

January–April 2023



Day by Day with God

Rooting women's lives in the Bible

FEATURING RACHEL TURNER, LYNDALL BYWATER AND CATHERINE BUTCHER

January–April 2023

Day by Day with God

Rooting women's lives in the Bible





15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon OX14 3FE
brf.org.uk

Bible Reading Fellowship is a charity (233280)
and company limited by guarantee (301324),
registered in England and Wales

ISBN 978 1 80039 164 2
All rights reserved

This edition © 2022 Bible Reading Fellowship
Cover image © iStock.com/shapecharge

Distributed in Australia by:
MediaCom Education Inc, PO Box 610, Unley, SA 5061
Tel: 1 800 811 311 | admin@mediacom.org.au

Distributed in New Zealand by:
Scripture Union Wholesale, PO Box 760, Wellington
Tel: 04 385 0421 | suwwholesale@clear.net.nz

Acknowledgements

Scripture quotations marked with the following abbreviations are taken from the version shown. Where no abbreviation is given, the quotation is taken from the same version as the headline reference. NLT: The Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. NIV: The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790. MSG: *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. KJV: The Authorised Version of the Bible (The King James Bible), the rights in which are vested in the Crown, are reproduced by permission of the Crown's Patentee, Cambridge University Press. AMP: The Amplified® Bible, Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. **Lockman.org**. NRSV: The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TPT: The Passion Translation®. Copyright © 2017, 2018, 2020 by Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. **thePassionTranslation.com**. ESV: The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, published by HarperCollins Publishers, © 2001 Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound by Gutenberg Press, Tarxien, Malta

Day by Day with God

Edited by Jackie Harris

January–April 2023

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 6 Contentment
Catherine Larner | <i>1–14 January</i> |
| 21 Using the armour of God (Ephesians 6)
Di Archer | <i>15–21 January</i> |
| 29 God's view of work
Amy Boucher Pye | <i>22 January–4 February</i> |
| 44 People like us (1 Corinthians)
Sheila Jacobs | <i>5–18 February</i> |
| 59 Walking the wilderness with God
Rachel Turner | <i>19 February–4 March</i> |
| 74 Tending the mind
Sandra Wheatley | <i>5–11 March</i> |
| 82 The wives of the patriarchs
Elaine Storkey | <i>12–25 March</i> |
| 97 What Jesus said in his final hours
Lyndall Bywater | <i>26 March–8 April</i> |
| 112 Igniting hope
Catherine Butcher | <i>9–22 April</i> |
| 127 The cloud of witnesses
Chris Leonard | <i>23–30 April</i> |

Writers in this issue

Catherine Larnar is a freelance writer, editor and presenter. She reports on literature, culture and faith for national, regional and Christian magazines and local radio.

Di Archer is CEO of tastelifeuk.org, a charity she cofounded after her family's experience of eating disorders. An educator, writer and speaker, she is also resources manager on the CPAS leadership training team.

Amy Boucher Pye is a writer, speaker and spiritual director who runs the *Woman Alive* book club. She's the author of several books, including *Celebrating Christmas* (BRF, 2021). Find her at amyboucherpye.com.

Sheila Jacobs is a writer, editor and an award-winning author. She lives in rural north Essex, attends an Elim church where she serves as deacon and is a day chaplain at a retreat centre.

Rachel Turner is an author and speaker and the pioneer of Parenting for Faith. Until March 2022, she led the Parenting for Faith team at BRF, and she presents the Parenting for Faith course, a video-based resource for church groups and individuals.

Sandra Wheatley lives in Newcastle and loves to share God's encouragements through her writing and extensive prayer ministry. Due to the rapid onset of MS, retirement from her nursing career came early.

Elaine Storkey is an academic, author, broadcaster and senior member of Newnham College, Cambridge. A former president of Tearfund, she also directed the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity for ten years and has taught in universities both in the UK and overseas.

Lyndall Bywater lives in Canterbury and works with The Salvation Army and the diocese of Canterbury, helping people pray. She is the author of two books, both published by BRF: *Faith in the Making* (2018) and *Prayer in the Making* (2019).

Catherine Butcher is a freelance writer and editor, an Anglican reader and a member of General Synod. As communications director for HOPE Together for ten years, she wrote magazines and books to help churches make Jesus known.

Chris Leonard has been writing for *Day by Day with God* since 1998 and has several books published by BRF. She leads writing groups, creative writing holidays and a church homegroup, and has three young grandchildren.

Welcome



We're so pleased that you have joined us at the beginning of 2023. You are in the company of women who know the Bible to be a source of strength and inspiration for life, and we hope these studies will encourage you and spur you on in your faith journey.

