

Morning Watch Readings

2018

MAY



AMBASSADORS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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This Morning Watch Calendar follows the **Believe** *His* Prophets Daily Bible Reading Guide.



Each chapter has a study verse to be used as the
Youth Morning Watch verse of the day.
Daily chapter summary statements are provided.



MAY 1

CHAPTER: Acts 7

THEME: Truth Teller

STUDY VERSE: Acts 7:55, 56

STATEMENT: The first seven deacons were chosen because they were seen to be “full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom.” The story of one of them, Stephen, shows that deacons can spread the gospel just as well as “official” preachers and missionaries. He even “performed great wonders and signs.” Naturally, he immediately got in trouble. This chapter shows Stephen before the court of the Sanhedrin. What does he do? He retells these men the whole story of their shared heritage. He is trying to make them see that the gospel is not against this heritage, as they perceive, but Jesus is the fulfillment of it. What are some of his main points, and what is the result?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, as You received Your servant, Stephen, receive me. Give me Your grace and power to proclaim, in the ways that You call me, that You love*



MAY 2

CHAPTER: Acts 8

THEME: Great Trouble, and Great Power

STUDY VERSE: Acts 8:14

STATEMENT: The stoning of Stephen was just the beginning. That was the turning point. The 490-year prophecy of Daniel had ended, and as a nation, the Jews had rejected their Deliverer.* They began to persecute, imprison, and even kill those who told the story of Jesus. Did the miracles stop? Not for a minute! There are three main miracle stories in this chapter. Which most appeals to you, and why? Notice Samaria—do you think the woman at the well was part of the reason this region accepted the truth so readily?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord of truth and power, give me strength when I face trials because of my faith. Help me to be happy if I can be one of those who suffer ridicule and trouble for Your sake.*

*Ask your teacher or pastor for more resources to study this if you want to know more.



MAY 3

CHAPTER: Acts 9

THEME: A Major Turnabout

STUDY VERSE: Acts 9:15

STATEMENT: If ever there was a turning point chapter, this is it! Up till now, Saul, a chief Pharisee, had been one of the most intense leaders of the persecution. He was certain this movement was not of God but was against the truths God had given the Jewish nation, and he devoted himself to stamping it out. God knew that Saul thought he was right. He even knew this man would be His own true servant if he could be convicted and converted. God resorted to drastic measures. But He also relied on His own servant, Ananias. How would you respond if God told you to go and pray for someone who had been killing and torturing your people?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear God, help me to always look for signs of Your presence in even the most unpleasant-appearing personality. Make me willing to reach out to the most unlovely—for You.*



MAY 4

CHAPTER: Acts 10

THEME: The Blessing of Children

STUDY VERSE: Acts 10:34, 35

STATEMENT: The ugly issues of prejudice and racial and ethnic discrimination were present even in the earliest days of God's church. This story does not begin with Peter. It begins with a faithful man from a different culture, who knows part of the truth and is faithful to what he knows. Notice to whom God sent the angel—it wasn't Peter. Instead, God gave Peter a symbolic vision, and He gave it three times. That means, to God, this is a serious topic! *Do not dare to call unclean **any** of My children!* Do you see issues of race and culture and ethnic clashes where you live? What do you do about it?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, Lord, who has created ALL nations of the earth of ONE blood, help me to understand and to teach others that there is only one race—human—and that You love every single one of us.*



MAY 5

CHAPTER: Acts 11

THEME: Repercussions

STUDY VERSE: Acts 11:17

STATEMENT: Then as now, the church wasn't completely ready to accept this concept of one God for one united human race. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem actually called Peter to account for his actions. So, he told them the story. There are two important lessons here: good, converted, earnest people can be wrong about something, and good, converted people listen, learn, and change their minds. What were Peter's teaching points? How can they help you when trying to do your part to end prejudice?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Father of us all, even in Your family we don't always get along. Help me to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.*



MAY 6

CHAPTER: Acts 12

THEME: Contradictions

STUDY VERSE: Acts 12:5

STATEMENT: The main story in this chapter is a wonderful one, and if you have been raised a Christian, you are probably familiar with it: Peter in prison, miraculously delivered, the amusing incident of Rhoda leaving him outside while she exclaims about it, and the foolishness of (all of us), praying for a miracle, but then refusing to believe it when it comes. But did you ever notice the contrast of that big story with verse 2? Why did God deliver Peter, but not James? We can't know. But it helps to remember that He didn't always intervene, when we face our own trials and He doesn't do the miracle we want.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, Lord, grant me faith and trust so that I will rejoice and praise You when the miracle comes...and also when it doesn't.*



