

Finally God speaks out of a mighty storm and confronted with the great power and majesty of God, Job falls in humble reverence before him, speechless. God rebukes Job's friends and Job and the drama ends with Job restored to happiness and wealth.

1 CORINTHIANS

Paul's letter to the church in Corinth gives us a clear idea of the kinds of questions that an early group of Jesus' followers faced. It also shows Paul's teaching on a number of issues. This letter is well known for its chapters that discuss the gifts of the Holy Spirit and Paul's teaching that love is the best gift of all. Chapter 15 includes Paul's encouraging words about how God has defeated death and promises new life and a 'spiritual' body to all who have faith in Jesus.

2 CORINTHIANS

This letter gives insight into Paul's personal relationship with the Corinthian Christians especially how he tries to answer attacks that have been made against him. While many support him, some challenge his authority as an apostle, others criticize him for the way he speaks and unites and still others think he is unfriendly and harsh in his comments. As Paul defends himself as an apostle of Christ he shares a number of important teaching about forgiving others (2:5-17); God's new agreement that comes from the Holy Spirit and not from the law (3:1-18), how anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person (5:17-21); giving generously to help God's people in Jerusalem (8: 1-15, 9:1-15) and how God changed Paul's own life (12:1-9)

The Learning and Growing Team

Tony Ellis, Revd. Stephen E Robinson, Lindsey Brewerton,
Sharon Evans, Tracey Pugsley & Rachel Banks

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Bible Reading Challenge

**WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE READINGS
FOR MAY?**

EZRA

The book of Ezra was probably written by Ezra, a priest, scribe and great leader. His name means 'help' and his whole life was dedicated to serving God and God's people.

The book begins with Cyrus, the king of Persia releasing the Jews from exile in Babylon. He allows them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple under the leadership of Zerubabel, a descendant of King David and the great-grandson of Jehoiakim.

Things do not go smoothly and the work is halted for fifteen years until God sends two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah who help to revive the work and complete the building of the temple.

Sixty years later, Ezra arrives in Jerusalem with another group of returning exiles and he begins to teach the people the Word of God. He rebukes their compromise with the heathen nations around them. This Word of God starts to build up the people again and gives them a firm foundation for the future.

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah is the last of the Old Testament historical books, it was probably written by Nehemiah with Ezra serving as editor. Nehemiah saw a problem and was distressed. Instead of complaining or wallowing in self pity and grief, he took action.

He knew that God wanted him to motivate the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem's walls so he left a responsible position in the Persian government to do what God wanted. Nehemiah knew God could use his talents to get the job done. From the moment he arrived in Jerusalem everyone knew who was in charge. He organized, managed, supervised, encouraged, met opposition, confronted injustice, and kept going until the walls were built.

ESTHER

The book of Esther begins with Queen Vashti being exiled because she refuses to obey an order from her husband. The King sends out a decree to gather together all the beautiful young women in the empire and bring them into the royal harem. Esther, a young Jewish woman from the tribe of Benjamin was one of those chosen; indeed the king is so pleased with her that he makes her his queen.

Mordechai (Esther's older cousin) manages to foil an assassination plot but infuriates a commander in the empire called Haman by refusing to bow in reverence to him. Haman deceives the king and persuades him to issue an edict condemning the Jews to death.

Mordechai tells Queen Esther who decides to risk her life to save her people. She invites King Xerxes and Haman to a banquet and during the feast the king asks Esther what she would like, promising to give her anything she would like. Esther simply invites them to another banquet the next day.

That night, unable to sleep the king is browsing through some records and reads about the assassination plot that Mordechai had thwarted. Surprised to learn that Mordechai had never been rewarded he asks Haman what he thinks should be done to properly reward a hero. Haman thinks that the king is talking about him and so he describes a lavish reward. The king agrees and to Haman's shock and humiliation he learns that Mordechai is the person to be honoured.

During the second banquet the king again asks Esther what she desires. She tells him about the plot to destroy her people and names Haman as the culprit. Immediately the king sentences Haman to die on the impaling pole that he had set up for Mordechai. In the final act of this true life drama, Mordechai is appointed in Haman's position and the Jews are guaranteed protection throughout the land to celebrate this historic occasion and the festival of Purim was established. Because of Queen Esther's courageous act, a whole nation was saved.

JOB

The book of Job tells the story of Job, the man of God. It is a gripping drama of riches to rags to riches. It speaks of suffering and divine sovereignty and paints a picture of faith that endures.

Job is a prosperous farmer living in the land of Uz. He has thousands of sheep, camels and other livestock, a large family and many servants. Satan accuses Job of trusting God only because he is wealthy and everything is going well for him.

Job's faith is therefore tested, Satan is allowed to destroy Job's children, servants, livestock, herdsman and home, but Job continues to trust in God.

Next Satan attacks Job physically covering him with painful sores. Job's wife tells him to curse God and die but Job continues to trust in God.

Job suffers in silence whilst three of his friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar visit him. At first they silently grieve with Job, but when they began to talk about the reasons for Job's tragedies they tell him that sin had caused his suffering. They advise him to confess his sins and turn back to God, but Job maintains his innocence. Unable to convince Job of his sin, the three men fall silent. At this point another voice, the young Elihu enters the debate. Although his argument also fails to convince Job it prepares the way for God to speak.