

EVERY DAY WITH JESUS

ONE YEAR DEVOTIONAL *Walking in His Ways*

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SELWYN HUGHES

**Further Study: Philip and Mary Greenslade,
and Trevor J. Partridge**

Foreword

I believe with all my heart that the most open time of receptivity in the soul is the devotional time. By “devotional time” I mean allowing the mind to dwell on a biblically-based thought then turning it to prayer. What point is there in reading Scripture unless we allow it to nourish and fire our souls with a deeper passion for God?

It is getting close to 40 years now since I began to write a devotional series of meditations called *Every Day with Jesus*. During that time the readership has risen year by year until now it numbers hundreds and hundreds of thousands.

Interviewers often ask me what is the secret of its success. My usual answer is this: firstly, it is something I believe God called me to do. I felt the call to write devotionally as definitely as I did the call to the Christian ministry. Secondly, whilst the meditations are divided into a page a day a definite theme is followed throughout. The page a day is not an isolated dab of unconnected ideas and suggestions but forms a consistent whole until the chosen theme is ended. This gives a sense of completeness and realisation, of having moved toward a goal.

Thirdly, a theme stretched out over two months seems to be a formula that fits well with most people. I am convinced three months would be too long and one month too short. Two months, it seems, is just right.

I hope and pray that this well tried and tested formula will once again enrich your personal devotional time as you journey with many others through the six great biblical themes that have been selected.

Selwyn Hughes

How to use the Bible

A question I am often asked, especially by young Christians, is this: why do I need to read the Bible?

We need to read the Bible in order to know not only God's mind for the future but how to develop a daily walk with Him. God uses His Word to change people's lives and bring those lives into a deeper relationship with Himself and a greater conformity to His will. For over four decades now I have spent hours every week reading and studying the Scriptures. God has used this book to transform my life and to give me a sense of security in a shifting and insecure world.

How do we read the Bible? Do we just start at Genesis and make our way through to the book of Revelation? There are many ways to go about reading the Scriptures; let me mention the three most popular approaches.

One is to follow a reading plan such as is included in the *Every Day with Jesus Devotional Bible* or *Through the Bible in One Year*. The great advantage of following a reading plan is that your reading is arranged for you; in a sense you are being supervised. You are not left to the vagaries of uncertainty: what shall I read today, where shall I begin, at what point shall I end?

A second approach is to thread your way through the Scriptures by following a specific theme. It is quite staggering how many themes can be found in Scripture and what great spiritual rewards can be had by acquainting yourself with them. When I started writing *Every Day with Jesus* in 1965 I decided to follow the thematic approach and I wondered how long I would be able to keep it up. Now, nearly forty years later, I am still writing and expounding on different themes of the Bible, and the truth is that I have more biblical themes and subjects than it is possible to deal with in one lifetime!

A third approach is by reading through a book of the Bible. This enables you to get into the mind of the writer and understand his message. Every book of the Bible has something unique and special to convey and, as with any book, this can only be understood when you read it from start to finish.

How to use the Bible

It is important to remember that all reading of the Bible ought to be preceded by prayer. This puts you in a spiritually receptive frame of mind to receive what God has to say to you through His Word. The Bible can be read by anyone but it can only be understood by those whose hearts are in tune with God – those who have come into a personal relationship with Him and who maintain that relationship through daily or regular prayer. This is how the Bible puts it: “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Praying before you open your Bible should not be a mere formality. It is not the *act* that will make the Bible come alive but the *attitude*. Prayer enables us to approach the Scriptures with a humble mind. The scientist who does not sit down before the facts of the universe with an open mind, is not prepared to give up every preconceived idea and is not willing to follow wherever nature will lead him, will discover little or nothing. It is the same with the reading of the Scriptures; we must come to it with a humble and receptive mind or we too will get nowhere. Prayer enables us to have the attitude that says, “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:10).

If we are to grow in the Christian life then we must do more than just *read* the Bible – we must *study* it. This means that we must give time to poring over it, considering it, thinking about what it is saying to us and assimilating into our hearts and minds its doctrines and its ideas.

I have already pointed out that one of the ways of reading the Bible is by taking a theme and tracing it through the various books of the Bible. The pleasure this brings can be greatly enhanced by using this as a regular means of Bible study. When we study the Bible with the aid of concordances, lexicons and so on, we feed our minds, but when we study the Bible devotionally, we apply the Word of God to our hearts. Both exercises are necessary if we are to be completely rounded people but we must see that it is at the place of the devotional that we open up our hearts and expose ourselves to God's resources.

