

*This Morning Watch Calendar
follows the Believe His Prophets 2019 Daily Bible Reading Guide*

DECEMBER

*Each chapter has a study verse to be used as the
Youth Morning Watch verse of the day
A chapter Summary Statement
is provided each day*



DECEMBER 1

Chapter: Nehemiah 2
Theme: God Helps Nehemiah
Study Verse: Nehemiah 2:4

STATEMENT: Nehemiah apparently thought if he allowed the king to see his worry he would be in big trouble, but in fact, the king was sympathetic. Notice what Nehemiah did when the king asked, “What would you request?” He prayed first. We should all do that! He was allowed to go help the people rebuild Jerusalem, and given great authority, which was helpful when he was opposed by local officials—probably ones who had had something to do with the destruction.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: God of heaven, You are always in the rebuilding business. You rebuild hearts, lives, and souls. Help me to be Your assistant in these matters, and to go where You call me, even if it’s right next door or in my own family.

DECEMBER 2

Chapter: Nehemiah 3
Theme: Working Together
Study Verse: Nehemiah 3:1

STATEMENT: These records are more interesting to read than some of the lists we’ve seen. It’s good to think of each family getting credit in an eternal record for the part they took in this rebuilding. You have to work together if you’re going to do one section of a wall while other families on each side of you are doing their sections. Stones have to be alternated, and fit together precisely. Notice in verse 5 that the people who considered themselves “high class” (at least some of them) didn’t support or help the work. Have you worked together with others on a big project?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: God of community, You always work with us when we work together. Help me to be cooperative and helpful.

DECEMBER 3

Chapter: Nehemiah 4

Theme: Opposition

Study Verse: Nehemiah 4:6

STATEMENT: In their long history, the Jews tended to give up in the face of much opposition. But this time they “had a mind to work.” When the local non-Jews made fun of them, they were a little demoralized, but Nehemiah kept their spirits up and they kept going. When the opposition turned to actual threats, they prayed, armed themselves, took turns guarding and building, and kept going. They could only work half as fast this way, but they were determined to honor God by seeing their work through.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, You must have been proud of Your children. They had really learned their lesson and were just as determined to follow You as their ancestors had been to rebel. I want that kind of spirit, too.

DECEMBER 4

Chapter: Nehemiah 5

Theme: Rich Oppress the Poor

Study Verse: Nehemiah 5:13

STATEMENT: The Bible Commentary says we can't know when these stories took place; certainly not all during the rebuilding of the damaged wall, which only took 52 days (Neh. 6:16). They are out of chronological order. It was a sorry situation—the poor were being oppressed and charged interest (against God's law—Ex. 22:25) to the point where the rich were getting richer and the poor couldn't even eat. Nehemiah rebuked the rich strongly, and added that he himself had always helped the poor and had not even taken advantage of all that was officially due him as governor. The people listened, and gave back the lands and properties they had taken in repayment of their unjust loans.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear God, we see the same situations now in our world. The rich use the poor and don't pay fair wages, then charge interest for loans that will never get the poor out of the burden. Help me to never be like that.

DECEMBER 5

Chapter: Nehemiah 6

Theme: Continuing Opposition

Study Verse: Nehemiah 6:16

STATEMENT: Back to the rebuilding story. Because there were Jews living among the Samaritans, bringing news of every new threat, Nehemiah and the others had been able to hold off danger. Now, the officials try lying. They make up ridiculous stories about Nehemiah and say they'll tell the king. They hire false "prophets." They try everything to frighten him and the workers, but his response is always prayer, and they might be able to win against humans, but they can't win against God. How do you think the people felt when their work was all complete?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Father, it's always exciting to complete something, but doubly so when it was a project You directed, and was done under pressure and opposition. How overjoyed they must have been!

DECEMBER 6

Chapter: Nehemiah 7

Theme: Populating the City

Study Verse: Nehemiah 7:5

STATEMENT: The Bible Commentary says that even though it was now 90 years since thousands of people came back with Ezra, not many lived in Jerusalem itself. The temple and wall had been rebuilt in Ezra's early days, as well as some houses, but most people lived outside of Israel. Once Nehemiah finished repairing the damaged wall and gates, he consulted the census Ezra took back when the early exiles came home, to determine who would be best encouraged to come and fill Jerusalem and run it again as the capital city it was meant to be.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, You are so patient! To You, 90 years are nothing, but it must have seemed mighty slow to the exiles who were now 3 and 4 generations down from those who came back from Babylon. Help me to be patient, too, when it seems Your plans are a long time coming.

