn't they help him?**

#### **What did the law say they should do? Exodus 23v4-5**

Judaism has always upheld the sanctity of human life, it holds that almost all the laws can and should be broken in order to protect life. Luke 13v15, this concept is called Pikuach Nefesh. Only the high priest would be constrained from helping under these circumstances. Lev 21v11.

Equally assuming they thought he was already dead, they were still not off the hook. Providing



burial for a stranger was one of Judaism's ultimate good deeds.  
The Priest and the Levite passed by because they concluded, this man was not their neighbour.

**What did the Samaritan do? What characteristics did he show?**

**What made his actions stand out? Why did he help?**

**Would he have been criticised for not helping?**

No one would have expected a Samaritan to help. The priest's concern was 'am I obligated to help this man? Is it my duty?' The Samaritan acted out of love. Jesus is calling for a change not only in the lawyers behaviour but in his total outlook. A change for law to grace.

**Did the Samaritan do the minimum for the man?**

The Samaritan left the man at an inn where he could rehabilitate. He paid generously for his care.

The Jews and Samaritans hated each other. John 4v9. The Samaritans were gentiles that had been settled in the north of Israel by the Assyrians. 2 Kings 17v24. They had taken on many of the beliefs of the Jews in a divergent form. They were if you like renegade Jews. Hatred often gave way to racial violence. The animosity was real. To the Jews "good Samaritan" was an oxymoron.

**What were the current relations between Jesus & the Samaritans? Luke 9v51-55**

**Why do you think Jesus picked a Samaritan to be the hero of the story?**



**What point is He trying to get across?**

**Is Jesus saying the Samaritans are better than the Jews?**

**Who would be the equivalent of the Samaritan for you?**

The Samaritan was the last person you would ever have expected to help and the person you most despise. Jesus intends this story to be scandalous, even offensive. When the lawyer answers Jesus parting question, he avoids the word Samaritan. If Jesus were telling this story in a Samaritan village He would have made the hero a Jew!

**Would the story have had the same edge if it had been a Jew helping a Samaritan?**

**What was the answer to the lawyers question, who is your neighbour?**

If even a Samaritan is your neighbour, then everyone is.

**What does this story say about racism among believers?**

**Can a Christian maintain racist views?**

In a way Jesus is speaking against racial stereotypes. This was not the actions people expected from a Samaritan. Jesus found something good where others could find only evil.

**What happens when you look for good in people?**



### **The Allegory**

Some people have found an allegory in this story. Jesus is the Good Samaritan, we are the beaten wretch. The Priest represents keeping the law something that could not help us. Meanings are found in the oil and wine, the inn is the church. Some have even found a meaning for the donkey!

**What barrier did Jesus cross to help us?**

**Can you think of a problem with interpreting the story this way?**

You could say the story has a secondary meaning. It illustrates how we receive eternal life. At His own cost, Jesus became our neighbour. He acted like the good Samaritan, when we were helpless He came to our aid. It is a beautiful picture and has blessed many. But this is not the reason Jesus told the story. By emphasising an allegorical interpretation, we find ourselves in the embarrassing position of ignoring what Jesus wanted to tell us! Like the lawyer, who could not admit that it was the Samaritan who helped. Like him we want to avoid the point, it is too uncomfortable.



**What about you?**

**What is the moral of this story?**

**What was Jesus concluding remark to this man?**

**Did he want the man to change his attitude or his actions?**

**Read Matthew 5v43-46, 1 John 3v16-18, James 1v27**

The man's original question was about inheriting eternal life. Jesus is saying, that inheriting eternal life requires you to reach out to the unloved, as God did for us.

**Is there a connection between loving God and loving others? 1 John 4v20-21**



**How will you behave differently because of this story?**

**How are you going to do likewise?**

**Who are you going to do likewise to?**

**How should we behave toward those we hate or despise?**

**Is the Gospel just for people like us?**

**Is it just people like ourselves that we should help?**

# Bible Studies

## A Page from Deuteronomy

Most Christians get very confused when they read the Law (the first five books of the OT). They are part of the Scripture, we feel we should obey them but there are large parts of them that we have no intention of keeping. Some of them the NT endorses, others it abrogates.

Mark 7v19	<b>What part of the law did Jesus free us from?</b>
Matthew 5v17-19	<b>Did Jesus say we are free to ignore the law?</b>
Matthew 5v38-39	<b>How did Jesus interpret the law?</b>
Acts 15v10-11	<b>Are gentiles required to keep the law?</b>
Romans 3v21	<b>Are we made righteous by keeping the law?</b>
Romans 3v31	<b>Do we nullify the law?</b>
Romans 6v14	<b>Are we under (required to keep) the law?</b>
Romans 7v6	<b>Are we bound by the law?</b>
Romans 10v4	<b>What does it mean that Christ was the end of the law?</b>
1 Corinthians 9v8-10	<b>How did Paul use the law?</b>
1 Timothy 1v7-8	<b>What does use it properly imply we can do?</b>
James 2v10	<b>What happens if you do not keep the whole law?</b>
Romans 13v9-10	<b>How do you keep the law? Matthew 22v37-40</b>

This is a really big subject on which we can only touch. The law was central to the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. We are under a different covenant, a New Covenant. The law is not our covenant. We cannot be saved or made righteous by keeping it. In fact one of the reasons God gave the law, was to highlight our inability to be righteous. It was intended to force us to throw ourselves on God's mercy. This does not mean it has no relevance for us.

We are not obligated to keep the law for our salvation, but there are parts of the law that we need to obey, the New Testament tells us this and it is clearly God's will.

**What is the difference between keeping the law and obeying the law?** Rom 2v14-15

The question remains, how are we to treat the law?

**Do we reject it all?**

**Do we keep it all?**

**What parts do we keep, what do we reject?**

**And how do we know?**

The danger is it becomes subjective. We go on our gut feelings, we accept the bits we like and reject the bits we don't. In doing so, we know we are being inconsistent, so we file it in the *to difficult* folder, and argue about whether verses like Leviticus 19v28 ban tattoos. There has to be a better way. **What parts of the law don't we keep today?**

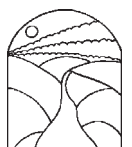
### **Some considerations for application**

- ?** Does the New Testament endorse it, comment on it or abrogate it.
- ?** Does it have a cultural application. Cooking a goat in its mother milk was thought to bring good luck, (sympathetic magic) it was part of pagan occult practice. It was also a rotten thing to do!
- ?** Does it have reasoning behind it that no longer applies (banning pork & shell fish in a hot climate is a very good idea.) Like many laws they were intended for Israel's good and safety.
- ?** Some parts of the Law were civil law which is no longer part of our system. (eg cities of refuge.) They may still have implications for us.
- ?** Some part we cannot keep and have been superseded (eg animal sacrifice and ritual purity.) Again they have principles that are still important.
- ?** Is there a spiritual reason behind it? (eg the law of the kinsman redeemer teaches us who Jesus acted in redeeming us)
- ?** What does this law tell us about God and His will. Many of these laws express God's love, care and wisdom even when we are not obligated to keep them we can still learn from them. (eg not harvesting the edge of our field to provide for the poor)

The OT laws are given as examples to be applied, not as an exhaustive description of everything you should and shouldn't do. Eg Lev 19v14, says we are not to mistreat the blind or the deaf, but it says nothing of the dumb or crippled are we therefore allowed to mistreat them? No the law is an illustration not a description. It's paradigmatic.

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- 1** **Deuteronomy 21v22-23** Joshua 8v29 & 10v26-27  
**Why do you think this law might have been given?**  
**How does the New Testament use this law?** Galatians 3v13  
**Why did hanging on a tree equate to God's cures?**  
**Why did the body have to be buried the same day?**  
 To be hung on a tree was the ultimate humiliation.
- 2** **Deuteronomy 22v1-3** Exodus 23v4-5  
**What is this law telling us to do?**  
**Was this command for the sake of the animal or it's owner?**  
**How does it apply to us today?**  
**What does this command teach us about social responsibility?**
- 3** **Deuteronomy 22v3-4**  
**What is this law commanding us to do?**  
**Can you think of a modern equivalent?**  
**What does it tell us about the way we need to treat each other?**  
**Does the New Testament touch on this subject?**
- 4** **Deuteronomy 22v5**  
**Why did God give this command?**  
**What did men and women wear in biblical times?**  
**Does this commandment mean that women should not wear trousers?**  
**Do you think this command is exclusively about clothes?**  
**Could this be linked to the prohibition of homosexual acts?** Lev 18v22, 20v13  
 It could well be that this command is intend to maintain distinction between the sexes.  
**Is this distinction still important?**
- 5** **Deuteronomy 22v6-7**  
**What does this prohibit you from doing?** Why?  
**What does this say about our responsibility to the world around us?**
- 6** **Deuteronomy 22v8**  
**Why did you have to build a parapet around your roof?**  
 Middle Eastern houses had flat roofs, where people meet & talked. Josh 2v6, 2Sam 11v2  
**If someone fell from your roof, who's fault would it be?**  
**What application does this have for us today?**  
**Is this law found in our legal systems today?**
- 7** **Deuteronomy 22v9**  
**What is wrong with sowing two kinds of seed?**  
**How would this apply to genetic engineering or hybrid crops?**  
 The most likely explanation is that this is another command against a practice that was associated pagan ritual and intended to bring luck. It could also be about keeping species separate and protecting biological diversity.
- 8** **Deuteronomy 22v10**  
**What will happen if you plough with an ox and a donkey?**  
**What effect will it have on the weaker animal?**  
**Why was the command given?**  
**How did Paul apply this verse?** 2 Cor 6v14  
 It is possible that all these 'keep separate' commands, were intended to remind the Israelites that they had to remain distinct from the surrounding nations?  
**What things do we need to be careful to keep separate?**
- 9** **Deuteronomy 22v11** Leviticus 19v19  
**How many of us are breaking this command right now?**  
**Does God give pointless commands?**  
 This is probably another sympathetic magic command. Others have seen in this an illusion to the historical enmity between those who raise crops and those who herd animals.
- 10** **Deuteronomy 22v12**  
 Jews today still have four tassels on their prayer robes. In Jesus day all outer garments had these tassels. It was the tassel on Jesus robe that the women with the issue of blood reached out and touched. Matthew 9v20  
**What were these tassels for?** Numbers 15v37-41  
**What would be a good equivalent for us?**

# Bible Studies

## The Parable of the Workers



### **Read Matthew 20v1-16**

The question we have to answer in this study is , what aspect of the kingdom of heaven did Jesus want us to understand? Why were the last to be hired who did almost not work given the same as those who worked hard? How is this parable relevant to us? Jesus intended this story to be disturbing. It still elicits strong reactions.