How to use the Bible

Let me encourage you also to take advantage of a reading plan as a further basis of study. Following this will enable you to cover the whole of the Bible in a set period. Those who have used this method tell of the most amazing spiritual benefits. One person who had read through the whole of the Bible in a year said to me, “It demanded more discipline than I thought I was capable of, but the rewards have been enormous.” When I asked her what these rewards were, she said, “I used to have a partial view of God’s purposes because I dipped into my Bible just here and there as it suited me. Now, however, I feel as if I have been looking over God’s shoulder as He laid out the universe, and I feel so secure in the knowledge that He found a place for me in that marvellous plan.” There can be no doubt that reading through the entire Bible in a set period enables one to gain a perspective that has tremendous positive spiritual consequences.

The third form of study – reading through a book of the Bible at a time – has the advantage of helping you understand the unity and diversity of the Bible. It is quite incredible how so many writers sharing their thoughts at different times of history combine to say similar things and give a consistent emphasis. Reading and pondering on this gives you such an appreciation of the wisdom of God in putting together this marvellous volume that it fires your soul and quickly brings praise and adoration to your lips.

I have found the best way to study a book of the Bible is to read it through once for a sense of the whole, and then to read it again, making a note of anything that strikes me, such as a principle to be applied, an insight to be stored away in my heart, or a thought to be shared with someone who is struggling.

One thing is sure, time spent with the Bible is not wasted. The more one loves God the more one will love the Bible. And the more one loves the Bible the more one will love God. Always remember this unique volume – God’s one and only published work – yields its treasures only to those who read it, study it and obey it.

Selwyn Hughes

**Changing
Times –
Unchanging
Truths**

“Come let us sing”

Day

1

“How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?” (v.4)

For reading & meditation – Psalm 137:1–9

These “bashing crashing times”, as one writer has described them, bring challenges to every one of us – Christians and non-Christians alike. Nevertheless, for Christians there are particular challenges, perhaps the greatest being that our society has become fiercely secular. You and I woke up today to a world that cares little for God. Secularism has spread everywhere. It fills our schools with books that have no room for divine truth, dominates our political systems, saturates the entertainment industry, and infiltrates morality with false definitions of power, sex, pride, and so on. If you speak out your convictions about God or the Bible you are ridiculed or labelled a fundamentalist. “To believe the Bible,” concludes Calvin Miller, “has become a kind of grand slur – an antiquated stumbling stone on the path to the brave new liberated world.”

Jean-Pierre de Caussade said: “It requires heroic courage and self-surrender to hold firmly to a simple faith and keep singing all the time.” The people in the psalm we have read today found that difficult. Surrounded by a pagan culture, they cried out: “How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?” With us, it must be different. We must have the boldness to keep singing the Lord’s song and refuse to be silenced by society. All may change, but God’s truth – never.

FURTHER STUDY

Psa. 138:1–8;

Jer. 29:1–28;

Rom. 12:1–2;

Phil. 2:14–16

1. How can I best bless the unbelieving society I live and work in?
2. How can I not be conformed to the world today?

Prayer

O God my Father, give me the courage “to hold firmly to a simple faith and keep singing all the time”. Baptise me afresh with Your Holy Spirit so that I may be all that You want me to be in the days that lie ahead. In Jesus’ Name I pray. Amen.

What is your name?

“... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin
... and let us run with perseverance ...” (v.1)

For reading & meditation – Hebrews 12:1–12

Despite increasing secularisation we must go on singing. And the song we should sing is that of the unchanging nature of spiritual truth. God’s Word never changes. Paul’s instruction to his son in the faith, Timothy, was: “Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of” (2 Tim. 3:14). What have we learned and what can we learn from Scripture that will help us develop a biblical framework for our thinking?

First, *we must put the past firmly behind us*. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”. When much of my time was spent in counselling I discovered that three things often hinder people from moving on in their Christian life. These may well be preventing you from making a fresh start spiritually. We must deal effectively with the past before we can deal effectively with the future, or even the present.

At the ford of the Jabbok, Jacob had to confess his old name before he was given a new one (Gen. 32). He had to own up to his flaws (“Jacob” means “supplanter”, or “opportunist”) before he was given the name of Israel, “God strives”. The past and the future are often separated by a river called Jabbok; it is a place of honesty, repentance and authentication. Jacob had to spend a while there before he was able to move on. I invite you to join me at the Jabbok. You may have wrestled with principalities and powers. Now it is time to wrestle with God.

FURTHER STUDY

Num. 11:1–20;

Heb. 10:35–39;
11:13–16

1. Why was
nostalgia dangerous
for Israel?

2. How does
Hebrews challenge
me to be a disciple
of Jesus?

Prayer

My Father and my God, help me I pray to put the past firmly behind me so that I can move into the future with no weights or encumbrances. I would be free – free to accept Your plans for me. In Christ’s Name I ask it. Amen.

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