

trinitychurch

OF THE NAZARENE

Devotional Reading Guide

October 29 — December 2, 2018

**Proverbs, Ecclesiastes,
Song of Songs, Romans 1-8**



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About this Guide

This monthly devotional is designed to guide our reading through every book of the Bible between 2018-2019.

Each week, we will read several chapters of Scripture. You are encouraged to spread out this reading by incorporating it into your daily devotional practices. Remember, this is not homework we are obliged to complete, it is spiritual formation that we make time to invest in. God wants to meet with you!

Two pages are set aside in this booklet for each week's reading. The first page offers a brief devotional reflection to help you begin thinking about how to apply the reading.

The second page is devoted to your own reflections. Questions are provided to help you engage the reading both thoughtfully and personally. However, do not limit yourself to these questions or to the space provided: allow the Holy Spirit to guide how you engage and respond to God's Word.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. May God bless you as you read God's Word more and more!

Growing Together

God's Word is meant to be studied together. While we hope that this devotional guide will be a valuable tool to your personal study of Scripture, we also hope that you will join us in continuing to reflect on God's Word at Trinity each week.

On Sundays, our morning and evening Worship Celebrations will provide more detailed teaching about the passages that you have read. They will also be a space for us to ask questions and reflect on how God is calling us to respond to God's Word.

Connect Group meetings also present a great opportunity to regularly reflect with sisters and brothers in Christ on passages as they are preached in worship. If you would like more information on how to get connected, please contact our church office:

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Prayer of Illumination

(Can be said prior to Bible reading)

Father God, You lavish your love upon me. While I was far away, You pursued me. When I was unfaithful, You were faithful. In Christ I know that nothing can separate me from Your love, and I give You thanks.

As I open Your Word today, open my heart and mind to Your truth and Your love. Help me to receive Your wisdom, God. Mold my heart so that I may reflect Your love into the world. I ask this in the name of Christ and by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

October 29–November 4: Proverbs 1-16

Trusting God's Plan

Proverbs is full of so many significant pieces of wisdom; we could probably write a devotion or two on each verse! However, I'm going to take this opportunity to write about how God has used Proverbs 16:9 in my journey of faith.

When I was 17 years old, I began attending Trinity, and I quickly learned that Christ had died for me. That was a formative moment and it certainly drew me closer to God, but there were aspects of my life that I still wanted to hold onto. I heard Christians talking about letting go of their own dreams and desires to serve as missionaries—to do what God had “called” them to do. But this confused me. Didn't God create us? Didn't God give us our gifts, desires, and passions? Then why would God “call” me to do something other than what I want to do with my life? Why should I give up my dreams? Even if I did, how am I supposed to know what God wants me to do?

I asked these questions to God, and I genuinely wanted to know the answer: “God, why should I trust Your plan more than my own?” So I opened my Bible and something remarkable happened: God answered me. “*For we can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.*” Through this verse, I heard God say, “Yes, I created you, Travis. And I know you better than you know yourself. Trust Me, and all the true and genuine desires I placed in your heart will be fulfilled. Trust Me, and all your true gifts will be used.”

Of course God was right. I have never regretted giving up my own plans to obediently follow God's lead. God has brought growth, challenge, and blessing that I could not have dreamed of. May we lay our own plans on the altar, so that God can lead us to the places He created us to go.

Questions for Reflection

How can you thank God for this Word that you have read?

What do these passages teach us about God?

What do these passages teach us about humanity?

Is there anything that God is asking you to let go of? How have you seen provision in God's plan throughout your life?

Was anything about the reading confusing to you? If so, what questions might you want to ask to help bring understanding?

How is God calling you to respond to what you have read?

Memory Verse of the Week

For we can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.

— Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)

November 5-11: Ecclesiastes

Fear God, Enjoy Life, and Don't Try Chasing the Wind

Some people think the book of Ecclesiastes is depressing. That's probably because it starts out like this:

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" Says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

Whether your Bible translates it "meaningless," "vanity," or "futility," it tends to send off a negative or pessimistic vibe. Before you judge Ecclesiastes too harshly though, go and read Jesus' parable in Luke 12:13-21. Seriously, go ahead and read it.

While Ecclesiastes touches on a few more subjects than Jesus' story, its point is similar: don't cling too tightly to things of the earth, which are perishing; cling to God, who is eternal. I think that this message is particularly important for our culture today.