**How do you feel about this story? Who do you identify with?**

The scene is self explanatory. There is an employer with work to be done and a market place where casual labourers gather waiting for work and a chance to feed their families. At dawn (first hour) he hires a group of workers. At three hour intervals, the land owner returns and finds another group of workers and invited them to come to his vineyard to work.

**Who is the landowner? What is the vineyard?**

The landowner is obviously God. Frequently in the Scriptures, Israel is represented by a vineyard. Isaiah 5v7. Here it seems to be a broader idea, there are several things it could be. Living as a Christian seems the most obvious. It can also be doing God's will or His work. It represents salvation.



**Who are the workers?**

**What does the hour they started work represent?**

**What did evening and settling of accounts represent?**

The workers are us. People who get saved. The hour at which they are employed is the time when they got saved. The evening is judgement day.



**How many groups of workers were employed?**

**How long did the last group work?**

**How long was the working day?**

A standard working day would have been about ten hours, at harvest time it would be longer.

**What agreement did the landowner make with the first group?**

A denarius was the standard rate of pay for a days work.

**What agreement did he make with the second group?**

**What agreement did he make with the third & subsequent groups?**

The first group had a clear bargain struck, a denarius for a days work. The second were told that they would be paid 'what was right', the groups after that had were not given any expectation. They had to trust the landowner.

**Can you see a parallel here?**



**What is the denarius?**

This is an important question, how you answer it changes the way to interpret the parable. The passage preceding this one, (19v16-30) deals with how you get saved and what reward their will be for those who sacrifice for the kingdom.

The Bible tells us that we will be rewarded for our labours for God. If the denarius is our reward, then all receive the same reward no matter what they have done for God, or not done for Him. Other passages in scripture suggest there will be degrees of reward. 1 Cor 3v15, Rev 22v12. However...

Alternatively the denarius can be taken as God's gift of eternal life, our inheritance, our final salvation. It seems this is the meaning Jesus wanted us to understand.

**If this is so then what is the meaning of the parable?**

The basic meaning is that it is not the amount of work you do or how long you have been saved, that gets you into heaven, it is the fact that God called you to work in his vineyard. It is by grace and not works.

**At the end of the day what happened?**

**What did the first group expect when they saw the last get a denarius?**

**Why did the first workers get angry?**

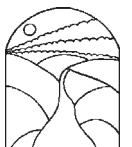
**What was their grievance?**

**Would they have felt aggrieved if the latter workers had got less?**

**What characteristics did they show?**

**Was this fair?**

Yes and no. It was fair, in that they got what was the day's rates, they got what they agreed to. If the others had not received the same they would have been happy with it. They got greedy and wanted more. This parable portrays human nature very well, when we have we



always want more. They based their claim not on the rate for the job. But as a comparison to what the others got.

On the other hand, the point of this parable is that it's not fair! They had worked harder, they had born the heat of the day. God does not treat us according to what we deserve but according to His generosity.



**What argument does the land owner use to justify himself?**

**Did the last lot of workers deserve the full denarius?**

**Why did the land owner give them the same wages?**

The landowner paid them according to his generosity not according to what they deserved or the requirements placed upon him.

Those who had waited all day in the market wanted to work, but no one hired them.

**Were their needs any the less for the fact that they could not find work?**

They had the same size mouths to feed. The land owner paid them according to their needs not their work.

**How do these two facts apply to us?**



**The application**

Jesus spoke this parable for the benefit of the Pharisees. They were those who had 'worked hard all day'. They had kept the Law of Moses to the best of their ability.

As a result they thought they deserved eternal life. Then along comes Jesus and starts offering this same reward to sinners, not because they were good, or deserving or had kept the law, but by grace through faith. A salvation that depends not on how hard they had worked but upon the generosity of God and the fact that God called them and they responded.

Things got even worse in the early Church when this same reward is offered to heathen gentiles, who did not know God or the law, and who did not deserve anything. This is a salvation based not by works but by him who calls-Romans 9v12. The Pharisees were offended they thought they deserved better.

**How are we like the last group of workers in this parable?**

**What attitude should the first group of workers in this parable have taken?**

**Read Romans 9v30-33**

**How does this passage connect with the parable?**

**In what way is Jesus a stumbling stone?**

**Does this attitude find it's way into the Church?**

Jesus is still a stumbling stone for many. The cross tells us that we can do nothing to achieve our own salvation, it is all dependent on God. We have to admit our need and our inability to help ourselves. Calvary is a very humbling place.

**What two roles does Jesus fulfill?** 1 Peter 2v6-8

**This parable also applies to us today.**



**Read Luke 23v39-43**

**What did this man do to deserve eternal life?**

**What did the man do to receive eternal life?**

This man had sinned his whole life long. His execution was a fitting end to the way he had lived. With his last breath he asked for mercy and he received it in full.

**How does this express God's generosity? Is this fair?**

You probably said yes. But it is not fair! It is just, it is right and it is wonderful. Parables are stories that convey a meaning. They are not always perfect similes. The truth is that no matter how hard we work or how long we have been believers, neither the Pharisees or us can earn eternal life, it is always God's gift. We never deserve it. If salvation was based on God being fair, none of us would attain it.

**If a serial killer, who has done horrendous, inhumane things, repents just before he dies how will God treat him?**

Lots of people find this hard to accept, it is offensive to them. **Why do you think this is?**



**Read Romans 3v21-24**

**What does 'there is no difference', mean? (between who?)**

**In God's sight are we any better than the serial killer?**

**Does this mean you can safely wait till the end of your life to accept Christ?**

The Bible does indicate that there are degrees of reward for the service we render Christ. But, if you got to heaven and found someone who had been a total failure as a Christian, got the same reward as you, (having worked incredibly hard.) **How would you feel? How do you feel when God blesses someone who does not deserve it?**



# Bible Studies

## Your enemies



“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ Matthew 5v43  
In this passage Jesus mentions the need to love your neighbour. He goes on to comment that it is said love your neighbour and hate enemy.

**Is this a quote from the Old Testament?**

**Read Leviticus 19v18**

**Is the command to love your neighbour in the context of friends or enemies?**

Confronted with this verse from Leviticus, one man asked Jesus, “who is my neighbour”  
Jesus went on to tell the parable of the good Samaritan.

**In the end who did the mans neighbour turn out to be?**



**Read Matthew 5v43-48**

The Bible is very specific about how we treat people we do not like. It is a test of our maturity and the genuine nature of our faith.

**What did Jesus say it was easy to do?**

**Do you get any credit for this?**

**What Point is Jesus making by comparing us with tax collectors and Pagans?**

Perhaps the reason that Jesus approaches the issue in this way is to avoid the embarrassing position of his followers acting no better than sinners. He is pointing out that we have to live by a higher standard and that sometimes this standard requires us to do painful things, like loving our enemies.

**/ According to this passage what should we do to our enemies?**

**Which of these do you think is the hardest?**

**What tends to happen if you pray for someone?**

If we follow Jesus instruction it will eventually lead us to reconciliation.

**What is the result for us before God when we do this?**

This passage says that by doing so we show ourselves to be sons and daughters of God. The reason for this is that we are acting Just as God does. God’s Standard here is very high. It is not natural to love your enemy, it requires God’s divine help.

**In what way does God show love for His enemies?**



**Read Romans 5v8-10 & Colossians 1v21-22**

**How did God treat us when we were His enemies?**

**Who is my enemy?**

We need to start get personal and practical.

**Who is my enemy? What makes them my enemy?**

Spend any time thinking about questions like this and you will realise there are all kinds of enemies. In Matt 5 Jesus described our enemies as those who persecute us. In Luke 6v27 He called them those who hate you, or ill-treat you.

The list of our enemies may include;

Those who are against us because we are Christians.

People who have somehow acted against us.

People we are in competition with.

People we do not like. Someone you hate.

These can be individuals or the can be ethnic groups or nations. Some times the reasons for hostility are very strong at other times they are very weak or even non existent.

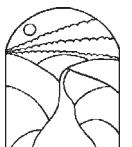
**How do you make a person your enemy?**

If you are mean or unpleasant you will make enemies.

**Is it inevitable that we are going to have enemies?**

The fact that Jesus tells us how to act towards them assumes that for one reason or

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Our language lets us down. The word enemy given no indication as to where the antagonism rests. Paul came to our rescue

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12v18

We may be other people's enemies, but we are not to have enemies ourselves.

***Paul's verse implies we have a responsibility to our enemies, what is it? When might it not depend on us?***

You cannot stop people from being your enemy. But the fault should never rest with us. If we have done wrong we should put things right. We should be the ones who seek reconciliation. Paul acknowledges that this is not always possible, but where it is we should take the initiative.

**2** ***According to Romans 12v14-21 how should we treat our enemies?***

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***What are we not to do?***

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***What will happen to them as a result?  
What will God do as a result?***

Paul explains the danger to us if we do not do this. Face with evil, unless we do what is good, the evil swallows us up. We end up bitter and isolated from God. If we take retaliation we usurp a position that belongs to God.

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***What will the result be?***

***Is it OK just to avoid someone who irritates you?***



***Read 1 Corinthians 6v7-8***

***What does this passage say about the way that we should treat people who have become our enemies?***

This is a useful passage because it helps to explain one of Jesus' difficult teachings. Paul applies this to believers, Jesus applies it to unbelievers.



