

Fleet Methodist Church

365

Bible Reading Challenge

WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE READINGS FOR FEBRUARY?

Eli

As a religious leader, Eli began his life with a close relationship with God but then things started to go wrong. He was unable to control his wayward sons and as a result the ark of the covenant fell into the hands of the enemy. He meets Hannah in the temple courts praying for a son and nurtured God's response to that prayer, a boy called Samuel. Eli's death marks the decline of the influence of the priesthood and the rise of the prophets in Israel.

Samuel

Samuel was dedicated to God's service by his mother, Hannah, he became one of Israel's greatest prophets. He was a man of prayer who finished the work of the judges, was one of the first prophets and anointed Israel's first kings. Like Eli, his sons turned away from God, by taking bribes and demanding that God gave them a king "like other nations have".

Saul

Saul is a striking figure, handsome and humble. He was chosen by God to be Israel's first king. His early reign was marked by leadership and bravery. Then he began to disobey God, became jealous and paranoid and finally had his kingship taken away from him by God. Saul's life continued steadily downward, obsessed with killing David, he consulted a medium and finally committed suicide.

David

Finally we are introduced to David who followed God and ministered to Saul. A shepherd boy, he is best known for his bravery in killing the gigantic Philistine Goliath. He became a great warrior. His story continues in 2 Samuel.....

The Learning and Growing Team

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JOHN

The writer of the fourth Gospel is believed to be John, one of Jesus' disciples. He is a son of Zebedee and twin brother of James. He identifies himself as the one "whom Jesus loved" and offers eye witness accounts of the events he describes. John was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name", (20:31).

It doesn't follow the same order as the other three gospels or reproduce the same stories. John sets out to fascinate his readers with the incredible truth of the incarnation. He selects just a few events and conversations from the life of Jesus and presents them as evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

In the beautiful prologue there is a profound announcement that Jesus is the Word of God, who was with God at the beginning and through whom this world was created. He is all powerful, eternal and infinite and yet, amazingly he came to live among us on a speck in the universe called planet Earth.

John focuses on seven 'signs' of Jesus' identity and mission:

1. Water to Wine (2:1-11)
2. Cure of Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
3. Cure of Paralytic (5:1-18)
4. Feeding of the Multitude (6:6-13)
5. Walking on Water (6:16-21)
6. Sight to the Blind (9:1-7)
7. Raising of Lazarus (11:1-45)

....and seven "I am" themes:

1. Bread of Life (6:35)
2. Light of the World (8:12)
3. Door of the Sheep (10:7)
4. Good Shepherd (10:11)
5. Resurrection & the Life (11:25)
6. The Way, Truth, & the Life (14:6)
7. True Vine (15:1)

He introduces Jesus as the light of the world, who came into conflict with the darkness of Satan. In that darkness the insecurity of the Jewish Leaders compels them to seek his execution but just as it seems that darkness has triumphed - Jesus rises from the grave and is victorious.

Jesus' words to Nicodemus nicely summarize this Gospel's central theme "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life", (3:16)

RUTH

The book of Ruth forms a supplement to the book of Samuel; it is a true story which describes how people can trust in God at times of extreme testing and great distress. Perhaps one of the most significant things about this book is that it is essentially about a woman's relationship with God and yet we find it in the very male dominated world of the Old Testament where they had a lowly view of women.

Emilech, Naomi and their two sons were forced to emigrate to Moab because of famine. Emilech died and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion married Moabite women who are Orpah and Ruth. Not long after, the two sons died and Naomi and her daughters-in-law are left alone.

Naomi decided to return home to Bethlehem and encouraged Orpah and Ruth to stay in Moab. Orpah (which means "she who turns away") listened to Naomi - but Ruth (whose name means "beloved") refused to leave her mother-in-law. What she said to Naomi is memorable "Your people will be my people and your God will be my God", (1:16). Naomi loved and cared for Ruth and her life became a powerful witness to the reality of God. Ruth was drawn to her and to the God whom she worshipped.



When Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, she didn't look for a man to marry, but instead trusted Naomi's God to take care of her. He led her to a man named Boaz whom she eventually married. Ruth enjoyed prosperity and a fruitful relationship with Boaz. David was her grandson and this makes Ruth, who is a Gentile, a descendant of Christ.

1 SAMUEL

People think that the book of Samuel was compiled from the writings of the prophets Samuel, Gad and Nathan. Samuel describes four men's relationship with God and how though they began strong, they struggled to remain faithful to God.

It is called Samuel, not only because he is the chief character of the first part, but also because he anointed both of the other two chief characters of the books - Saul and David.