MAY 7

CHAPTER: Acts 13

THEME: Paul's Sermon

STUDY VERSE: Acts 13:38, 39

STATEMENT: Wherever the early apostles went, they went to God's house on Sabbath. Sometimes somebody recognized them, and when that happened they might be asked to speak. They were always ready for this. Make an outline for yourself of what this sermon contained: the inclusive greeting, the story of God's past dealings, and so on. What would you say if you visited a church and someone asked you to stand up and share?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God, Your word says Your followers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. That is what I ask for myself. Help me to always have an answer for those who ask.*



MAY 8

CHAPTER: Acts 14

THEME: From One Extreme to Another

STUDY VERSE: Acts 14:15

STATEMENT: Well, if you're not being persecuted, it's nice to be admired, but these people took it rather far! Imagine Paul and Silas, moving from place to place as they're hounded out of one town after another, still faithfully preaching...and now, suddenly hailed as gods! It would be funny if it weren't so serious. You don't see them tearing their clothes for persecutions, but this truly grieves them. Why do you think that's so?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear Jesus, help me to faithfully point people to **You** and not seek to be either admired or reviled.*



MAY 9

CHAPTER: Acts 15

THEME: The Jerusalem Council

STUDY VERSE: Acts 15:11

STATEMENT: This is one of the most important chapters in the early church. Here is a lesson for all of us in what to do when disagreement arises. First, we gather. Next, we listen. This means *listen*. Let each side have their say in a respectful manner. Then, we might have to compromise. What things can you think of that each side had to give up to come to the agreement this chapter shows? Which things would *you* call most essential for Christianity? Are their choices partially cultural, and might other groups in different places have made different choices?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of unity in diversity, You seem to really like things to be very different and creative. Help my own family, church, school, and community to find the core things we agree on and live by those.*



MAY 10

CHAPTER: Acts 16

THEME: Further Travels

STUDY VERSE: Acts 16:4, 5

STATEMENT: This is a packed chapter. There is an interesting thread about women and what they can do to hurt or help the cause of Christ. In Paul's past life as a Pharisee, it would *never* have occurred to him to meet with praying women and discuss the gospel with them, let alone go to stay at the home of one of them! Lydia is an early church leader, and even has a church at her house. Then there is the girl who is enslaved not just by her human owners, but by the devil. Does she help or hurt God's cause? We don't know what happened to her after this story, but we can hope she, too, became a believer and devoted herself to the true God.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Holy One, You made male and female in Your image, and gave each of us work to do for You. Help me to find and be faithful to my task.*



MAY 11

CHAPTER: Acts 17

THEME: Versatile Methods

STUDY VERSE: Acts 17:28

STATEMENT: This chapter gives a great picture of the versatility of the apostle Paul. From being a narrow-minded and legalistic Pharisee, he is now someone God can count on to talk to nearly anyone in “their own language.” Count the different ways he reaches out to different people in this chapter. Can you, too, reach out to different people that you know, in ways each one will understand and perhaps respond to?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *One Lord of all people, we can't even begin to imagine the diversity of ways You use to reach the billions on this planet! Help me to see just a few ways I can use where I am.*



MAY 12

CHAPTER: Acts 18

THEME: Another Turning Point

STUDY VERSE: Acts 18:9

STATEMENT: Up till now, Paul has spoken to all kinds of people, but he has been faithful to Jesus' original instruction to go "to the Jews first." It has become clear that (probably due in part to his high level of education) he has a gift for reaching not only Gentiles, but also secular people, even leaders and government officials. He gets tired, in verse 6, of the constant opposition from Jews (who think just as he used to, by the way) and says, "From now on, I'm going to the Gentiles." This must have been quite a switch for a Pharisee. Have you ever had a turnaround like this in your life?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear God, I'm glad You came to non-Jews, too. Come to my town, and to my house. Teach me to help You spread the word.*