***Read Matthew 5v38-41, Luke 6v29***

(Notice that main passage about loving your enemy follows on from this teaching)

***Does this mean that if someone attacks you, you should not protect yourself?  
Does this mean we should not stop someone from stealing from us?***

Some people have taught that this means you must never stand up for yourself, defend yourself or even resist against evil in society. An 'eye of an eye' is all about retaliation, (in OT context it was about Justice), Jesus is telling us that we must not retaliate. We are not the ones to use evil and be overcome by it. Even if it means sacrificing or being unjustly treated we must not respond with evil. Better have two bruised cheeks than become the aggressor or evil doer. Jesus is saying that we should not even harbour resentment. You must respond out of grace not retaliation. Jesus gave us a very clear precedent in the way He suffered injustice and sacrifice.

***What is the connection between forgiveness and loving our enemies?***



We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:19-21

***Are you allowed to hate people?***

We are allowed to hate sin. We are allowed to hate what people do, but not to hate people.

We have listed the ways we should treat our enemies from three passages of Scripture.

***What will happen to you and your enemy, if we obey what we have learned?  
What should our goal be towards our enemies?***

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**/ According to this passage what should we do to our enemies?**

Love

Pray

Greet

**Which of these do you think is the hardest?**

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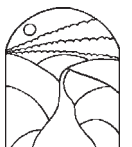
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**2 According to Romans 12v14-21 how should we treat our enemies?**

Bless, live in harmony, Give food & drink.

**What are we not to do?**

Curse, repay evil, take revenge.



**What will happen to them as a result?**

Convicted

**What will God do as a result?**

Justify / avenge.

Paul explains the danger to us if we do not do this. Face with evil, unless we do what is good, the evil swallows us to. We end up bitter and isolated from God. If we take retaliation we usurp a position that belongs to God.

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Do good Lend to

**What will the result be?** God will reward you.

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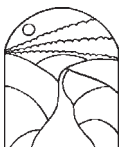
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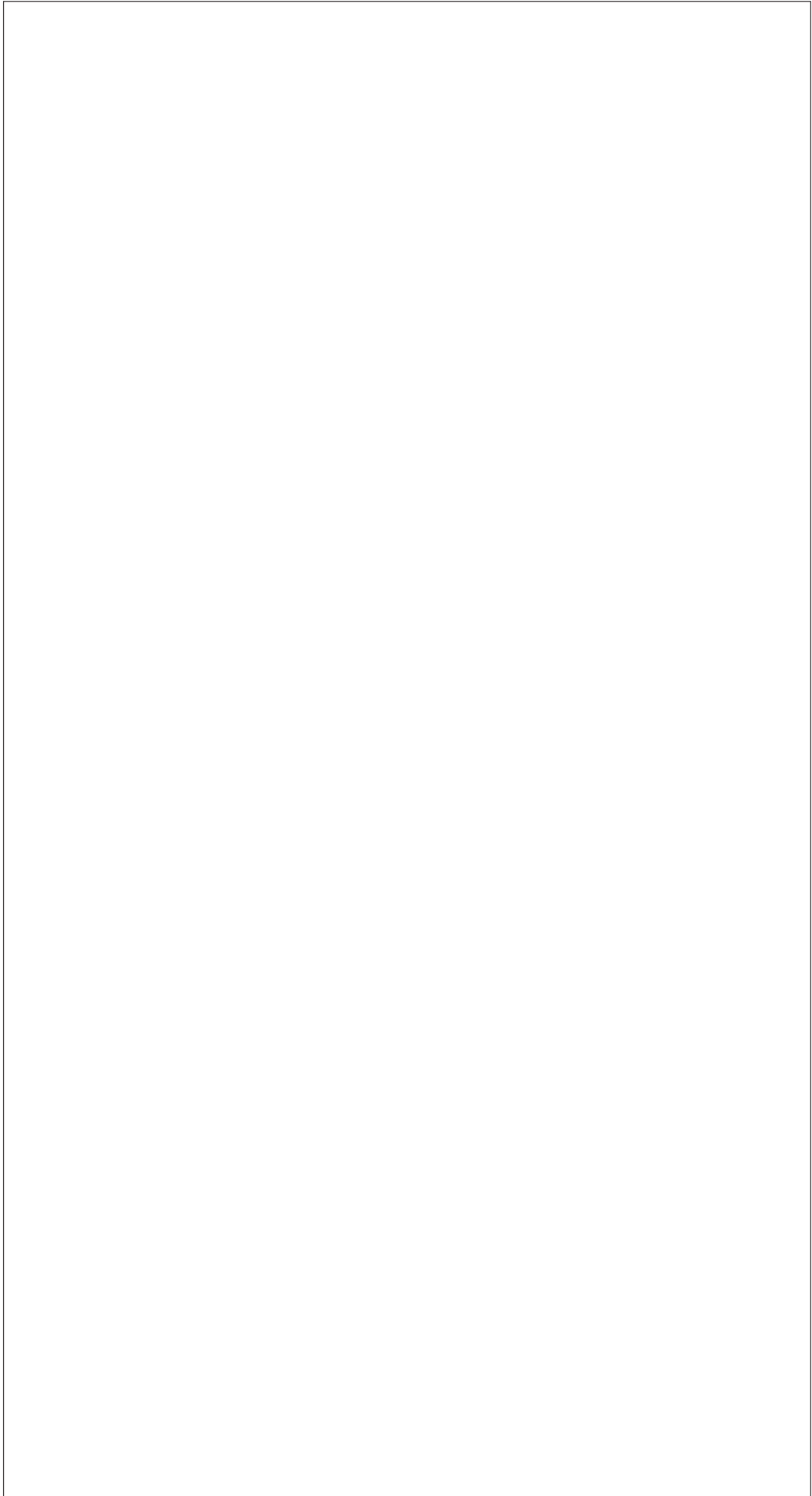
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# Bible Studies

# STREAMS IN THE DESERT

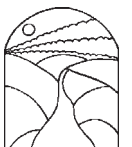


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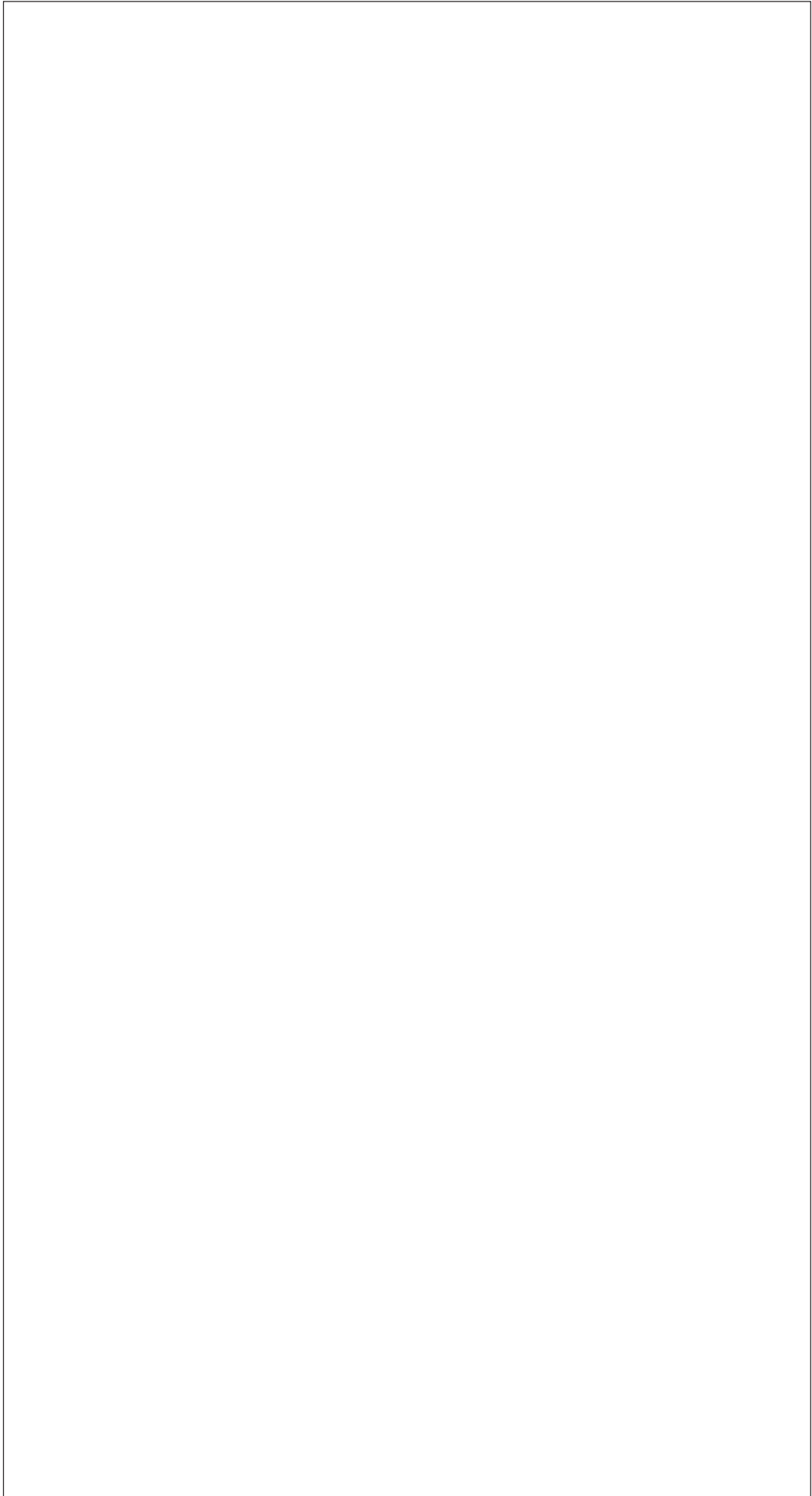


# Bible Studies

# STREAMS IN THE DESERT



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# Bible Studies

## Jonah 1



### **Read 2 Kings 14v25-26**

Jonah was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom. Gath Hepar is not far from Nazareth. He prophesied shortly after the time of Elisha, before or during the reign of Jeroboam II. According to tradition he was part of Elisha's school of the prophets.

### **What does this passage tell us about Jonah and his prophecies?**

Jonah is called the servant of God, he spoke the word of God and his prophecy was fulfilled. It also reminds us that Jonah's ministry was greater than just the events recorded in his book.