At the beginning of this new year, I wonder where you are at and how you are feeling. Some of us may be hopeful, looking joyfully to the year ahead. Others perhaps are wary, with concerns about what might happen or simply weighed down with burdens that have accumulated over the last twelve months.

As I have read through the studies in this edition, I am drawn again and again to the truth that when we belong to Jesus, we are secure in him whatever our circumstances.

We begin with a study on contentment, how to use the armour of God and what God's view of work can teach us. We will be delving into 1 Corinthians, with its call to love and respect all of God's people, exploring what God might be doing through tough seasons in our lives and learning how to care for our mental well-being. The patriarchs' wives will teach us how God can use us despite our failings, and we will be considering who our influences are and how we might influence others.

As we draw closer to Easter, our studies focus on Jesus, what he has done for us, the hope we have and how we might share it. Perhaps there is something in this list that resonates with you. If so, turn to that study first and let God minister to you through his word.

Some of the teaching may challenge us, but we have God's promise that he is working in us to give us 'the desire and the power to do what pleases him' (Philippians 2:13, NLT). We just need to be willing to let him lead us step by step. Perhaps if we're thinking of New Year's resolutions, that's a good one to make.

So, as we begin these studies together, let's make these words from the letter to the Hebrews our prayer for 2023: 'May the God of peace... equip [us] with all [we] need for doing his will. May he produce in [us], through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him' (Hebrews 13:20–21, NLT).

Jackie Harris, Editor

Using the armour of God (Ephesians 6)



Di Archer writes:

One of our children's favourite praise songs had the words, 'You've got to put your armour on, you've got to put your armour on, so you'll be safe!' (Ernie and Debbie Rettino, 1990). Our children loved the concept and gladly sang along. It was a bouncy, upbeat song which still plays in my head now – for me, it is inextricably linked with the verses we are about to consider together. But it also contained a serious message. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul is saying that we who follow Jesus cannot avoid the fact that we face opposition. Aligning ourselves with the Lord means that we are not just part of his family, but also part of his army. Putting our trust and our lives into the hands of our loving Lord Jesus, and going his way, means that we are choosing *not* to go other ways. And some of the battles and difficulties we face very often feel like someone, or something, is against us. In addition, one look at the news confirms that many of the world's troubles seem instigated and sustained by malign forces – they are hard to explain in any other way.

Being enlisted into an army was probably not uppermost in your mind when you became a Christian. But you are part of it, nevertheless. Whether it is a fight to overcome a destructive behaviour that is ruining your life, a fight for peace in your local Christian community that seems so at odds with itself or a fight against a systemic social evil, there are battles to be won.

You may not feel like a fighter, and some of us may struggle to relate to the military language and imagery. On a bad day it can be hard to put a toe out of bed, let alone put on the armour of God that Paul recommends. On days when I seem to be fighting myself, rather than any useful kingdom battles, I try to remember that I am not alone – we are all in this together. And after all, I am a beloved daughter of the king of kings, not superwoman!

The good news is that God has provided what we need to fight well. Learning how to use his provision takes time and practice. The best way to learn is together, so why not share these daily reflections with a fellow soldier and invite someone to join forces with you for this week?

The battle is real

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (NLT)

As a 'final word' in a letter to a church, this takes some beating. The apostle Paul has inspired and challenged his listeners throughout his letter and ends with this clarion call to stand firm in God. Coming hard on the heels of a culture-changing list of how we are to treat each other, which must have caused a good deal of reaction (chapters 5 and 6), Paul does not let us off the hook.

Paul wants us to focus on two things. First, he wants us to remember that the battles we face are not against other people as such, but against the spiritual forces behind everything, from disconcerting mischief-making to serious relationship troubles, to national discord and war. While sometimes we must challenge other human beings, we must always recognise that there are larger powers at work. When we want to blame or slap someone (or am I the only one who feels like doing that?), it might help to cool our temper by bearing this in mind. It might restrain us from actions that we later regret. It also helps to explain the rampant misery in the world that too often threatens to beat a path to our door.

How do we cope with the reality of malign opposition? The answer is Paul's second focus – to 'be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power'. Such easy words to say and yet they contain a whole world of perspective. Will we choose to stick close to Jesus no matter what? When our pain screams so loudly that we cannot hear his voice? When we feel abandoned? When the bad things look like they are winning? It may be 'fingernail faith' at these times but seek your strength from the Lord who is always with you.

Read John 16:33. Jesus has it more in hand than we can imagine.

DI ARCHER

How it's done

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth... (NLT)

It is said of Susanna Wesley that despite having 19 children, she spent time with God daily by sitting in her favourite chair and throwing her apron over her head to give herself space to pray. She homeschooled her children, both boys and girls, in classical and biblical learning, ran a 200-strong Bible study group and survived her minister husband's frequent absences. Two of her sons, John and Charles, grew up to change the Christian world, founding the Methodist Church and bequeathing us thousands of hymns.