Interestingly, the word translated "meaningless" throughout Ecclesiastes may actually be better translated "vapor." The teacher is not trying to say that things on earth are necessarily without meaning, but that they are fickle, elusive, and temporary. Like smoke, they can seem to be solid, but they quickly fade away.

The teacher highlights several things in particular: Do you place your hope in money or possessions? One day, they'll either become worthless or you will die; they won't be of much use then. Do you seek honor or fame? In a few hundred years, no one will remember you or your children. Do you invest all your time to develop a business? When you die, it'll be left to someone else, and you won't have any say in what they do with it.

Ecclesiastes is not depressing unless we're placing too much hope into the things of this world. To work is good, but make sure you enjoy it and appreciate the little things. Live your life in fear of God, who is eternal. Don't waste time chasing after the wind.

Questions for Reflection

How can you thank God for this Word that you have read?

What do these passages teach us about God?

What do these passages teach us about humanity?

Are you tempted to put your hope in something in this world?

How can you better appreciate the beautiful little blessings?

Was anything about the reading confusing to you? If so, what questions might you want to ask to help bring understanding?

How is God calling you to respond to what you have read?

Memory Verse of the Week

I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in their toil—this is the gift of God. — Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 (NIV)

November 12-18: *Song of Songs*

To Be Loved

How many sermons have you heard from the Song of Songs? I haven't heard very many. This book tends to make some of us uncomfortable, particularly if we're not used to talking about passionate love and physical intimacy. And yet, there is a reason why it's called *the* Song of Songs: it is a beautiful piece of art that has a lot to share with us.

Song of Songs can be read two different ways. The first and most obvious reading is that it pictures the romantic love of a woman and man who have overwhelming desires for one another. They delight in the beauty they find in each other's bodies, and they long to be together. There is a reason that love stories have captivated human beings for thousands of years: there is something wonderful about romantic love. The Song of Songs helps us to appreciate how God designed us as people capable of deep romantic love that can lead to the unity of two people becoming one flesh (see Genesis 2:18-25). Love is something we should celebrate! The marriage relationship—and the passion that accompanies it—is a gift from God.

Song of Songs can also be read as an illustration for God's relationship with God's people: the Church. This analogy is found elsewhere in Scripture. The prophets often characterized Israel as the bride of God. Christ used wedding/bridal parables to talk about the Kingdom of God. Paul even seems to understand Genesis 2:24 as a reference to God and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32). While some of us may feel uncomfortable reading Song of Songs as a love story between people, many can feel even more uncomfortable applying it to our relationship with God. Using the analogy of a passionate romantic relationships highlights just how desperate we should be for God. God calls us beautiful and flawless. God delights in us, searches for us, and longs for us. That should sound like music to our ears, but it also begs a question: Do we long for God so deeply?

Questions for Reflection

How can you thank God for this Word that you have read?

What do these passages teach us about God?

What do these passages teach us about humanity?

How do you feel when hearing that God loves and desires you?

How can you nurture your longing for God?

Was anything about the reading confusing to you? If so, what questions might you want to ask to help bring understanding?

How is God calling you to respond to what you have read?

Memory Verse of the Week

*You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.*

— Song of Songs 4:7 (NRSV)

November 19-25: Proverbs 17-31

Reflecting on Wisdom

The wisdom literature of the Bible maintains an amazing balance between the ideal and the exceptional, so we must hold all the books in tension. In particular, we always need to keep Job and Ecclesiastes in mind when reading through Proverbs (and vice versa). Proverbs presents us with wise observations about how the world works and how we should behave. We should certainly heed these wise words, but it's important that we hear them as descriptions rather than promises. Take these as an example:

The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever had it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm (19:23).

The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor in life (22:4).

Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity (28:14).

After reading these, we might expect that righteous people will always be blessed, healthy, rich, and respected. So when bad things do happen, does that mean that we have failed to fear the Lord? It's possible to get that impression when reading Proverbs. But Job shows us that sometimes bad things happen to good people. But if that's true, then why should we read Proverbs?

First, God's promises are ultimately fulfilled in eternity, and that's where we should place our hope. Second, we don't worship God in order to be blessed, but because God is worthy. Paul may have had good reason to omit "and the LORD will reward you" from his quote of Proverbs 25:21-22 (see Romans 12:20). We don't feed our enemy in order to be rewarded. We do it in order to overcome evil with good, even as Christ overcame sin and death through loving sacrifice. The wisdom of Proverbs helps us to see what a holy life looks like, and we should strive toward holiness.