### **Read Jonah 1v1-4**

**What was the word of the Lord that came to Jonah?  
What did Jonah do instead?**

Nineveh was one of the leading cities of the Assyrian empire, at times it was its capital city. Assyria was rapidly becoming Israel's natural enemy.



**What was Nineveh like?  
What happened to Israel?**

Nahum 3v1-4 & 19  
2 Kings 17v3-6

The Assyrians had a reputation for brutality, beyond the brutality of the day. At present there was no conflict between the Assyrians and the Israelites but you did not prophesy to realise that there would be. At the time, Nineveh was being threatened by the hill tribes of Urartu to its north. Jonah wanted only harm for Nineveh, he wanted to prophesy as Naham had. He did not want to give his natural enemy a chance to repent. Jonah understood the risks of preaching repentance - they might repent.

### **How do we know this was going through his mind? Jonah 4v2**

Asking Jonah to preach to Nineveh is like God asking you to witness to your worst enemy, just on a much larger scale.

There are going to be times when your opinion of what should be done and God's are different. If you are going to serve God, you must serve Him totally. If you are going to obey God, then you must do so in all things. We need to submit to the will of God.

*"The man who questions the wisdom of God really claims to know more than God."*

### **Do you ever know better than God?**

When you don't want to do what God tells you to, how will you respond, run or obey? To run away from God's commands is to do a Jonah!



**What spiritual challenges faced Jonah?  
What physical challenges faced him?  
What might God want you to do that you are unwilling to do?**

In each of our lives there is a critical barrier, a point where our love for God and our desire to obey Him reach their limits. Beyond this barrier self interest and preservation rule. We serve and obey up to this barrier but we are reluctant to go beyond it. When God calls us to do so we procrastinate, find excuses and sometime we just flatly refuse. God wants all of our lives so He will constantly be working to push that barrier further out. Calling us out of our comfort zone, stretching us.

### **What is a comfort zone? Why are comfort zones dangerous?**

**Why did Jonah feel the need to run?** (Why couldn't he just disobey where he was?) It is possible that it was due to bad theology. Most of the pagan religions saw their gods as territorial, they had no power or diminished power outside of their domain. 1 Kings 20v28. Jonah wanted to get away from the God of Israel by leaving Israel. Generally one would hope for better theology in a prophet! Maybe he hoped God would give up on him.

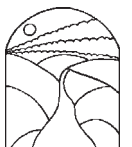
### **Can you escape from God? Psalm 139v7-12**

But Jonah ran away from the LORD Jonah 1:3

As a general rule you carry with you the problems you run from. They tend to follow you and recur in your life. God calls us to face our problems not to run from them.

### **In what ways do we run from God?**

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Sometimes we move, sometimes we remove ourselves from situations or relationships. We try to ignore God or keep Him at a distance. We deny God's will, we delay and we involve ourselves with other things. Sometimes we backslide. Most of us do an Adam and try to hide from God. This is just as futile as running.

It is possible that running was a spur of the moment reaction, he just didn't think, he wanted to put as much space between him and the problem as possible. Running is often a consequence of disobedience.

**Why do you think this is?**

**When he ran, God could have found another prophet, why didn't He?**

Jonah rejected his God given responsibility



*"The book of Jonah is a rebuke to every Christian who does not have a passion to win men to Christ. The book of Jonah is a rebuke to those who long for the conversion of sinners providing that only certain types of sinners get saved."*



For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4v14

**Why did Jonah run to Tarshish?**

Tarshish is in the opposite direction from Nineveh, In the Jewish mind of the time it was the end of the world. Tarshish means to smelt or refine. When you run from God, Tarshish is always where you run to!



For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. Psalm 66v10

See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48v10

Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people?" Jeremiah 9v7

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, Malachi 3v2-3

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart. Proverbs 17v3

**What does it mean when God refines us?**

**How does He do it?**

**What does He want to achieve?**

**Read Hebrew 12v5-6. What is likely to happen when we go away from the Lord?**

Having disobeyed God Jonah went down at every step.

Down to Joppa, down into the boat, down below deck, down into the water, and down into the fish. (The first three instances use the Hebrew 'yared') **What does this tell us?**

**When you observe a trend like this in your life, what should you do?**



**Read Jonah 1v4-17**

**What happened to Jonah as a result of his disobedience?**

**What happened to the sailors as a result of Jonah's disobedience?**

**What were the potential effects of Jonah's disobedience for the Ninevites?**

**Why do you think Jonah was asleep?**

**Where did the storm come from? Why did God send it?**

**Does God still send storms into the lives of his people? Why?**

**What lesson did Jonah learn from this?** Jonah 1v9

The sailors cast lots to discover who had caused the storm, they already knew Jonah was running from God. v10. The God who manipulated the storm manipulated the Lot.

You may be sure that your sin will find you out. Numbers 32v23

**Can you avoid the consequences of your sin?**

One of the themes behind the book of Jonah is the interaction between Jews and Gentiles. God is calling Israel through Jonah to reach out to the nations around her. Most Jews had low expectation of gentiles.

**How well did the gentiles in this passage behave?**

**Does this have a lesson for us in our dealings with those around us?**

**What have you learned from this chapter of Jonah?**

**What is the spiritual equivalent for us of not going to Nineveh?**

In Matthew 28v18-20 Jesus gave us a command, if you have not taken it seriously, then you are doing a Jonah.

# Bible Studies

## Jonah 2



### **Read Jonah 1v4-17**

Jonah the first thing Jonah did when he got on board was to pay the fare. There is something symbolic about this, when you run from God there is always a fare to pay. Jonah did not realise the cost of His actions.

### **Read Luke 14v25-33**



**What are the two costs we need to count?**

**What is the cost of following Jesus?**

**What is the cost of not following Jesus?**

**What is the cost of disobeying Jesus?**

**Do you always know what the cost is going to be in advance?**

Jonah ran from his calling and he ran from God. He paid the fare but he did not realise the cost of his actions. You have to count the cost of your actions.

### **What did the sailors do when the storm hit?**

When the storm hit the boat the sailors did the sensible thing, they prayed (all be it to the wrong gods). They sought to find out what the problem was and they took physical measures to ensure their survival. Jonah was conspicuous by his absence.

Jonah is typical of many Christians, when people around us are in trouble we are asleep. Self absorbed and indifferent, asleep in the light. The sleep of a seared conscience.

For the sailors finding the problem did not solve the problem. Action had to be taken.



**Whose idea was it to throw Jonah into the water?**

**What did the sailors think about the idea?**

**Why were they reluctant to throw Jonah in?**

**Why did Jonah suggest that he be thrown in?**

The sailors were reluctant to take a life, but if Jonah was a prophet even a disobedient one God might hold them accountable for his blood! How much did Jonah know about what would happen when he was thrown in? He knew the sea would become calm and he knew he was responsible for the storm. Did he ask to be thrown in because he felt guilty? Or because he knew it would save the sailors? Did he want to die, (but not kill himself?)

The sailors probably saw throwing Jonah into the water as a kind of sacrifice. Jonah may well have seen himself as a substitute for the crew, saving their lives.

**Did the sailors expect Jonah to survive?** v14

**Did Jonah expect to survive?**

When most people talk about being a Jonah, they mean being the one that brings bad luck.

**Is this justified?**

Some people for a variety of reasons live in fear that they might be a 'Jonah' for a church.

**Why might they think this?**

**How might they act as a result? What would you say to such a person?**

In biblical terms to be a Jonah is someone who runs from their calling, who runs from God.

But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. *Jonah 1:17*

Even in the worst situations, God is able to save, even when we have sunk beneath the surface and all hope is gone. **Why do you think God rescued Jonah?**

**What swallowed Jonah?**

**Why do people say it was a whale?**

There is no specific word to distinguish fish from whale in Biblical Hebrew. It could have been a whale. Rabbi Eliezer taught that this fish had been created from the beginning of the world, just to swallow Jonah.



**Read Matthew 12v39-40** (cf Mark 9v31, John 2v19-20)

**What did Jesus compare to Jonah's time in the fish?**

Jesus was buried before sunset on Friday and he rose again in the early hours of Sunday. **How many days and nights was he in the tomb?**

This has been a stumbling block for many. Some people say he was crucified on the Thursday, but this is unlikely. Rabbi Eleazer Ben Azaraia (c 100 AD) said "A day and a night makes an Onah (ie a period of 24 hours) and a portion of an Onah is recognised as a



*complete Onah.*” In terms of the culture in which the Bible was written it is accurate to say that Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights. The same may be true of the time Jonah spent in the fish. In modern empirical terms, Jesus not in the grave for three days and nights, however we must interpret the Bible in the culture in which it was given. It is unlikely that Jonah knew exactly how long he was in the fish.

**Why do you think Jesus made this comparison?**

Probably to highlight the similarities of his mission with Jonah’s, maybe specifically his outreach to the gentiles.

**What do you think was the sign of Jonah?**

There is a credible story of a whaling ship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, catching a whale and finding a live man inside. He was in the whale for a shorter period than Jonah but had been bleached white from the acid. This could help explain the willingness for the Ninevites to repent.

**What are the chances of surviving three days in a whale?**

For may the credibility of this story is a stumbling block. (others respond, 'if the Bible said Jonah swallowed the whale I'd believe it') There are two possible explanations.

- 1 It was a miracle
- 2 Jonah was dead in the whale.

The second of these is not as surprising as it may sound, remember the parallel with Jesus. It is based on the line that says that Jonah prayed from Sheol or the grave. As you read the prayer through you will notice other lines that can be interpreted this way.

**How do you think Jonah felt when he was swallowed by the fish?**



**Read Jonah 2v1-10**

**When Jonah was in trouble what did he do?**

This is the prayer to pray when you are in a pain in the stomach. This is another background theme of the book. The worse the mess the harder we pray. Sometimes it is the only time we pray seriously. Someone once pointed out, *sudden prayers make God jump.*

**What other times in the book of Jonah did people turn to prayer?**

Jonah had run from God now he needs to run to God.

**Do you think this was what God planned?**

**According to this passage who through Jonah into the sea? v3**

This was God’s plan and Jonah knew it. When we rebel or backslide God will often engineer a situation where we have no choice but to turn back to Him and rely on Him fully. The prodigal in the pig pen is another example of this. Even so it is amazing how often people stubbornly refuse to repent. God brought Jonah to a place of surrender, a yield point. He broke Jonah’s disobedience and made him fit for further and greater use.