Extraordinary stuff. Susanna faced and met her challenges well. She knew how to both wear and use the armour of God. Her confidence in the mighty power of the Lord is fabulous. Perhaps you know fellow believers like that. Maybe you are one – someone like Judge Deborah, who took God at his word and set off into battle, trailing dependent men in her wake (Judges 4:7-9).

These women do not go into a fight unprepared. How do we copy their example and 'resist the enemy', so that we too can stand firm? First, by putting on the belt of truth. Presumably Paul was thinking of a Roman soldier's armour here. The belt was essential for holding your underclothing in place, for the scabbard to hang on and as a base for the rest of the armour. It held you tight at your core.

Isn't this what we need? To know deep in our heart that the truth of God holds us steady. To rely on his faithfulness, his presence and his good purposes towards us. To be defined by his radical love for us. To have peace, deep inside, because of God's kindness in saving us. What is one truth that you need to help you resist the enemy and stand firm, with or without an apron?

Thank you, God, for your unending faithfulness to us. Thank you that your love never wavers. Help us to depend on it. Amen. (Read Isaiah 49:15-16).

DI ARCHER

Treasuring your heart

Put on the full armour of God, so that... you may be able to stand your ground... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place... (NIV)

If Paul thought that putting on the armour of God was necessary in order to stand firm against the strategies of the devil, then, like it or not, we would do well to take it seriously. What helps you to relate to this? I have done various things over the years: sometimes thinking of the pieces of armour while I am getting dressed in the morning, sometimes counting my 'Morning, God! I am busy today, please help' as that vital connection with my heavenly Father which arms me for the day. Roman armour doesn't look all that attractive and might feel removed from 21st-century life – that doesn't really matter of course, but it does help to visualise putting it on. Imagine it protecting you and giving you what you need for the day ahead.

The second piece of armour is 'God's righteousness'. It's the breastplate, protecting your heart from attack. It's Jesus rescuing you from sin and fear, and making you his child. It's the power to live in the freedom and security of that. It's the invitation to follow in Jesus' footsteps, living in honesty and righteousness yourself so that you don't give the devil a foothold. You don't need to fight for your place in the world – it is already assured. You don't need to put others down in order to feel better about yourself – you are loved and accepted just as you are. You can trust that you are always held and always seen. You have been made right in every way that matters.

The devil would have you believe otherwise. He would want to undermine your confidence and worth. But your heart is covered by his righteousness, it is precious to God – so stand firm.

Dear Father God, thank you that you know my heart. Please may you guard it today. Amen

DI ARCHER

Don't be slipshod

For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the good news so that you will be fully prepared. (NLT)

The important thing about the footwear that Roman soldiers wore was its durability. It was one of the main reasons why the Roman army swept to victory in so many countries – they had the best boots. Other armies were badly equipped in comparison; Roman boots just kept going, protecting their wearers from all weathers, keeping their feet healthy and supporting them in long marches across the continent. Made from layers of leather, heavy-soled and hobnailed with iron, they gripped well and endured for the long haul.

So that's why we need them too. First, of course, because we need that peace of the good news for ourselves. It is so easy to lose in this demanding, noisy, challenging, ever-changing world. But we need to step out into it with the right shoes on – that inner reassurance that God is with us every step of the way.

Second, this peace is not just for us but also for us to give away. This is another reason why we need brilliant boots that give us a really firm footing, not only to keep our balance, but also to go forward and take ground for God's kingdom. We take Jesus' presence with us everywhere we go, just by having our boots on. We have prepared ourselves and are ready to tell our God story wherever we can. Imagine yourself walking with his peace around you, in all your familiar places. He is with you, he is with you, here and there and everywhere you go.

The good news of peace is durable. It protects you, keeps you healthy and supports you. It gives you the best grip so you can go out into the world with confidence that you are on the winning side.

Plot spoiler: we really do have the victory. Have a look at Revelation 1:12–18.

DI ARCHER

Armour really works

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (NIV)

When Roman legionaries put on their armour, a servant passed them each part in turn. Piece by piece they readied for battle. But they had help.

As, of course, do we. We are not alone. Like King David in the Old Testament, we have a first-class trainer: 'He trains my hands for battle' (Psalm 18:34). For King David, it was a physical battle; for us it is usually other fights. However, whether our battle is moral, emotional, spiritual, physical or something else, we are not solo soldiers.