DECEMBER 7

Chapter: Nehemiah 8

Theme: Rosh Hashana to Feast of Booths

Study Verse: Nehemiah 8:10

STATEMENT: On the civil New Year's Day, which was also Feast of Trumpets, the beginning of the Ten Days of Awe leading up to the Day of Atonement, Nehemiah gathered all the people to the square in front of the temple. Old Ezra, who must have been well over 100 by now, brought the book of Moses and read all day, while the people listened intently, calling, "Amen, amen!" when something moved them. They wept when they realized they had fallen back into old ways and not been keeping God's law, but Nehemiah said one of the greatest things in Scripture, still helpful for us today. Learn verse 10 well and try to live by it.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: My God, no matter what is happening or how I feel, help me always to remember that Your joy is much stronger than any feelings of mine, and can give me Your strength.

DECEMBER 8

Chapter: Nehemiah 9

Theme: A Belated Day of Atonement

Study Verse: Nehemiah 9:6

STATEMENT: According to the law, Trumpets was supposed to be ten days before Atonement, and Booths five days after that. We don't know why they reversed the order, celebrating Booths during the ten days, and then putting off Atonement for another two weeks. Perhaps it was to allow people far away time to get there. In any case, they did sincerely repent and keep the solemn feast, rededicating themselves fully to the one true God. That's always in season!

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, You are the Atonement for all people and all time, and every day I present myself before You and recommit to following and loving You.

DECEMBER 9

Chapter: Nehemiah 10

Theme: A New Covenant

Study Verse: Nehemiah 10:29

STATEMENT: During this year, we have read the full early history of the children of Israel. How many times have we seen them promise, “Oh, yes, Lord, we’ll obey!” They said it to Moses, and to Joshua, and they’ve recommitted themselves under a dozen kings. They’ve rebelled, fallen into enemy hands, been rescued, and repeated, over and over. At last, they went into a lifetime of captivity to Babylon, during which they saw the leadership of people like Daniel. Now they’re home, and there is a different sense about this new covenant. They seem to really mean it. They summarize all God’s laws, and promise faithfully to live by them. Do you think they will?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, what a sigh of relief must have sounded in heaven! Of course, there have been many, many lifetimes in all this history, and there have always been people who were faithful to You. But this time it seems the nation as a whole may do better. Show me how my life is like this, and how I can stop waffling and follow You with all my heart.

DECEMBER 10

Chapter: Nehemiah 11

Theme: Ten Percent Resettle Jerusalem

Study Verse: Nehemiah 11:1, 2

STATEMENT: Most of the people have property outside Jerusalem, but ten percent commit to living in the city, besides the civil leaders and the priests and Levites and other temple servants. Nehemiah lists them faithfully, and they go down in history as being blessed by their brothers and sisters for their willingness to live in the city and maintain it. It is less likely to be attacked and damaged again, with people in it watching over it.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: God, show me whether You want me to be a country dweller or a city dweller, or somewhere in between. In either case, I commit to being Your servant.

DECEMBER 11

Chapter: Nehemiah 12

Theme: The Great Rejoicing

Study Verse: Nehemiah 12:43

STATEMENT: Once the wall was completely repaired, Nehemiah planned a huge celebration. He gathered all the leaders of the people, both spiritual leaders and civic leaders, and they all mounted on top of the wall. Then he divided them into two companies, one headed by Ezra and one by himself, and the two companies marched in opposite directions, singing, playing lots of instruments, and shouting with joy. People could hear them for miles. And those who had opposed this building and tried to stop it knew that they had lost, and God had won.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Great God of Israel and of all peoples, bless us and dedicate us and all our works to You and to Your kingdom.

DECEMBER 12

Chapter: Nehemiah 13

Theme: Another Rebuke

Study Verse: Nehemiah 13:14

STATEMENT: Again, these stories are not quite in order. Nehemiah had two periods as governor of Judah, going back to Babylon in between (v. 6). When he came back he learned that Tobiah, the enemy who, in chapter 2, had tried to prevent the rebuilding, had not only been allowed into Jerusalem, but the high priest had actually given him a room inside the temple to live in! Nehemiah was horrified, and immediately set things right. Eliashib was also “allied” with Tobiah, probably through marriage. Once again, Nehemiah had to settle things and make clear that obeying God’s laws means obeying God’s laws, including not doing commerce on Sabbath!