Questions for Reflection

How can you thank God for this Word that you have read?

What do these passages teach us about God?

What do these passages teach us about humanity?

Is there a Proverb that particularly stood out to you in your reading? What do you think God is trying to communicate through it?

Was anything about the reading confusing to you? If so, what questions might you want to ask to help bring understanding?

How is God calling you to respond to what you have read?

Memory Verse of the Week

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. — Proverbs 25:21-22

November 26-December 2: Romans 1-8

Dead to Sin

Early in my walk with Christ, I had the opportunity to attend a Christian discipleship camp. Toward the end of that week of camp, I participated in an activity that tangibly illustrated the weight of sin in my life. It was a formative experience for me. I realized that I had been carrying the burden of my own sin. Like trying to climb a mountain with a backpack full of lead, I had tried to work off the debt of my unfaithfulness—I tried to wrench myself free of sin’s grip on me.

That night I realized in a deeper and more tangible way that I didn’t have to carry that weight anymore, but that I could lay it on the feet of Jesus. I couldn’t free myself from sin’s grip on me, but Christ could. I couldn’t earn forgiveness nor pay back my debt, but Jesus had already forgiven and pardoned me.

For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)

Our old self has been crucified with Christ, and Christ has given us new life! We are free from the weight of sin, forgiven of our debt, and reconciled to God!

That is Good News indeed. But you and I know that allowing sin to die is easier said than done. Sin likes to cling to us, and sometimes we are reluctant to let it go. It seems that some of the Christians in Rome struggled with this as well. Paul told them, “We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”

May we be people who truly put our sin to death so that we can allow Christ’s life to be evident in us more and more each day.

Questions for Reflection

How can you thank God for this Word that you have read?

What do these passages teach us about God?

What do these passages teach us about humanity?

Is there a sin that needs to die in your life?

Was anything about the reading confusing to you? If so, what questions might you want to ask to help bring understanding?

How is God calling you to respond to what you have read?

Memory Verse of the Week

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 8:38-39 (NASB)



Logos Devotional Schedule:

December 3-8	Romans 9-16
December 9-15	Psalms 41-50
December 16-22	Psalms 51-60
December 23-29	Psalms 61-70
December 30—January 5	1 Corinthians
January 6-12	2 Corinthians
January 13-19	Galatians
January 20-26	Ephesians
January 27—February 2	Philippians
February 3-9	Colossians
February 10-16	Psalms 71-80
February 17-23	1 Thessalonians
February 24—March 2	2 Thessalonians
March 3-9	1 Timothy
March 10-16	2 Timothy
March 17-23	Titus
March 24-30	Philemon
March 31—April 6	Isaiah 1-22

April 7-13	Isaiah 23-44
April 14-20	Luke 19-24; John 12-21
April 21-27	Isaiah 45-66
April 28—May 4	Jeremiah 1-17
May 5-11	Jeremiah 18-34
May 12-18	Jeremiah 35-52
May 19-25	Psalms 81-90
May 26—June 1	Lamentations
June 2-8	Ezekiel 1-24
June 9-15	Ezekiel 25-48
June 16-22	Daniel 1-6
June 23-29	Daniel 7-12
June 30—July 6	Psalms 91-100
July 7-13	Revelation 1-3
July 14-20	Revelation 4-11
July 21-27	Revelation 12-22
July 28—August 4	Jonah
August 5-11	Joel & Amos
August 12-18	Hosea
August 19-25	Micah
August 26—September 1	Psalms 101-110
September 2-8	Zephaniah & Nahum
September 9-15	Habbakuk; Obadiah
September 16-22	Haggai & Zechariah
September 23-29	Malachi

Our Logos Journey

In January of 2018, Trinity Church of the Nazarene began a two year journey to deeply engage God's Word. We chose to use the Greek term, *logos*, to name this journey because *logos* literally means "word." In the Christian tradition, *logos* not only refers to God's Word—the Holy Scriptures of the Bible—but also to God's Word made flesh: Jesus Christ.

We are convinced that God wants us to invest ourselves more deeply in God's *logos*. As we draw near to Christ and invest ourselves in the study of Scripture, we know that God transform us to better love God, each other, and others in our community.

Over these two years, we will be reading all 66 books of the Bible, engaging them in Worship, and studying them through weekly Bible Studies and Connect Groups. This guide will direct our reading every month, offer some devotional thoughts each week, and encourage space for reflection.

We hope that you will join us on this exciting *Logos* journey!



*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. — John 1:1*