This prayer contains all the classic themes that need to be found in such a situations *Thanksgiving & Praise. Confession & Repentance. Rededication, Commitment & Faith* This prayer is made up of quotations from the Psalms about 90% of its content are direct quotes out of the Psalter .



Jonah had a choice repent or perish. **What is repentance?**

**Is it enough to repent to get out of a difficult situation?**

**What effect did repentance have on Jonah’s situation?**

Never underestimate the power of repentance, never think you are too far gone for to repent. The New Testament talks about *repentance unto life.* Acts 11v18

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. Jonah 2:8

There is a Jewish tradition that the sailors throw their idols into the sea once it was calm.

**What would have happened if the sailors had clung to their idols, not God 1v5**

**What idols do you think Jonah had been clinging to?**

Jonah did not worship physical idols, he was a prophet, maybe his idol was his free will, his choice to disobey God, maybe it was his limited view of God, or his ideas about the his role as a prophet.

**What do you think forfeit the grace that could be theirs means?**

It means their future, their relationship with God and the blessings He has for them.

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah 2:10

Jonah went from being fish food, to being something else.

We usually assume that the fish spat Jonah out next to Nineveh, However Nineveh is on the Tigris Rivver, 700km inland from the Persian Gulf, Joppa and Tarshish are on the Mediterranean Coast. To get from one to the other, you would need to circumnavigate the whole continent of Africa. Chapter 3 makes it clear that Jonah did not go immediately to Nineveh, he probably went home. Jonah decides he will never eat fish again.

# Bible Studies

## Jonah 3



### **Read Jonah 3v1-10**

The fish spits Jonah out on to the dry land. Thrown into the water, thrown onto the land. As we have seen, the fish did not take Jonah to Nineveh as we usually think. Jonah found himself on the Mediterranean coast, maybe at Joppa, maybe Jonah went home.



### **What happened next?**

#### **What did Jonah do?**

#### **Why did Jonah obey God this time, what had changed?**

In the end Jonah still had to obey God. All of his running achieved nothing, he still had to obey. Jonah has changed He now understands that he has to obey God, We would like to think that this was a change of heart and perhaps, at least towards God it was. Jonah was humbled before God and a changed man, he walked with Jacob's limp. He was forgiven for his disobedience and reconciled to God. It becomes clear that the one thing that has not changed is Jonah's attitude to the Ninevites. He obeys God but against his wishes.

### **Do you think it is strange that God was prepared to use Jonah again even after his failure?**

God does not bear grudges, His aim in forgiveness is to restore us. The Enemy will come along and brand us as second rate Christians. Tried and found wanting. By grace we are still saved, but we are no longer fit for use in God's kingdom.

#### **Do you think God takes this attitude?**

#### **What attitude does God take?**

God's attitude is found in the parable of the prodigal son, He welcomes us back with open arms and restores us to our position. At the same time, this requires a change of heart on our part. It may take time for us to find our way back to where we were. There is always a need for fruit of repentance.

It would have been easy for Jonah to see this second call as a test. "Yes lord I have learned my lesson, I will always obey you, I don't really need to go do I?" God's concern with perfecting Jonah is secondary, His primary concern is with Nineveh.

### **What do you think would have happened to Jonah if he had refused this time?**

Probably it would have been much less spectacular this time. Jonah would have stayed put and just ignored God's command. God would probably left Jonah to come to his senses. Spiritually he would stagnate, physically things would have gone down hill, until he repented. Therefore God gave them over . . . Romans 1 : 24 is one of the scariest verses in the Bible.

The danger here is not that this might happen to us, but that it is perhaps happening to us now and we have not yet realised!



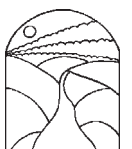
#### **What would be the solution to this problem?**

#### **What would you do if it was no longer possible to obey what God had told you to do?**

God is not concerned that we learn academically but that we learn practically. Often he will bring us back to our place of failure to give us a chance to show that we have learned from our mistake.

Jonah started out for Nineveh. Nineveh is about 700 km from Israel, a journey of several months. A journey not to be undertaken lightly. Nineveh itself was a large city, according to the Bible it contained more than 120,000 people. The archaeologists have found the inner city to be a rectangle with a wall length of 12km. The whole city may have been 12 km across. It could have had a population as high as 170,000. It was an impressive city the walls are reputed to have been 30m high and three chariots wide. The KJV suggests that the city was so large it took three days to cross. The NIV correctly explains that this does not indicate the dimensions of the city but the amount of time it took the prophet to deliver his message across the whole city.

### **How do you think Jonah felt confronted with this great city?**



*Lord, are you sure this is the right place?  
Lord, these are a ruthless people are you sure?  
Lord, they might tease me, (not to mention skin me alive, pull out my tongue etc.)  
They seem to have quite enough gods of their own Lord.*

**What message did God tell Jonah to proclaim?**

**How well do you think that Jonah preached his message?**



**What was the response of the people?**

**Do you think Jonah expected this response?**

**How would you characterise the peoples repentance?**

The Bible tells us that the people believed God. They fasted and humbled themselves. It also tells us they turned from their evil ways and their violence. The people, rich and poor responded voluntarily but the king also commanded the people to repent. A proud people humbled themselves. Did the people forsake their idols and worship God only? Probably not. From a Jewish point of view, keeping the laws of Noah would have been sufficient. Some people have found significance that up until this point YHWH, the specific name of God has been used, but now, Jonah uses 'Elohim' a more general name. Their repentance was sufficient to satisfy God.

The Ninevites had to repent to believe, Jonah had to repent to obey.

There are two practical reasons why the people may have repented so readily.



The account of the man swallowed by a whale in the 18<sup>th</sup> century records that the man was bleached white. If this happened to Jonah then he must have been an impressive sight, almost ghost like. His appearance alone may have been sufficient.



At the time Nineveh was being threatened by the hill tribes of Urartu to it's north. It has been suggested that these armies were now very close to Nineveh. So when Jonah proclaimed Nineveh's destruction, the people knew this destruction was close at hand.

If Nineveh was confronted by an advancing army at this time it is possible that their repentance was accompanied by victory on the battle front. If so Jonah's words received vindication.



In addition to this there is a spiritual reason. There are times when God pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, Zech 12v10, that enables people to come to the place of repentance. Another example of this is the Day of Pentecost. The theologian call this preventential grace . Sometimes the most unlikely people repent.

**What priority did the Ninevites put on repentance?**

Repentance came before, business, leisure, family and pride

**What was God's response to the Ninevites actions?** 3v4

**Does this surprise you?** Romans 9v15, 2 Peter 3v9, Jeremiah 18v8

Jonah seems to have suspected that this was the way the Ninevites were going to react and that God would then forgive them. 4v2. God prevented the imminent destruction of Nineveh. On this Jonah is different from us. Most of us assume that the people we talk to about the Lord are not going to want to respond.

**What effect does this assumption have on us?**

**What does it fail to take into account?**



**Read John 15v18-21**

**What does this passage tell us?**

Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthless words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. Jeremiah 15:19

**In what way is Jonah's message similar to ours?**

**In what way are we like Jonah?**

Lifestyle evangelism and loving people into God's kingdom are very important. It is true that listening is often as effective as talking. But in the end a person needs to hear the Gospel. Unless a man is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. John 3v3

**When is the right time to present the Gospel to someone?**

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Rom 10v14-15

# Bible Studies

## Jonah 4



### **Read Jonah 4v1-11**

This passage is full of butts, each one indicates a point where Jonah and God disagreed with each other. Jonah has gone to Nineveh and preached the message God has given him. The people, from the king down, have believed his teaching and responded by repenting and humbling themselves. God spares them.

**How would you have expected Jonah to respond to this success?**

**What would you expect Jonah to do next?**

This was Jonah's moment of glory, you would think he would be at least flattered by the response to his words, basking in his new found fame, enjoying drinks at the palace. From a spiritual point of view it is very clear what he should be doing, he should be in Nineveh teaching the people the fear of the Lord. After repentance, there is a need for people to form a relationship with God. The same is true for people who get saved today.

**What should you do when someone you have witnessed to becomes a Christian?**

**What is likely to happen if you don't?**

**Do you think this would be likely to happen in Nineveh?**

Jonah's obligation to Nineveh was clear. He failed to follow up his work. Nineveh's repentance was shallow and short lived. Had it been otherwise the course of history would have been different. Nineveh was destroyed 150-200 years later, as Nahum prophesied.

**What did Jonah do?**

**What was his mood?**

**Who was he angry at?**

**What did he want to happen to Nineveh?**

Jonah did not like the Ninevites and he could not leave quickly enough. Jonah went and sat outside Nineveh to watch. Maybe God would realise how false the people repentance was. Maybe when God saw that they continued with their evil, He would still destroy them. Certainly if any people deserved to be destroyed, the Ninevites did. Jonah could only hope!



### **Read Jonah 4v1-4**

**What was Jonah's complaint against God?**

**Do you think Jonah understood the concept of grace?**

He probably did understand the concept of God's grace, he just did not like it, or agree with it!

**What was the root cause of Jonah's anger?**

There were many reasons Jonah was angry, as we have seen Jonah had good reason for wanting Nineveh destroyed, they were Israel's natural enemies. Maybe he was worried about the reception he was going to get back home. "you did what?" Some people think Jonah was worried about being labelled a false prophet. But the root cause of his anger was that he did not get his own way. God did not do what Jonah wanted. It becomes clear that when Jonah ran from God, it was not only because he did not want to obey. He was deliberately trying to frustrate God's plan. **Did Jonah have the right to be angry?**

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. Psalm 103v8-10

**What are the dangers of our anger?**

Ephesians 4v26, James 1v20

**What was Jonah's solution?**

Like Elijah before him Jonah was so disillusioned he wanted to die. He had an attach of the spiritual sulks, spiritual thumb sucking, a spiritual tantrum.