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Merciful God, we keep going astray! Keep bringing us back again, but please help me to stay true and not stray, or at least to recognize it as soon as I start to.

DECEMBER 13

Chapter: Esther 1

Theme: A Wild King

Study Verse: Esther 1:12

STATEMENT: According to BC 3, p. 458, this story took place about 16 or 17 years before Ezra left for Jerusalem. Babylon has fallen to Persia, but the Jews taken away to captivity are still there. One of them is Mordecai, raising his young cousin, Hadassah to love and serve God. The king throws a giant, six-month drinking party, during which he demands that the queen come out before all the nobles. He wants to show her off as his possession. She refuses, and not only does the king put her away, but he passes an edict that all men are to be “masters in their own house.”

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord of love, I know this is not the way You planned marriage, with each partner equal in love and service to each other. When the time comes, help me to find a loving, godly partner I can trust.

DECEMBER 14

Chapter: Esther 2

Theme: Esther—Beautiful Inside and Out

Study Verse: Esther 2:17

STATEMENT: Once he calmed down, the king needed a new queen, so he sent couriers to find all the most beautiful girls and bring them all to him. This is the sort of king God warned about, way back when the Israelites wanted a king “like everybody else.” Imagine how you would feel if the leader of your country demanded that you or your sister be brought to live in his harem. Could you cling to trust that God had a plan for you or her? Hadassah was made queen, and her name changed to Esther, but she still belonged to the king.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, You are sovereign over all sovereigns who think they rule the world. You can work even when people do evil. I trust that You always have Your hand over my life, no matter what happens to me.

DECEMBER 15

Chapter: Esther 3

Theme: Haman’s Plot

Study Verse: Esther 3:2

STATEMENT: You can see that this king is very easily influenced by those around him. He promoted Haman to high position, and Haman loved to be bowed to by all the people when he went out. But Mordecai bowed to no one but God. Haman wasn’t satisfied with getting even with Mordecai. He created an underhanded way to get the king to destroy all the Jews. What kind of person is that?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear Father, show me right away if I get proud and like to have people praise me. I want to be Your humble child.

DECEMBER 16

Chapter: Esther 4

Theme: Mordecai and Esther Pray

Study Verse: Esther 4:16

STATEMENT: Obedient to Mordecai’s advice, Esther had not told anyone she was a Jew. When Mordecai learned of the edict that would allow all Jews to be killed, he went into mourning. When Esther learned why, he urged her to try to do something about it. She knew she was nearly powerless, but she agreed to try. First, she and her maidens, as well as all the Jews in Susa, would fast for three days. How frightening would it be to know you had to go before a king without being summoned, when he could kill you at a command?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Great Ruler, sometimes You ask Your people to do things that are frightening, but You always give us the strength to do them. Help me to be as brave as Esther.

DECEMBER 17

Chapter: Esther 5

Theme: Esther's Banquet

Study Verse: Esther 5:2

STATEMENT: Trembling, dressed in her very best finery, Esther went before the king. Would he kill her? No—with a breath of relief, she saw the scepter held out. She knew better than to ask her favor right away. She just invited the king to a banquet. She made a point of inviting Haman, and he was filled with conceit. So when he saw Mordecai refuse to bow to him again, he gave way to rage and had a great gallows built, on which to kill Mordecai. At the banquet, Esther invited them both to another one the next day.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, I know that how we respond to events shows our true character. I can say I love You and follow You, but if I get enraged over a perceived slight, that shows me the truth. Help me to be yours, through and through.

DECEMBER 18

Chapter: Esther 6

Theme: Pride, then a Fall

Study Verse: Esther 6:10

STATEMENT: While Esther was planning her second banquet, the king couldn't sleep that night. He had his servant read to him from the records, and learned that Mordecai had never been rewarded for saving the king's life (ch. 2:21-23). He asked Haman what should be done for a man he wanted to honor. Now, here is where Haman truly gets tripped up on his own pride. Can you imagine his face when he had to do for Mordecai all the things he had imagined being done for him?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord of justice, sooner or later, what we give to others comes back to us. I want to give love and respect—not just so it will come back to me, but because all people are Your children.

