

Hebrew Scriptures from about the age of five.

16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

*"All Scripture" – refers to the OT but includes the growing body of Holy Spirit-inspired NT writing. At this time some of the gospels and letters were in circulation, and in Paul's first letter to Timothy, 1 Tim. 5:18, he defines quotations from the OT and from Luke's gospel, Deut 25:4 and Luke 10:7.*

4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

*"This charge" – a weighty command in legal language invoking Father and Son as witnesses*

2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

*"In season and out of season" – Paul well understood the opposition which Timothy faced and gave him the solemn charge not to be swayed*

**IN PRACTICE** The relationship and trust challenge for Timothy is in essence the same as Jacob's lesson, as he is renamed Israel. It also sets out the choice for any person facing difficulty and injustice, like the woman being dismissed by the judge. This is what Jeremiah saw, and spoke of, out of prophetic insight. It is what we may know in our heads but struggle to believe in our hearts. This is the thing: We have a partnership, a protection, a provision, assured to us, not because of any good thing we have done, but because of what Jesus has done for us, and our humble acceptance of His lordship in recognition of that fact. Timothy knew that. He was also (like us) prone to take the path of less resistance, to compromise a bit here and there, and so swerve into his will rather than God's. That was not being a proper partner. The question for us is always, what is God doing? Then, how do we join Him, trusting that He knows what He is doing!

**QUESTION** *Those first Christians were confident about what they believed and knew about taking Scripture as the yardstick to guide their practice. How does that shape how we should believe and act today?*

**PRAYER** Lord, as we come to You through Your Word we see character redeemed, heart and understanding renewed, your commitment of love and care affirmed in Jesus' teaching, and your Word upheld as our utterly reliable standard. As you choose to make us Your partners in bringing Your kingdom order, so we ask You to protect and guide and help us, to be those trusting partners You seek. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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*by it, or be tempted to compromise, but to use sound, accurate teaching to put right errors and encourage true faith in Jesus and His Good News.*

3-4 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

*"Sound doctrine" – may be what people need but not what they want, if it confronts the beliefs they hold. Timothy is to concentrate on Scriptural teaching that builds spiritual maturity.*

5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

*"Do the work of an evangelist" – proclaiming the content of the gospel to those as yet outside the household of faith. This does not categorise Timothy as an evangelist, Eph. 4:11, but as with all Christians, "doing the work" as one who proclaims Christ to those who do not know him.*

# The Living Word

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Bible readings for Sunday, October 20, 2019, with commentary notes

Bible study on Revised Common Lectionary passages for **Sunday, October 20**  
*Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand - read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching*

**Theme: Coming to know God and His Word is to live in His ways**

Genesis 32:22-31 – Jacob loses to an angel, and gains a new name and identity  
*with Jeremiah 31:27-34*

Luke 18:1-8 – God is watching out for our persistence in prayer

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – Timothy's test is to stay true in the face of difficulties

Also read: Psalm 119:97-104, Psalm 121

## Genesis 32:22-31 – An ego broken through a life-changing struggle

**He meets God in a struggle and emerges a changed man**

22-23 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.

*"Jabbok" – flows westwards into the River Jordan between Bashan, north, and Gilead to the south.*

*"Sent them across" – to the south side for protection while Jacob remained on the northern bank.*

24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak

*"Wrestled... till daybreak" – scheming Jacob, 97 years old, now finds himself in a frightening situation in the dark with an unknown assailant.*

25-26 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

*"His hip was wrenched" – Jacob, the fighter, had held his own and despite an injury to his hip struggled on. It slowly dawns on him, in the growing light, that he has been competing with an angel.*

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

*"Jacob" – he is made to speak out his name, "the deceiver". Jacob has to admit his old nature and self-will, to be broken of it.*

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

*"Your name" – in the Bible a new name marks a change of life and a new relationship with God (like Abraham, Sarah, Peter). The people of Israel are the people who struggle with God – an ongoing relationship which Israel begins, by allowing God to fight for him.*

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

*"Tell me Your name" – which God will not reveal, confirming who Jacob had struggled with. God does reveal His name later, to Moses, in Exodus 3:14-15, Exodus 34:4-7.*

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

*"Peniel" – meaning "face of God". It was held, that to see God was to die, but Jacob is still alive, and so he feels assured that his prayer for deliverance from Esau will be granted also.*

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## Jeremiah 31:27-34

### **Jeremiah sees a time when God's laws planted in our hearts will be intuitive**

27-28 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will plant the kingdoms of Israel and Judah with the offspring of people and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the Lord.