**What dangers do you think faced Jonah in his current situation?**

At the end of a long day when everything has gone wrong and it seems like the whole world is out to get you and God is nowhere to be found. **Do you have the right to be angry?**

**Is sulking a mark of spiritual maturity?**

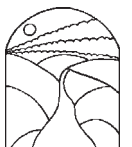
So often when we do not get our own way, when God does not do what we had hoped or expected, we do a Jonah and sulk. **What should we do?**



### **Read Jonah 4v5-11**

Jonah sits in the sun and God provides a vine or gourd (or castor oil plant?) to give him shelter him from the heat.

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**How does Jonah feel about the vine?      How does Jonah feel about God?**

The identity of the plant is not important, it is another example of God's control over nature, like the fish and the storm. Next God sends a burning east wind and a worm to kill the vine. ("anyone can train a whale," says God).

**How does Jonah feel about the vine?      How does Jonah feel about God?**

This incident is an acted parable. God has a message for Jonah thorough it. It works on two levels.



**It relates to Nineveh.** The vine was a blessing from God, a good thing to be enjoyed. Destroying it was futile and senseless, bringing only harm and distress.

God is saying to Jonah that he should rejoice that Nineveh has repented and been saved the same way he rejoiced over the vine. To destroy Nineveh once they had repented would be as senseless as destroying the vine. It would benefit no one, not even Jonah. God is calling Jonah to see things His way. To take joy in what was good.

God wanted Jonah to reassess his ideas about judgement, grace, justice and vindication.

**Did Nineveh deserve to be spared?**

Our attitude is often quite different.

**Why did God spare them?**

**Read Luke 9v52-56**

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3v9

**What attitude did James, John and Jonah all share?**

The account of Jonah also parallels the parable of the workers, it demonstrates how God will show mercy to whoever He wants and that we have no right to complain.



**It relates to the book as a whole.** The subject of this parable is one of the themes of the book. Jonah was happy with God, as long as God did what Jonah wanted, agreed with, understood or found acceptable. The moment God acted outside of Jonah's paradigm, or in a way that Jonah considered contrary to his best interests, Jonah balked. First he ran, then he got angry and sulked.

Notice that although Jonah outwardly obeyed God on his second call and went to Nineveh, God was not content with an outward or coerced compliance. He wanted Jonah's heart and attitudes to be changed. Jonah's outward compliance had done nothing to change his heart. It is for this reason that God speaks to Jonah through the vine and the worm. God loved Jonah enough to show him his fault.

The wall Jonah hit is one that will face every Christian at some point in their spiritual walk. When God steps out of line. When instead of removing a problem from our lives God says walk through it. When God allows something terrible to happen. Like Jonah we end up getting angry with God. Angry enough to die. Angry enough to quit. Angry enough to sulk.

**Is it safe to be angry with God?**

The vine was a microcosm, it demonstrated to Jonah his bad attitude and character faults. *Have you noticed how often the things that God provides to bless us with become our rights? How quickly we turn and resent God if something challenges use? How so often the small things cause us the biggest griefs?*

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1v21  
"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job 2v10

**In what ways might we need to accept trouble from God?**

God does not make us suffer, (evil KJV adversity NKJV) but there are clearly times when as a Christian we need to face adversity for the sake of the gospel. 2 Timothy 2v3 Hebrew 12v7. If following Christ means sacrifice then so be it. For Jonah following meant doing something he really did not want to do, the same may be true for you. Hopefully your attitude will be better than Jonah's



In the end God's sovereignty must be acknowledged by us, we must obey and accept even when we do not agree.

*Blessed are those who grumble, for they shall not be left with nothing to grumble about.*

**Why is it significant that Jonah was not responsible for the vine growing?**

Nineveh was not Jonah's problem, it was God's problem. God made the Ninevites and God loved them. It was God who called them to repentance and caused them to repent, not Jonah. Nor was Jonah responsible for their subsequent actions. All Jonah needed to do was obey God willingly.

**What attitude did God rebuke Jonah for?**

**Why did God spare Nineveh?**

It must be noted that God could only spare them because they repented, Jonah does not preach universalism.



# Bible Studies

## Jonah 4b



### ***What is the Book of Jonah about?***

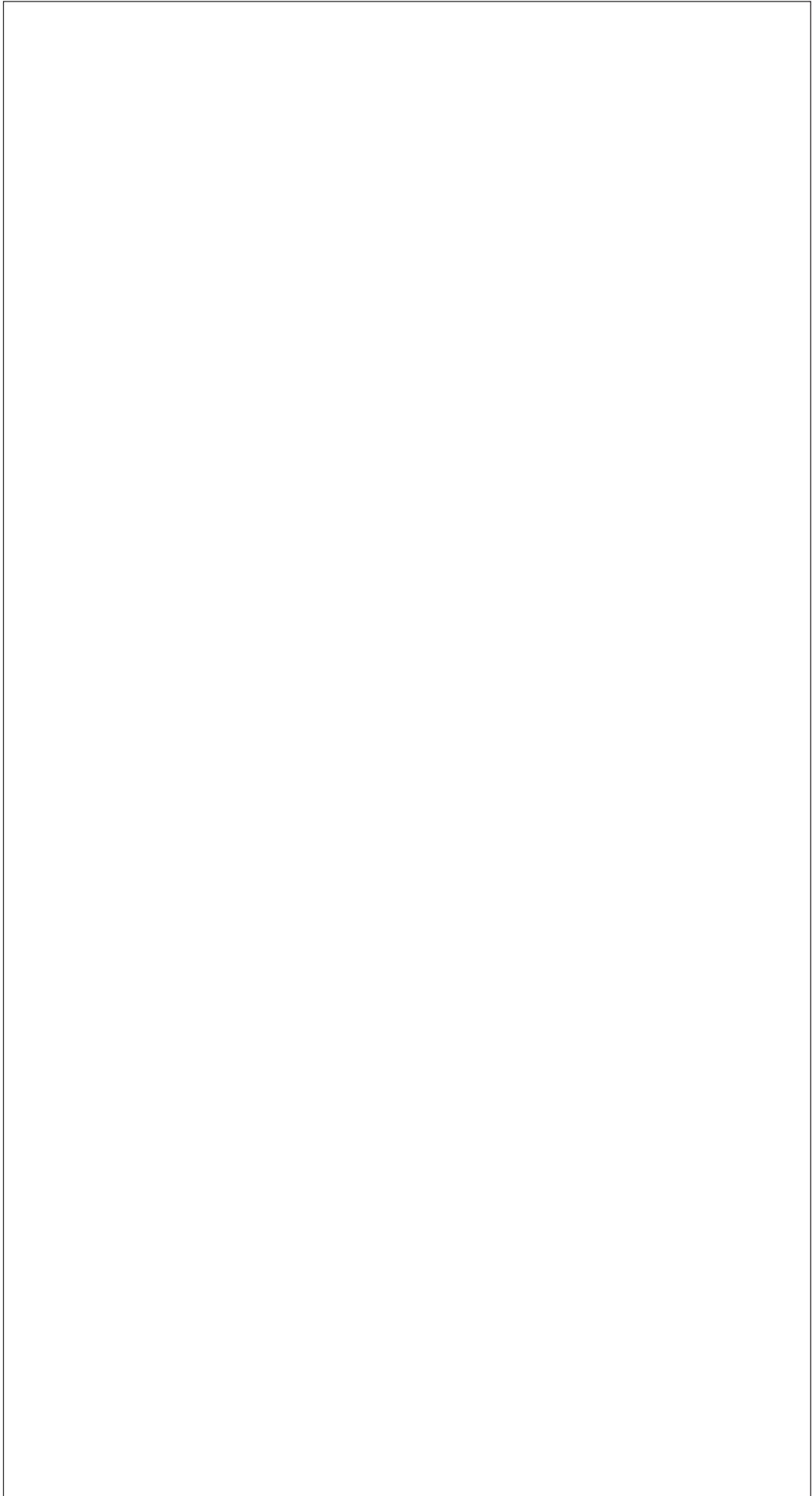
This may seem like a strange question but it is obvious that the book of Jonah is there to make a point. But what is the point. There are several to choose from;

- 1** The Book of Jonah called on the Jews of the day to reassess their attitude to the gentiles, who are consistently shown in a good light.
- 2** The Book of Jonah serves as a rebuke for those who only want good people to get saved, or who discount people as unreachable to the Gospel.
- 3** The Book of Jonah establishes God's control over all things. If God is sovereign over fish and worms, storms and wind. Then God should be obeyed by His servants.
- 4** The book of Jonah is a parallel for Christ's life, specifically that His mission was to reach out to the gentiles John 10v16 this must have helped the early Church to understand an idea that was foreign to them.
- 5** The book of Jonah demonstrates how God will work in a person to change them and bring them round to His way of seeing thing.
- 6** The book of Jonah provides an illustration for the words of Jesus in Matthew 28 and a rebuke for those who run from them.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28v19

### ***Can you think of an other messages the book has to tell us?***


- ?** ***Which of these do you think is the most important?  
Which of these spoke to you the most?***



# Bible Studies

## A Question of Friendship



**Read John 15v12-15**

**What does Jesus call us?  
What is the difference?**

**What else could he have called us?  
How did Jesus show us His Friendship?**

When Jesus calls us friends, it creates a level of intimacy with us, it suggests that He takes us into His confidence, it defines the kind of relationship Jesus wants with us. Jesus friendship for us was not only in words, it's ultimate expression was found in his death for us.

Jesus is a friend. The way he lived showed friendship. The Pharisees accused Jesus of being the friend of sinners, not the acquaintance of sinners. Three expressions of love

v9a The father love me v9b I love You v12 Love each other

From this we can see an order of friendship that God has given us; friendship with God, friendship with each other and if we are to follow Jesus example, friendship with sinners. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. 1 John 4v7

**Why do we need friends?**



**God made us social creatures.**

**What happens if you are isolated from other people?**

It has been claimed that to maintain mental health you need contact with 8 people every day. We need other people around us. Consequently friendships add stability to life.



**Friendship takes away the pain of loneliness.**

This is only achieved when people take a genuine interest in other people.



**Friendship adds texture to life.**

It brings fulfilment, joy, fun, excitement and relaxation.