DECEMBER 19

Chapter: Esther 7

Theme: Esther’s Request

Study Verse: Esther 7:3

STATEMENT: At the second banquet, the king asked again, “What do you want, Esther?” He offered half his kingdom, but she said, “All I want is my life and my people’s lives.” The king was shocked, and when he learned what Haman had done, he was so angry he left the room to calm down—also to think what to do, since he’d made an irrevocable edict. Haman ended up dying on the very gallows he’d made for Mordecai.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, I know You loved Haman, too, and wanted him to be the loving man You created him to be. I am sure You sorrowed over his loss. But You allow us to choose. Help me to choose wisely.

DECEMBER 20

Chapter: Esther 8

Theme: Turning Things Around

Study Verse: Esther 8:15

STATEMENT: The king gave Haman’s house and possessions to Esther and Mordecai. He couldn’t change the decree, but he gave them his own signet ring to seal anything they chose to do to avert the crisis. They made another edict that the Jews could defend themselves, and the people were so dismayed that many of them became Jews themselves!

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear God, I hope at least some of those people really turned their hearts toward You, and didn’t just join to save themselves. Help me, too, to be honest in my devotion to You.

DECEMBER 21

Chapter: Esther 9

Theme: Purim

Study Verse: Esther 9:28

STATEMENT: Unfortunately, many of the Jews showed the same vengefulness as Haman had; they destroyed people by the thousands, and Esther even asked for a second day of bloodshed and the deaths of Haman’s ten sons. Perhaps the Jews were trying to get back at those who had kept them away from their homeland, but God was not honored by this behavior. However, they instituted a new holiday, one kept by Jews to this day, on which they read or act out Esther and remind themselves of God’s care for them.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, I know what it is to be angry at enemies who have treated me unjustly, but help me to leave vengeance and retribution, if any, to You, who know their hearts. But I do want to remember and memorialize Your care for me.

DECEMBER 22

Chapter: Esther 10

Theme: Results

Study Verse: Esther 10:3

STATEMENT: We rightfully remember this little book as being the story of Esther, but it is equally the story of the faithful Mordecai. Even Esther’s intervention might not have happened had he not urged her to do something, telling her she would not herself be saved if all Jews were killed. This little postscript on the book shows us that Mordecai ended up second to the king, perhaps as vizier or prime minister, like Joseph. He ended up being put in a position to help all his Jewish compatriots. It’s even possible that the later decree to let them go home might have been partially influenced by Mordecai’s fame and wisdom.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Faithful God, remind me that my smallest everyday choices can sometimes have bigger consequences than I may ever realize.

DECEMBER 23

Chapter: Job 1

Theme: The Test

Study Verse: Job 1:21

STATEMENT: The story of Job is generally understood to be one of the oldest stories we have. Its message is a timeless one. It begins, not on earth, but in heaven, where Satan claims the privileges of a representative of the planet he claimed as his own domain (v. 7), and asserts that Job only obeys God because he is rich and has many earthly blessings and a large and prosperous family. God gives permission for Job to be tested, because He knows Job will trust Him no matter what. On one dark day, Job loses all his flocks, all but a handful of his workers, and—far worse than all the rest—all his children. What is Job's response?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Almighty Father, Job must have been so distraught! I can't imagine what it was like for him. Yet he chose to trust you. I want to be like that.

DECEMBER 24

Chapter: Job 2

Theme: Job's Misery

Study Verse: Job 2:13

STATEMENT: Frustrated by Job's steadfast faith, Satan claimed that he would curse God if his own health were affected. That just shows how little he understands parental love! Job was far more grieved by the loss of his children than by his own pains, and so was his wife. Job had to remind her not to blame God. His three friends are going to spout a lot of nonsense, but as we read we will also find some truth in what they say. Here, we find great wisdom in how they first comfort Job. They simply sit with him in silent sympathy.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Loving Lord, we can learn a lot from this scene. When I suffer loss, I don't want people to try to say "the right thing," I just want to lean on them. Help me remember that when my friends are suffering.