MAY 13

CHAPTER: Acts 19

THEME: From Lectures to Riots

STUDY VERSE: Acts 19:20

STATEMENT: Paul didn't stop going to synagogue on Sabbath, and he didn't stop trying to tell Jesus' story, but he also went to a public, secular lecture hall and gave lectures there for the secular or pagan people (verse 8-9). God's power showed, and trouble followed. We've seen religion, politics, power, and racial tension try to get in the way of the gospel. It was inevitable that money would, too. The cause of the Ephesus riot wasn't the threat to the "goddess," it was the threat to the idol-makers' pockets! How did God prevail this time?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, Lord, search my heart and show me anything in me that is unlike You. Help me love everyone and treat everyone like my brother and sister, because you are the Father of us all.*



MAY 14

CHAPTER: Acts 20

THEME: What Matters Most

STUDY VERSE: Acts 20:24

STATEMENT: Paul and his companions continue to face opposition, persecution, and heavy trials, but they don't give up. Did you notice who did the encouraging in verse 1? You would think the man who just went through a riot would be the one needing encouragement! Not Paul. He did get discouraged sometimes, the same as any of us, but his faith in Christ always carried him. He calmly raises a young man from the dead in this chapter, then gives a heart-warming farewell speech to people he knows he might not see again. What does he say matters most to him? How can you tell he means it?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of Paul, and God of my heart, when I am discouraged, help me to remember this great man of faith, but more than that, to remember that You are what matters.*



MAY 15

CHAPTER: Acts 21

THEME: Acts 21:13, 14

STUDY VERSE: Acts 21:12, 13

STATEMENT: For Paul, Jerusalem is both the center of his entire religious life, upbringing, and education, and the center of the persecution he uses to help lead. He is determined to go back, even though it seems that many believe the Holy Spirit does not want him to. Did you ever consider before that his life may be even more unsafe in Jerusalem than other disciples' because the haters he used to work with consider that he betrayed them? They are furious that he teaches the way of grace, and he even goes through some Jewish purification rituals to show that he does not disrespect the law of God.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of Jew and Greek, of American and African and Indian, God of all people everywhere, make us one in You!*



MAY 16

CHAPTER: Acts 22

THEME: Paul's Testimony

STUDY VERSE: Acts 22:21

STATEMENT: It is very interesting to compare Paul's own telling of his conversion story here with the account in Acts 9. You'll see that Acts 9 tells more of Ananias' point of view and his understandable fear of going to Paul (then Saul). Here, what do you learn about Paul himself, both before and after his conversion? Why do you think the people were so angry after they listened to him?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of the whole earth, thank You for loving me and my country people, as well as those in all the other byways of the earth. Help me to be faithful as Paul was.*



MAY 17

CHAPTER: Acts 23

THEME: Good Conscience

STUDY VERSE: Acts 23:1

STATEMENT: Paul's story is heating up. Everywhere he has gone, some people have been in opposition to him, but it is growing fiercer and more widespread. It must have been very difficult for him, but each arrest gave him another chance to tell the story of Jesus and of his own change of heart and life, to higher and higher officials. What are some of the methods he uses to defend himself in this chapter? Can you make the confession he makes in verse 1?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, like Paul, I have not always been faithful to my conscience. But I know You have forgiven and changed me, as You did my brother Paul, and I ask for the strength and trust to be faithful from now on.*



MAY 18

CHAPTER: Acts 24

THEME: Faith on Trial

STUDY VERSE: Acts 24:14, 15

STATEMENT: Now Paul is up before the governor himself. Notice that he makes a point of saying that all he believes about “the Way,” (meaning the way of Christ) is in accordance with all the laws the Jews had been given by God through the centuries. Christianity was nothing new; it was just the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies they had always longed for. Felix and his wife are interested and listen more to Paul, but we don't know whether they ever gave their hearts to Christ. The governor, to keep the favor of powerful Jewish leaders, keeps Paul in prison for two years. How do you think this affected his work for God?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God, let me be faithful no matter where I am, showing Your love to whoever is around me.*



MAY 19

CHAPTER: Acts 25

THEME: Watershed Moment

STUDY VERSE: Acts 25:17

STATEMENT: After two years, a new governor, Festus, succeeds Felix, and he, too, is privileged to hear Paul's testimony. He can't figure it out, since it seems Paul believes in this "dead man named Jesus." To Festus, that makes no sense. So, he talks to King Agrippa, and the king wants to hear Paul, too. Do you see how God is working to get the story of Jesus into the highest orders of society and government? What would it take for the highest governing authorities in your country to learn about Jesus?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord, I admit I would rather not be sent in handcuffs to the leader of my country. But You are my only King, and where you send me, I will go—with You!*