**We need friends for practical, emotional and spiritual reasons.**

On a physical level sometimes you need someone's help. Emotionally you may need a shoulder to cry on or a person to encourage you. Spiritually you may need a mentor or someone who can speak into your life.



**Because we are made in God's image.**

Friendship is an attribute of God and He made us like him. Job 29v4, Isaiah 41v8

**If someone says "I don't need friends". how would you reply? Is it true?**



**What is a friend?**

Someone you trust and love.	Someone you feel comfortable with.
Someone you like to be with.	Someone you want to spend time with.
Someone you can talk to.	Someone you can be honest & intimate with.
Someone you can depend on.	Someone you can laugh and cry with.
Someone you support and stand up for.	

**We associate love & intimacy with romantic relationships, are they found in friendships?**

One of the things that stands in the way of friendship is that everyone has a different view of what a friend should be. This view is based on a person's own needs. A friend is someone who meets my needs.

**Is this a realistic view of friendship? What will happen if you hold this view?**

There are different levels of friendship. They range from people you say hello to, acquaintances, to best friends who you open your heart to. Strong friendships grow, they do not develop overnight. People move from Acquaintances to best friends. If the friendship builds too fast it can create pressure that the new friendship cannot sustain. One of the reasons for a lack of friendship is that people want a best friend, but they cannot be bothered to form acquaintances.

Seldom set foot in your neighbour's house—too much of you, and he will hate you. Proverbs 25v17

**How does this relate to friendship?**

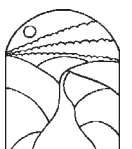


**How do you make friends?**

*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Proverbs 18v24 KJV*

**What does this mean? If you are not friendly what is going to happen?**

Are you friendly? If you want a friend, be a friend. You have to reach out, don't let fear of rejection or failure inhibit you, just be yourself.





**What do you think stops people from making friends?  
Why is it easy for some people to make friends and not others?  
How do you become friendly person?**



**How do you make a tree?**  
You need a tree seed, like and acorn.  
Then you care for it, water it, give it sunshine, sing to it, etc.  
And then the tree grows all by itself.

The seed is us saying hello to someone & making an acquaintance. We need to nurture that seed, which given time, will grow into a friendship.

In a forest, you are going to plant maybe four seedling for every tree you want to reach maturity. The same is true in friendship. Not all acquaintances are going to be good friends.



**You build a repertoire of friends eg.**  
30 acquaintances, 10 friends, 5 good friends, 2 best friends.  
Strangely enough, the top end of this pyramid are going to select themselves.  
**Why do you think this is?**

When you are making friends it is the base of the pyramid that is all important. **Why?**

Church is a great place to make friends.

In making acquaintance friends, which is the first step, no one wants to make the first move.



Everyone in Church wants to be talked to - no one wants to talk.  
Everyone wants a friend - no one wants to do anything about it.  
We suffer from fear of rejection and suspicion, 'why is this person talking to me?'

It's a bit like asking a girl out on a first date - a very traumatic experience.

So if you want friends, do something about it, don't complain "*I've got no friends*" - be friendly.



**Why are we so scared to talk to other people?  
How do friendships within the Church benefit the Church?  
How do friendships outside the Church benefit the Church?  
Will everyone you want to make a friendship with become a good friend? Why?  
Can you force someone to be your friend?  
What kind of things help a friendship from?**

**When people say "I have no friends" is it true?**

Sometimes it is, most of the time it isn't. What they usually mean is, "*I don't have the kind of friends I want.*" or "*I don't have friends at the level I want.*"

**What is the solution to this problem?**



- Ask God for friends.
- Make a list of the people you get on with.
- Grow acquaintances into friends.
- Have realistic expectations of people.

Perfect friends do not fall from the sky they need to be grown. Friendship grows between people.

Start talking to people. Talk about them, not yourself. Start finding out who they are, what they like. Don't stalk them. Phone them and say hello. Spend time together. Ask them for lunch after Church. Yes we are all busy so sometimes you need to work at it. Let it grow. Keep in touch.

What damages friendship? Proverbs 16v28, Proverbs 22v24, Proverbs 17v9



**Can you have ten best friends?  
Should we only make friends for social standing? Romans 12v16  
What are the dangers of trying to be friends with just popular people?  
Should we only make friends for our own benefit or to fill our own needs?**

**What will happen if:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| all you do is talk about yourself?                              | all you do is boast about yourself?      |
| you are only friendly when you want something?                  | you continually take people for granted? |
| you are not trust worthy?                                       | you live in your friends back pocket?    |
| you are only a friend because of their material goods?          | you are not there in their time of need? |
| you get jealous over your friends success or other friendships? |  |

**What will happen if you criticise your friends family/house/lifestyle ?**

**If you have an 'acid' personality are you likely to make friends?**

**What is the worst thing a friend can do? What is the best thing a friend can do?**



**Foundations of friendship.**  
Communication. Reciprocity. Forgiving. Caring. Realism.

# Bible Studies

## Philemon



### **Read Philemon v1-25**

**How does Paul describe himself in this letter?** v1 v13 v23, v9, v17

It is very likely that Paul wrote this personal letter during his first imprisonment at Rome.

At this time he was under house arrest and was free to entertain visitors. It was at this time Paul also wrote Colossians and probably Ephesians. (Paul mentions the same people, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Archippus, Demas, Timothy & Luke Phil 1,10,22-24 Co 4:7-17.)

**Who delivered the Colossian Epistle?** Colossians 4v7-9

The Onesimus who accompanied Tychicus, is the same one who is the subject of Philemon.



### **Onesimus**

**What had he done?**

**Who was Onesimus?** v16

**What happened to him in Rome?**

Onesimus was Philemon's slave. It appears that he had run away and gone as far as Rome. Some people think that v18-19 means Onesimus had stolen from Philemon or had in some way caused him harm. In Rome, against all the odds Onesimus finds both Paul and Christ. He becomes a Christian.

**How does Paul describe him?** v10, v16b

Onesimus means 'useful', it is from this that the significance of v11 takes shape. Onesimus was the sort of name that would be given to a slave.

**How good a slave had he been?**



### **Philemon**

**What kind of man was Philemon?** v4-7

**Who was Philemon?**

**What was his relationship to Paul?** v1b, v7 (&20,) v17, v19b.

If the Church met in Philemon's house, it is safe to say that if he wasn't in leadership, he was a significant figure within the Church. Paul calls him his fellow worker, brother, friend and partner. He was in all likelihood someone Paul had personally seen saved. This is probably what he means when he says Philemon owes him a very life. We have no record that Paul ever visited Colossae and no way of knowing where he met Philemon. Philemon must have been quite well off. He had at least one slave and a house big enough to function as a meeting house for the Church. Philemon was almost certainly part of the Church in Colossae, hence the greeting from Epaphras, who was part of the Colossian church. Col 4v12.

Because Paul wrote Philemon and Colossians at the same time and because he probably had this incident with Onesimus, in mind it is interesting to compare the two books. Colossians deals with slave master relationships and inter-Christian relationship. The teaching given in Colossians forms the bases on which Paul calls on Philemon to do what is right.

**What was Paul's relationship with Onesimus?** V12-13



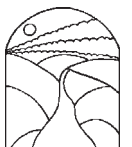
### **Slavery**

The Roman world used slaves extensively. It has been estimated that a third of the population of Italy were slaves at this time. The treatment of slaves was diverse. Some were treated well and had a high degree of freedom. For most, slavery was cruel and oppressive in keeping with the way it has been practised in more recent times. This was especially true for agricultural slaves, working the huge plantations of Italy. The Romans lived in fear of slave revolts and treated run away slaves severely. In Roman law, a slave could appeal to someone, to interceded with their master. It is probably on this basis that Paul writes to Philemon.

**What do you think the chances were of Onesimus ending up with Paul in Rome?**

**Do you think it strange that someone in the Church should have a slave?**

Paul does not directly teach against slavery, although it is clear he is against it. Slavery was a fact of life at the time. He does call for slaves to be treated well. The Bible is against the abuses that became inseparable from slavery. The OT allows a kind of limited slavery, where the slave might even choose to become a bondsman rather than be set free. This parallels our current contractual work environment, better than it does our modern idea of slavery. It is wrong for one person to own another. But there is nothing wrong with one person benefiting from the labour of another, who has no choice but to give it. Our economy is based on this principle, very few people go to work because they want to, most do so because of economic necessity. It was no different for slaves in Paul's day. If we reject this idea, we would all need to become self employed and then working only for ourselves. It is when slavery is forced immorally then it becomes wrong. This is why Paul treats slave traders as evil. 1 Timothy 1v10



**What is Paul's teaching to slave owners?** Colossians 4v1, Ephesians 6v8-9  
This was against the contemporary trend, where masters gave their slaves only enough to keep them alive. Christian slave owners must be fair and just. A slave is not an object, he is a person with rights. He must be treated accordingly. What Paul calls for is more like the situation we find in business today. This kind of slavery was practised at the top end of Roman slavery. Many of our modern professions today such as teachers and doctors were exclusively the domain of slaves in the Roman world.



### **Living up to your past**

**Do you think Onesimus ran away because he was badly treated?**

It is unlikely considering Philemon character. It is as likely that he ran away because his master was a Christian and he thought he would get away with it.



**How do you think Philemon felt towards his run away slave?**

**How do you think Onesimus felt about returning?**

**Why did Onesimus go back? What might happen when he returned?**

**What else could he have done? What might happen if he didn't return?**

**Did becoming a Christian mean Onesimus was no longer a slave or had to be set?**

**Does become a Christian absolve us of responsibilities for past crimes?**

**How often do we need to go back and deal with a situation from the past?**

**What happens if you don't? What should our attitude to our past be?**

Our past has been forgiven - totally we do not need to feel guilty, or make atonement for it. We do need to do what is right now.