DECEMBER 25

Chapter: Job 3
Theme: Job’s Sorrow
Study Verse: Job 3:1

STATEMENT: Mrs. Job gets a lot of criticism for what she says in chapter 1, but in fact, she was really saying she hurt so much she’d rather die. Here, we see Job saying basically the same thing. He curses the day of his birth and expresses not only his grief and pain, but his despair. Like most other sufferers in history, he begs to know Why? One of the most important things we can learn from Job is that it’s okay to say just what we feel, and to send our laments straight to God. He has broad shoulders, and is right beside Job in his suffering, and us in ours. But neither Job nor we can see Him. Have you ever felt like this?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: O Great Comforter, I have known sorrow. I have known the agony of asking “why, why?” I seek to trust You still.

DECEMBER 26

Chapter: Job 4
Theme: Eliphaz
Study Verse: Job 4:17

STATEMENT: Here is Job’s first friend to try to “help” him. (They did better when they sat silently with him.) Eliphaz insists that the innocent don’t suffer, which makes you wonder how much he knew about real life. Surely, he insists, Job must have done something wrong to deserve this. There are two germs of truth, though. The first is in verse 3 and 4, where he makes a point of first affirming Job as being kind and wise. At least he doesn’t just criticize. The second is in our study verses—it’s true that none of us is pure in comparison with God.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, when someone criticizes me, especially unjustly, it’s hard to take, and even harder to seek for any seeds of truth in what they say. Help me learn to do that.

DECEMBER 27

Chapter: Job 5

Theme: The Greatness of God

Study Verse: Job 5:8, 9

STATEMENT: As Eliphaz continues, he does share some beautiful things, and we can hope Job found comfort in at least some of them, even though he was also being unjustly accused of hiding some wrongdoing. God is as Eliphaz describes Him, and really does do all those great things. Which verses are your favorites? Which verses do you disagree with? Is Eliphaz correct that it's God causing pain and then healing us (v 18)? After all, the men don't know it, but God did give permission to this testing. What do you think?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: God, I admit I don't understand Your ways or why You allow bad things to happen to good people. I'm sure it isn't always a test, but I also know You can always bring good from it if we trust You, so help me to do that.

DECEMBER 28

Chapter: Job 6

Theme: Job Argues

Study Verse: Job 6:28, 29

STATEMENT: Job is not finding much comfort in this friend! He does feel as if God is against him, as you can see from the early verses. Have you ever felt that way? What did you do about it? But he also argues against his friend's comfortless words, and insists that he is not guilty of wrongdoing.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Dear Father, give me the courage to stand up for myself even if others criticize me, but without putting them down.

DECEMBER 29

Chapter: Job 7

Theme: Job Wants to Die

Study Verse: Job 7:21

STATEMENT: Job turns his words away from his earthly friend and toward God. He is angry and in pain, and he trusts God enough to tell Him so. His contemporaries, people who worship idols and false gods, would never have the courage to say such things to their angry Gods, but despite everything, Job is sure that God will listen to him. He defends himself and asks God to just let him die. But he begs for answers and hears nothing in return. Will he still trust?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: God of Job, You were still there. It's easy for us, centuries later to see You working for Job, but we also know pain and confusion, and we know it's not easy when we're the one in trouble. We want to trust You, even when answers do not come.

DECEMBER 30

Chapter: Job 8

Theme: Bildad

Study Verse: Job 8:6

STATEMENT: Job's second friend is more confrontational than Eliphaz was. He is even sarcastic, calling Job's words worthless wind, and demanding if Job thinks God does wrong and hurts people unjustly. He insists that if Job will just repent from whatever he's done wrong, this will all fade away and all will be well.

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Lord, deliver me from friends who think my trouble is all my fault! Sometimes it is, I admit, but sometimes it is not, and what I need is comfort, not accusation. Help me remember that when someone else is in trouble.

DECEMBER 31

Chapter: Job 9

Theme: “God is Unfair!”

Study Verse: Job 9:2

STATEMENT: When we come to the end of the book of Job, remember this chapter. Here, Job lays out the greatness and unreachable power of God, in some of the same words God will use then. The issue is not that Job doesn’t know God, or can’t defend His power and glory. The issue is that Job doesn’t understand what is happening to him. He even says God multiplies his wounds without cause (v. 17), and declares him guilty though he is guiltless (v. 20). But God is too big—how can Job argue against Him?

RESPONSE: _____

PRAYER: Great Judge of heaven and earth, You are too big for us! We wouldn’t know You at all if You didn’t choose to come down to us. Like Job, I often wish I could question You. I am glad You are willing to listen and hold us close, even when You do not answer directly.

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