MAY 20

CHAPTER: Acts 26

THEME: Paul Before Agrippa

STUDY VERSE: Acts 26:29

STATEMENT: Once again, Paul tells his story quietly and respectfully. Again, he adds some details about his conversion. What extra points do you find? Once again, he points out that the story is exactly what all the Jewish prophecies have always said would happen. He even says he's on trial by his own countrymen, only for believing exactly what they all believe, except it's no longer in the future—Messiah has come, has died for the people, and has risen again. Once again, he is found innocent of wrongdoing. But Paul has appealed to the highest earthly authority—Caesar. What will happen next?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord, somehow You take Your people wherever they need to be to tell Your story and show Your love. Let me be faithful where I am planted.*



MAY 21

CHAPTER: Acts 27

THEME: A Gathering Storm

STUDY VERSE: Acts 27:24

STATEMENT: Almost from the beginning, Paul has said he longs to go to Rome and tell the story of Jesus. He believes that from there, the center of the earth in those days, the story will spread to the farthest corners of the earth. Now he is to get his wish, and they begin to sail, but it is late in the fall and they are going the wrong way, against the winds. Paul wasn't privileged to be one of Jesus' disciples who saw Him still the storm on Galilee, but he knows the stories—and he knows his Lord. Count the ways you can see Paul's love and gentleness even for his captors and others in this chapter.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear God, let me show faith and love no matter what storms I face in my life.*



MAY 22

CHAPTER: Acts 28

THEME: Results

STUDY VERSE: Acts 28:31

STATEMENT: Paul, not to mention all the companions who sailed with him (such as Dr. Luke, who is writing the story) must have believed that when they reached Rome, Paul would face more trouble and imprisonment. And he is still technically in custody. But he is allowed to live for two whole years in his own rented house, with just a soldier to guard him. Of course, you know that guard (or more than one, since they probably worked in shifts) heard all about Jesus lots and lots of times! Naturally, the opposition he faced came from some of his own people, the Jews.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of our fathers and mothers, You are faithful in all times and places. Sometimes I feel imprisoned by circumstances, but I know You are with me and will keep me.*



MAY 23

CHAPTER: Romans 1

THEME: Paul's Thesis Statement

STUDY VERSE: Romans 1:16, 17

STATEMENT: This long letter to the Roman believers had been written by Paul while he was still in Corinth, but it is helpful to read it now, while he is in Rome. This is the main explanation of all Paul's belief, and that of the early church, about Jesus and His Way. It is difficult in places, so buckle your seatbelt for the next few weeks! Here, we have Paul's statement of the gospel in a sentence or two, in our study verses. Try rewriting it, saying exactly what it says, in your own words. You could make a poster of it and put it where you and others can see it often. A person could live a whole and fulfilled life with just those two verses. What is your favorite part?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Great Creator, I know Paul speaks the truth when he says all humanity has no excuse, but that most simply refuse to know you, and run after their chosen sins. I know You love us all, just the same—help me to show people that one vital fact.*



MAY 24

CHAPTER: Romans 2

THEME: No Finger Pointing!

STUDY VERSE: Romans 2:1

STATEMENT: Paul is very direct in this chapter. He is clearly speaking to believing Jews who think they know the truth, so this chapter can speak very strongly to any Christian who also thinks he or she knows the truth and points judgmental fingers to others who supposedly don't. "If you think you're any better, you're in trouble," says Paul. Those who know the most have the most they *could* be giving to God, in the way of love for God and others. Just *doing* the "right thing" isn't even right if it isn't from the heart. Pick a verse you like from this chapter.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Holy One, establish Yourself firmly in my heart, in the very center of my being. No matter how much I learn from You, never let me start thinking I'm better than others.*



MAY 25

CHAPTER: Romans 3

THEME: How Salvation Works

STUDY VERSE: Romans 3:28

STATEMENT: These three stories show God's joy over recovering one. It is worthwhile to read this chapter in more than one version of the Bible, until you completely understand it. Paul is explaining that *everybody*, no matter what church or group they belong to, is a sinner and needs God. And *everybody*, no matter who or where they are, is within the reach of God's grace. Repeat the study verse over and over to yourself until you believe it. *Apart from the works of the law. APART from the works of the law. APART from the works of the law!* Yes, really!