**What is the Christian response to a past life as a thief?** Ephesians 4v28

**How does the New Testament tell slaves to behave?**

Colossians 3v22-23, Ephesians 6v5-8,1 Timothy 6v1, Titus 2v9, 1 Peter 2v18

**How does this apply to us today? Are slaves inferior?** Colossians 3v11



**Read 1 Corinthians 7v21-23**



### **New Relationships**

**What does it mean to be active in sharing your faith?** v6

**What did this mean for Philemon in his actions towards Onesimus?**

**How do you get a full understanding of the good things we have in Christ?**

**What implications does this have for us?**

Sharing your faith means witnessing. Our faith is not an individual thing, it is a blessing to be shared. But this also means to live out our faith. Paul is saying that Philemon needs to act towards Onesimus out of his faith in Christ. This means forgiving, loving and being just. Our faith has to affect our relationships with other people. Faith in Christ has to change the way we do relationships. We live by new standards and new ways of behaviour. Christ changes everything.

The fullness of the Christian faith is found in doing it, not in understanding it. Jesus made this point in the parable of the wise and foolish builder, hearing Jesus words is no good unless you live by them.

**How did being a Christian change Onesimus' position? How did it not change?**

**Should Philemon treat him better because he is a now Christian?**

The interesting thing about this book is that it presents a test for Philemon and Onesimus.

**On what points were they being tested?**

There were several tests, but both of them were called to live up to their faith and prove it genuine.

**What does Paul want Philemon to do? Failing this what should he do?**

Paul wanted Onesimus back to him in Rome, failing that he be treated as a brother in Christ.

**What was the worst Philemon could have done? What was the best?**

**what parallel is there between Paul and Christ, Onesimus and us?** v18-19



### **Using Authority.**

**On what authority could Paul have to give Philemon orders?**

**Do you need an excuse to do what is right?**

**What does Paul do instead? What love?**

The love Christ has for us, or the love between Paul and Philemon. It is very easy if you are in a position of authority to boss people around, but this is not the Bible's way. Mark 9v34-36.

**Do you think Paul is overbearing or manipulative in this letter?**

You could make this charge against Paul, he certainly makes it hard for Philemon to say no. In Paul's defence, he was writing to a close friend not a stranger. If you like, he is calling in a favour.



We do not know what happened to Onesimus. About 50 years later, Ignatius, referred to the bishop of the near by church at Ephesus, as one Onesimus maybe it was the same man.

# Bible Studies

## Heirs & Co-Heirs

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8v17

Everyone seems to agree that this is a deep, beautiful and meaningful verse. But what does it mean? In this study we are going to try to find out.



**What is an heir?**  
**What is an inheritance?**

The idea of being heirs is closely linked to that of receiving an inheritance. A Heir is someone who stands to receive an inheritance. This idea runs through the Old Testament extensively. Almost all of these references refer to one thing.

The Children of Israel were to receive an inheritance.

**What was it?** Psalm 136v21  Psa 25v13  
God also has an inheritance.

**What is it?** Joel 3v2

These two themes reoccur frequently. As if to emphasize the importance of inheritance and that we too are to receive an inheritance. The OT goes beyond this, Abraham desperately wants an heir. The inheritance he wants to pass on is not just his wealth but also the promises God has made to him.

**What are we heirs of?** Acts 3v25

**What does this mean?**

This means that we are included in these things and that we have or are receiving them. To be an heir means to be included.

**According to the New Testament what is our inheritance?**

Matthew 19v29	<input type="text"/>	Titus 3v7
James 2v5	<input type="text"/>	Col 1v12
Hebrews 1v14	<input type="text"/>	
Hebrews 6v12	<input type="text"/>	Gallatians 3v29
Hebrew 11v7	<input type="text"/>	
1 Peter 3v9	<input type="text"/>	
Romans 4v17	<input type="text"/>	

**What do each of these mean?**

**How is this inheritance described?**

Colossians 3v23	<input type="text"/>
Hebrews 9v14	<input type="text"/>
1 Peter 1v4	<input type="text"/>
Ephesians 1v18	<input type="text"/>



**Read Hebrew 1v2**, cf Matthew 21v38  
**Who is the heir?**  
**What do you think this means?**

Christ's closeness to God, His ownership of all things, His role in revealing God to us. When the Bible talks about Christ, or us as heirs of God, it is using human language to convey a meaning. The analogy is good but it is not perfect.



**Can you think of a problem with this analogy?**

God is never going to die. Nor are we in any way going to take over from God. Nor does it in any way suggest that Christ is anything less than God.



**An inheritance mean;**

We have a Future. An expectation of something beyond this life.

We have a Present. We are a part of something greater than ourselves.

We have a Past. We are part of a heritage.

Being an heir has past, present and future implications.

**What parts of our inheritance are past present and future?**



**What do we inherit?**

**When do we inherit?**

**What should our attitude be towards our inheritance?**

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—1 Corinthians 2v9



**Read Ephesians 1v13-14**

According to this passage, we have already received a deposit, a part of our inheritance now in the Holy Spirit. **What do you think this means?**



**Read Romans 8v14-17**

**How did we become heirs?**

**What things does this passage emphasize about being an heir?**

This passage is about being adopted into God's family. We are sons (& daughters), children and heirs, God is our *abba*. He has adopted us. Being an heir means being a part of God's family. It means receiving the blessing of the family.

**What does God want us to understand when He calls us sons and daughters?**

There is a common assumption, (which the Bible does not support,) that we are by nature sons and daughters of God.



**In what sense is this true?**

**Why is it significant that we are adopted sons not born sons?**

**How are we adopted?**

We are adopted through being born again into God's family.

What you inherit, you do not work for. Eternal life is God's gift, not something we earn or have as a right.



**Read Galatians 3v26 4v1-7**

**According to this passage on what basis are we heirs?**

Paul is comparing life under the law, the Old Covenant, with life under grace, the New Covenant. He says that the law was like a guardian or a school teacher, preparing us for the time when we would find our freedom in the grace of Christ Jesus. Under the law we were children, no different from slaves, but under the New Covenant we have become sons.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Romans 8v17

**What condition is given in this verse? Romans 8v17**

**Does this mean we are equal with Christ?**

**What does it mean?**

Our position as heirs is reliant upon Christ's actions as the heir. It is because of what he has done that we have become heirs and our status as heirs depends exclusively on our relationship with him. We have been included with Christ.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1v4



Being an heir emphasises our position before God.

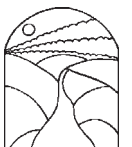
Being an heir emphasises our relationship with God

Being an heir emphasises our future Glory.

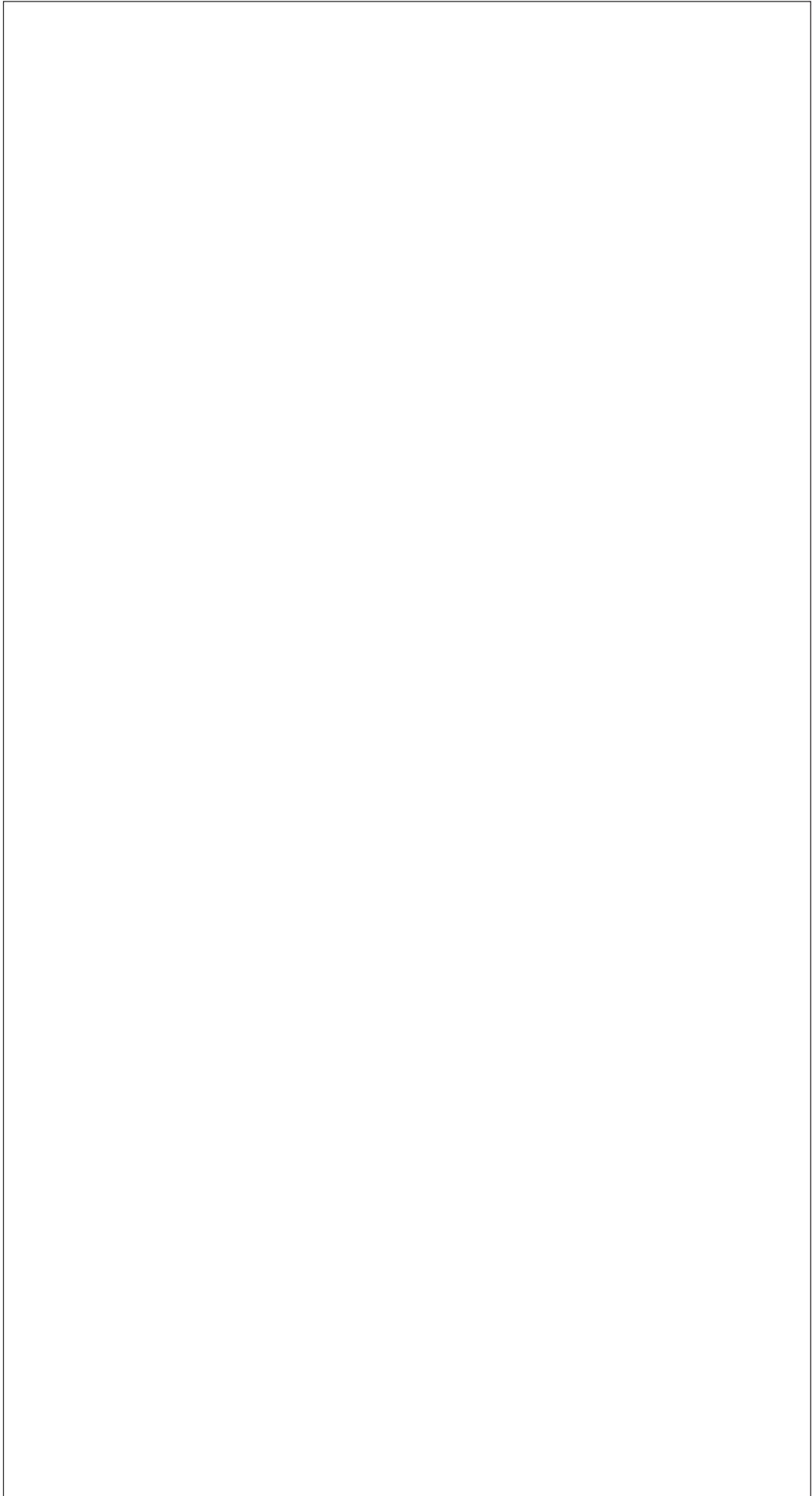


# Bible Studies

# STREAMS IN THE DESERT

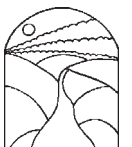


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# Bible Studies

# STREAMS IN THE DESERT



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