

# Fleet Methodist Church

## 365

### Bible Reading Challenge

#### WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE READINGS FOR AUGUST?

#### **JAMES**

James was written by Jesus' brother who was a leader in the church in Jerusalem. It was written in the first century to Jewish Christians who were being persecuted.

James wrote this letter to expose hypocritical practices and to teach right behaviour. The central theme is that genuine faith will inevitably produce good deeds

#### **1 PETER**

Peter wrote this letter to Jewish Christians who were driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor to offer them words of encouragement. He writes as a fellow sufferer. Beaten and jailed, he had been threatened often and seen fellow Christians die and the church scattered. But he knew Christ and nothing could shake his confidence in his risen Lord. So Peter wrote to the church, scattered and suffering for the faith, giving comfort and hope, and urging continued loyalty to Christ.

#### **2 PETER**

Three years after his first letter, Peter warns Christians about of a new danger— complacency and heresy. He implores the church to hold fast to the non negotiable facts of the faith, of growing and maturing in the faith, and rejecting all who distort the truth.

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#### **LAMENTATIONS**

Lamentations is anonymous but is thought to be the work of Jeremiah who is remembered as the "weeping prophet".

Jeremiah saw the destruction of the city and the temple as the divine judgement of God; he understood the Babylonians to be mere agents of His will. His people had continuously sinned against God and needed to repent and trust in His mercy and faithfulness.

Jeremiah wept because his people had rejected their God who had made them and loved them and sought repeatedly to bless them. He knew that their selfishness and sin would bring them much suffering and an extended exile. His grief is special because he is broken by his care for the people with whom he lives and his devotion to the God whom he serves.

## **EZEKIEL**

Ezekiel was taken into exile into Babylon in 597BC and served as a Jewish 'Street Preacher' for twenty two years telling everyone about God's Judgement and salvation and calling them to repent and obey.

Ezekiel lived what he preached. During his ministry God told him to illustrate his messages with dramatic object lessons. Some of these acts included:

1. Lying on his side for 390 days during which he could only eat one eight once meal a day cooked over manure.
2. Shaving his head and beard
3. Showing no sorrow when his wife died.

Ezekiel obeyed God and faithfully proclaimed His word.

## **DANIEL**

Daniel was taken captive and deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605BC. He served in the government for about seventy years during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus.

Daniel found himself surrounded by idolaters and facing an egocentric despot. Instead of giving in or giving up, this courageous young man held fast to his faith in God. He knew that in spite of his suffering God was still in charge and was working out his plan for all nations and individuals

## **PHILEMON**

This is a letter by Paul to Philemon who is believed to be a wealthy member of the Colossian church. It was probably written in AD60 during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

This is Paul's personal plea for a slave, Onesimus who had 'belonged' to Philemon. Onesimus had stolen from his master and run away to Rome where he had met Paul who had led him to give his life to Christ.

Paul wrote to Philemon to re-introduce Onesimus and explain that he was sending him back, not as a slave, but as a brother. He tactfully asks Philemon to accept and forgive his brother. He explains that all the barriers, including the one that had been build because of Onesimus' desertion and theft shouldn't divide them any longer. Their faith had made them one in Christ.

## **HEBREWS**

The author of Hebrews is not certain. It is a masterful document written to Jews who were struggling with their new faith. They were probably undergoing fierce persecution socially and physically both from Jews and Romans. Christ had not returned to establish his Kingdom and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The message of Hebrews is how Jesus is superior because he is a superior sacrifice (once and for all) Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation.