

- 6 *Deuteronomy 5*
“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (v.12).
Is it still important today to keep the Sabbath?
What kind of ‘work’ is it spiritually acceptable to do on it?
And do you see the Sabbath as ‘a reward for work done’ or
‘an anticipation of life graced’ (see the notes)?
- 7 *Deuteronomy 8*
God’s people are warned not to forget him when they settle
and thrive in the Promised Land. In our craving for self-
sufficiency how do we guard against the spiritual amnesia
that seeks to replace God as the one who longs to bless us
and provide for us, with the fruits of our own achievements?
- 8 *Deuteronomy 11*
How does the recurrent ‘blessings and curses’ motif in
Deuteronomy gel with the New Testament doctrine of
salvation by grace which seems to imply that eternal life
can never be earned through our own ‘goodness’?
- 9 *Deuteronomy 13*
Tolerance is a modern day mantra.
Have you ever been labelled as ‘intolerant’ by friends?
What was the context? How did it feel?
Where should Christians draw the line (if anywhere) in terms
of religious, spiritual or moral tolerance?
- 10 *Deuteronomy 14*
“Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce
each year” (v.22). Is tithing a tenth (at least) of our income
a Christian duty? Are there any exceptions to this principle?

Closing

*Be still for a few moments quietly reflecting on your discussion.
Then close by having a member of the group read out John
Chrysostom’s prayer reproduced in the notes for Day 28.*

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 27

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the living God,
teach us to walk in your way more trustfully,
to accept your truth more faithfully,
and to share your life more lovingly.
By the power of the Holy Spirit
guide us in our work for the Church,
so that we may come as one family
to the Kingdom of the Father,
where you live for ever.
Amen.

(National Pastoral Congress, Liverpool, 1980)

General Question

- 1 Did God speak to you in any specific way as you were reading through this month's Bible chapters?

Activity

The notes to *Deuteronomy 6* describe the small leather boxes, known as phylacteries, that Jewish men would tie to their foreheads, especially during prayer times. The boxes contained tiny strips of parchment on which were written verses from the books of the Law, the idea being to keep God's word as close as possible.

This month's activity mimics this a little. Each person is to pick out two or three scripture verses (from anywhere in the Bible) that are particularly meaningful for them, and write them out on separate pieces of card (which will need to be provided). People are then encouraged to keep these cards close by during the month ahead.

Invite members to share which verses they chose and why.

Further Ideas

As usual, do not try to work through all these ideas, just discuss some of them as the group chooses.

- 1 *Nehemiah 1-2*
Nehemiah listens, fasts, prays, acts decisively, prays some more, picks a small team to confide in, and starts work. What can those in leadership learn from this today? Are there times when spiritual leadership overrules the perceived need for democratic decision-making processes? Are formal church structures (e.g. PCCs) always helpful in this regard?
- 2 *Nehemiah 4*
Have you ever encountered significant opposition to work that you were doing? How did you cope with it? What strategies did Nehemiah use to combat the opposition he experienced? Can we learn from this?
- 3 *Nehemiah 9*
The people publicly put on sackcloth and ashes and confess the sins of the past. In comparison, does our practice of reciting a general confession and hearing the words of absolution in a two-minute slot in a busy service seem a soft option? Is receiving God's forgiveness too easy?
- 4 *Nehemiah 12*
The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem was a great occasion. Do you ever feel real 'joy' at the heart of worship? Have you often worshiped God with the kind of exuberance described here (or *Psalms 98*) for who he is and all that he's done?
- 5 *Psalms 99*
On God's holiness. Can sinful humans ever really strive for personal holiness or is it characteristic of God alone?