



2026 Pre-Conference Bible Reading Plan

To **behold** is to look intently at something—to see it and process it instead of giving it a cursory glance. This year as we consider the **cross**, may its beauty and significance hold our attention in such a way that our lives are transformed to look more like Christ.

The following five-day Bible reading plan is an invitation to **lift our eyes**, **fix our gaze**, and **behold the cross** in preparation for our time together through Scripture reading, careful thought, and heartfelt prayer.

Day 1: The Cross from Matthew's Point of View

Scripture: Read or listen to **Matthew 26–27**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What details in these chapters catch your eye?
2. What do we learn about the character of Jesus in the garden, during his trial, and at the cross?
3. In what ways does this passage challenge you to trust, confess, surrender, and worship?

Prayer:

Now speak, Lord, and I will hear. Now call, Lord, and I will answer. Now command me, impose on me what you will, and I will submit.

None but the Lord, none but Christ, no other lord nor lover. I am yours, Lord, your own.

Do with your own, demand of your own, whatever you please.

What will you have me be, Lord, what will you have me do? That is what I will do and be.

No longer what I will, but your will be done. Amen.¹

¹ Richard Alleine, “Your Will Be Done,” in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, ed. Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 151.

Day 2: The Cross from Mark's Point of View

Scripture: Read or listen to **Mark 14–15**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What details in these chapters catch your eye?
2. Why do you think the details of the torn curtain (Mark 15:38) and the centurion's confession (Mark 15:39) are included?
3. How does the cross reshape your understanding of power and victory?

Prayer:

What had you done, my Savior, that Judas betrayed you, and you were led, bound as a lamb to the slaughter? What evil did you commit, to be falsely accused and unjustly condemned? What was your offense? Whom did you ever wrong, to be scourged with whips, crowned with thorns, reviled, buffeted, and beaten?

Oh Lord, how did you deserve to be spit upon, covered with shame? To have your garments parted and your hands and feet nailed to a cross? To be lifted upon the cursed tree, to be crucified among thieves? To endure such a sea of God's wrath, that made you cry out, as if you had been forsaken by God your Father? To have your innocent heart pierced with a cruel spear, and your innocent blood spilled before your mother's eyes?

I can find no offense in you. The centurion who executed you confessed you to be the very Son of God. The thief that hung with you said you had done nothing wrong. So what caused this cruel disgrace, suffering, and death?

Lord, I caused your sorrows. My sin brought about your shame, my failings your injuries. I committed the fault, and you are plagued for the offense. I am guilty, and you are charged. I sinned, and you suffered the death. You hung on the cross.

Oh the deepness of God's love, the wonder of his grace! Mercy without measure! What can I say? I was proud; you are humble. I was disobedient; you became obedient. I ate the forbidden fruit; you hung on the cursed tree.

O Lord, let me never forget your infinite love. Amen.²

² Lewis Bayly, "I Am the One to Blame," in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, ed. Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 202–203.

Day 3: The Cross from Luke's Point of View

Scripture: Read or listen to **Luke 22–23**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What details in these chapters catch your eye?
2. Why is the repentant criminal's interaction with Jesus so significant?
3. Betrayal, denial, and repentance are key themes in these chapters. What is one specific way this passage challenges you to follow Jesus more faithfully today?

Prayer:

Keep me, O Lord, now and always. Whatever age or place in life I attain, never let me think I am strong enough to maintain the combat without you.

You are my glorious Redeemer, pioneer of my salvation, the great Author and Finisher of my faith. When I am in danger of denying you, as Peter did, look on me with your majesty and tenderness. Keep me from falling, or quickly lift me back up to God and my duty again!

*Show me how to learn from my missteps and to humble myself in even greater diligence and caution. Amen.*³

³ Philip Doddridge, "I Need Your Protection," in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, ed. Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 85.

Day 4: The Cross from John's Point of View

Scripture: Read or listen to **John 19**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What details in this chapter catch your eye?
2. How does the cross shape your understanding of sin and salvation?
3. Jesus declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30). What would it look like to live in light of these words today?

Prayer:

I am wearied with my temptations, wearied with inward trouble.

So now, Lord, speak a word in due season to this poor, wounded, and wearied soul.

Let me serve you, Lord—that is all my desire.

I see the sinfulness of sin, so let me also see the graciousness of grace, and the fullness of Christ. I come to you for righteousness, because I see my sin is exceedingly sinful.

O Lord, keep my soul in the ocean of your free love. Amen.⁴

⁴ William Bridge, "Grace for the Weary," in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, ed. Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 28.

Day 5: The Cross from Paul's Point of View

Scripture: Read or listen to **Romans 5**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What details in this chapter catch your eye?
2. What stands out about the timing of Christ's death (Rom 5:6, 8)?
3. What would it look like to "rejoice in the glory of God" (Rom 5:2) today?

Prayer:

Lord!

I am yours!

Your mercy is mine to pardon me.

Your blood is mine to cleanse me.

Your merits are mine to justify me.

Your righteousness is mine to clothe me.

Your Spirit is mine to lead me.

Your grace is mine to enrich me.

Lord! Here I am; do with me as seems good in your own eyes.⁵

⁵ Thomas Brooks, "My Amen to Your Amen," in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, ed. Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 164–165.