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, Lord, how can I even thank You, let alone express how much it means to me to know that You do it all—ALL! You save me totally by Your grace alone! Thank You, thank You!*



MAY 26

CHAPTER: Romans 4

THEME: Children of Abraham

STUDY VERSE: Romans 4:17

STATEMENT: Remember that Paul is writing to Jews. They are likely to argue, “But Abraham was saved because he obeyed God! And the blessings are only for his offspring—only for us, the Jews!” Paul turns that argument inside-out. How does he say Abraham was saved? And was he even a circumcised Jew yet? There was no such thing! He caps his argument by saying that all who have the faith of Abraham are children of Abraham. What kinds of “things that are not” has God called into being in your life?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of the living, be the God of me. Call into reality in my heart and life the righteousness of Christ, so that all around me may see Your love.*



MAY 27

CHAPTER: Romans 5

THEME: Peace!

STUDY VERSE: Romans 5:1

STATEMENT: So, is there punishment to fear? So many people, in Paul's day and in ours, run around trying so hard to be good enough, so that God will not be angry with them or punish them. But Paul says, once we realize it's God's freely given grace that makes us right, we can relax, give a huge sigh of relief, and have peace. There is nothing to fear. We are His and He is ours. Learning to *live* in that grace is another matter—but the rest of the letter will go into that. First—*first*—we can relax into peace. Only then do we have any chance of learning to live as godly people.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of peace, sink this truth into my heart until I can't lose sight of it. You are not hovering over me waiting for me to make a mistake, so You can punish me. You are holding me in loving arms, waiting to teach me to live like Jesus. I can take a deep breath and relax in Your love.*



MAY 28

CHAPTER: Romans 6

THEME: Learning to Live

STUDY VERSE: Romans 6:8

STATEMENT: Oh, good, now it's Easy Street, right? Wrong! You'd think, once we accept this free gift of grace and relax into God's love, we'd be kind and loving and faithful and diligent and obedient, and... well, that's not going to happen. For two reasons: our sinful nature, and the devil's hard work to destroy that peace. It's the thing he fears most. So, Paul begins here and in the next chapter to describe the frustration of true believers who are trying to live in the light but finding that they still contain an awful lot of darkness. Notice what he emphasizes. Does he ask us to look at that darkness, or at the light?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord of light, help me keep my eyes on the light. Yes, I have to see and recognize the true darkness of sin, but I am only willing to do that from inside the safe circle of Your arms and the glowing light of Your compassionate love and forgiveness.*



MAY 29

CHAPTER: Romans 7

THEME: A Chapter of Distress

STUDY VERSE: Romans 7:25

STATEMENT: If you have given your heart to Jesus in the past, you are familiar with the feelings Paul expresses in this chapter. Pay particular attention to verses 14-23. Has your soul ever cried out verse 24? Of course, it has. So never, never, *never* forget verse 25! Always, if you belong to Christ, He *has already delivered you!* When you feel it isn't true, when you aren't living in that light, it's because you've forgotten *He* is the one who delivers, and you're trying to deliver yourself. It's not going to work. Just cling to Him. Cling to faith. Ask forgiveness. And try again, holding His hand. (Also, look forward to the next chapter!)

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord, I believe, please help my unbelief! I try so hard, and I fail so much, and then sometimes I remember to hold Your hand, and like Peter, I walk on the waters of Your grace. Make those steps longer and more frequent. Help me trust You completely.*



MAY 30

CHAPTER: Romans 8

THEME: Free!

STUDY VERSE: Romans 8:1, 2

STATEMENT: This is the beautiful centerpiece of the whole letter. If you have time, read it through more than once. Underline the parts you love best or write them on cards and carry them with you. Most of all, keep looking at verse 1. *When* is there no condemnation? At some future time after Jesus comes? After the great day of judgment? No, the verse says *now*. Verse 2 says He *has set* us free. Now. That's now. Today. You. Yes. Believe it, because it's true.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.....*



MAY 31

CHAPTER: Romans 9

THEME: Paul's Sorrow

STUDY VERSE: Romans 9:16

STATEMENT: This letter to the Romans lays out all Paul has preached ever since the Damascus Road experience. Everywhere he goes, some oppose him, and some accept it. But his greatest opposition is from his own people. Here, you can read his grief. Can you see the same things he speaks of, in action among your own church people in your own town, sometimes? Are there those who reject God's message of grace and compassion and freedom and insist on trying to work their way into heaven by trying to do everything right all the time, and make everyone around them as miserable as they are? What can you say to help?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of grace, please show me how to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Help me to see the most grumpy, difficult person as one who is loved by You, and to live out Your love for them.*