*"The days are coming" – a frequent saying in Jeremiah which underlines the word that follows.*

*"I will plant... with the offspring" – "plant and offspring" are from the same Hebrew root. God will populate both dwelling places and pastures, uniting Israel and Judah once again.*

29 "In those days people will no longer say, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

30 "Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes – their own teeth will be set on edge."

*"Sour grapes" – from a popular but misguided saying which claimed that the present generation should not suffer judgment for the sins of ancestors. One person's sin does affect others, but at the same time everyone is held accountable for the sin in their own lives, Deut. 24:16, Ezek. 18:2.*

31-32 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new

covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

*"A new covenant" – compared with the existing covenant through Moses. This is the only explicit OT reference to the New Covenant, made by Christ at the Last Supper and realised by Him in death, resurrection and ascension. This important passage is the longest sequence of OT verses to be quoted complete in the NT, Hebrews 8:8-12.*

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.

34 "No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord.

*"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

*"Put My law in their minds" – the Old Covenant could only point towards a way of living that reflected the character of God. That would be made possible later, by the spiritual rebirth Jesus offered, and the Holy Spirit's enabling, creating a heart desire for God's ways.*

**IN PRACTICE** It was the end of an era for Jacob, with his unfortunate name ('trickster') and reputation. He also had a track record as something of a fighter. In the way that God does, He redeemed these traits and turned them into qualities. A new name, Israel, depicted a new partnership – having contended to overcome God's wrestling angel, Israel became the model for those who would contend with God for His righteousness and justice among tribes and nations of much less savoury traditions. Much later, the giving of the law would give a framework for righteous living, but it could only point to the objective – people living in fellowship with God. External rules create transgressions. The huge shift of emphasis that Jeremiah saw in the Spirit made a conduct code obsolete. Instead, he saw changed and renewed hearts, that knew God personally and loved Him and His ways. In this new covenant we can know God intimately, so we will want to live for God, and we're helped to do so by His Spirit.

**QUESTION** *Why was righteous living set out at first in such a prescriptive way? What has changed, from how people were then, and our experience now?*

## Luke 18:1-8 – God is watching out for our persistence in prayer

### **Knowing God may not give us instant deliverance, but He won't let us down.**

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

*"Always pray" – especially in the context of difficult times, Luke 17:20-37. Believers learn to persevere by keeping on praying in faith.*

2-3 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

*"A judge" – a civil judge notorious for his disdain of righteous justice is the centre of the parable which argues from lesser to greater – a bad person's reluctant action contrasted with the 'how much more' of God's loving and just provision.*

4-5 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets

justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!"

*"Come and attack me" – more colourful in the Greek which describes giving someone a black eye. The judge had no compassion but would act out of self interest.*

6-7 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off?

*"And will not God" – quite unlike the unjust judge, compassionate and strongly motivated by a desire for justice*

8 "I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

*"Will He find faith" – as the time for Christ's return approaches, Christians become more marginalised and an increasingly secular society becomes more and more alienated from God, bringing the question into new focus.*

**IN PRACTICE** Jesus' story of the vulnerable widow woman desperate for a fair settlement from a wicked, uncaring judge gives us another picture – a picture of opposites. The judge who was so dismissive is a picture of the corrupt self-interest of the institution. By contrast, as Jesus explained, approaching God the Father is not hoping the faceless institution decides we are eligible, but coming through a relationship. It is not *what* you know (how much to bribe? how to get action, how to earn merit) but *who* you know. Knowing the One who is defined by His merciful nature and justice, who is also the God of ultimate power, changes everything. How do we know Him? By faith – easy to say, a bit harder to do, but that's the way a relationship of trust works.

**QUESTION** *When have you battled with an uncaring and faceless institution? On reflection, could you have sought resolution differently, in the light of this teaching?*

## 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – Timothy's challenge is to stay faithful to the Word

### **We need sound scriptural teaching to keep us close to God and His ways**

14-15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those

from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

*"From infancy" – a Jewish boy began to learn the*