Take the shield of faith. The Roman shield was fashioned from light wood and leather, held together by metal and soaked in water to put out the flaming arrows of the enemy. It was large, rectangular and covered the soldier down to his knees. You've probably seen pictures of how legionaries locked them together in front and above their ranks to provide an impenetrable box of protection. Thus, dressed well in their brilliant boots, they could advance, together.

We are left with two obvious lessons: one, shields are absolutely no use unless we use them; and two, they work better when we work together. So, every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, when we ask God to 'deliver us from evil', pick up your shield. You are on God's side and the battle is his. Ask him for help with your current challenges, especially if you are feeling hard-pressed and 'under attack'. Stand firm and resist the undermining thoughts, fears and worries. Choose to find things to give thanks for. Hold up your shield. And if it's hard to lift, ask others for help. Ask a friend to pray for you. Keep yourself in Christian community. It works.

The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). What truths do you need to proclaim to extinguish his flaming deceit?

DI ARCHER

Oh, happy day!

Put on salvation as your helmet. (NLT)

Have you ever seen what a Roman helmet looked like? Sure, it was made of solid bronze, with pieces extending to protect the cheeks, nose and back of the neck – all vital in a physical battle. But any soldier of rank also had a crest or plume of red dyed horsehair on the top. Imagine how intimidating it would have been to have a sea of strong red coming at you. It wasn't just for show, however. For Romans, red was the colour and symbol of Mars, their god of war. In their mythology, it identified them as a warlike people, descended from this god.

So when we put on our helmet of salvation, we are saying similar things. We are identifying ourselves as belonging to someone and something – to a person and purpose. We are declaring that we belong to Jesus, that we are obedient to his lead, that we are part of his army of followers and that we are dependent on him for provision and direction. We are also trusting that he will protect us from the worst of knocks on the head. Or at least provide a hospital tent for recovery and healing.

Given that our position in the ranks is secure because we are saved by Jesus Christ, what is our equivalent of the bright red plume? How does the world know that we are Christians? What are the characteristics that we display? How can we 'take ground' for the kingdom of God? Unlike the god of the Romans, we have a Spirit who brings love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. How can we spread these further, both within and around us?

Smile – you belong to Jesus. No matter what you are facing, he is with you. He will be faithful. Read Genesis 39:21.

DI ARCHER

Swing to win

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. (NLT)

During an extremely stressful time in my life, when our daughter was struggling with a severe eating disorder, I bought a wooden sword from an historic castle shop and used it in my agonised praying for our girl. It really helped to chop and swing as I prayed and shouted for deliverance. It reminded me that Paul didn't just fling down a few jolly words about the armour of God as an interesting illustration to bring his letter to a close. He wrote about armour because he knew we needed it.

I really don't like being in a battle. But I know that it is real, and when I remember to don my armour, it goes so much better. And if Jesus needed the word of God as his sword to defeat the father of lies, then so do I. Jesus fought the devil toe-to-toe with God's truth in the desert in a way we will never have to. The devil promised him authority over kingdoms in exchange for worship and Jesus responded, 'The Scriptures say, "You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him"' (Luke 4:8). The devil finally conceded because he lost his footing. Jesus took all the ground. During our eating disorder days, I clung to God's word for dear life. Thankfully, our daughter came through and the charity **tastelife** (tastelifeuk.org) was born in response to help others.

The battle is always about truth. It starts in our hearts and heads. It is seen in our actions. It is often bitter and frequently feels impossible. It lands us flat on our faces too many times. But God will meet us even there, in all the mess and pain. The message is always, 'Do not be afraid' (Isaiah 41:10).

'Be the kind of woman that when your feet hit the floor each morning, the devil says, "Oh no... She's up!"' (Joanne Clancy).

DI ARCHER



Enabling all ages to grow in faith



Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

BRF is a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches. Our vision is to enable people of all ages to grow in faith and understanding of the Bible and to see more people equipped to exercise their gifts in leadership and ministry.

To find out more about our work, visit
brf.org.uk

Treat yourself to time out with God every day!

Day by Day with God provides a short printed Bible passage, explained and applied especially for women, by women who have themselves found the Bible a source of strength and inspiration for life.

A suggested daily prayer or meditation helps you connect the daily notes with your own spiritual journey as you seek to follow Jesus more closely.

BRF Bible reading notes are published three times a year, in January, May and September.

Also available:

App for Android, iPhone and iPad

Day by Day with God is edited by Jackie Harris.



Jackie is married to Ray and lives in Worthing. A freelance editor, Jackie was previously editor of *Woman Alive*, the magazine for today's Christian woman.



Contributors in this issue

Catherine Larner

Di Archer

Amy Boucher Pye

Sheila Jacobs

Rachel Turner

Sandra Wheatley

Elaine Storkey

Lyndall Bywater

Catherine Butcher

Chris Leonard



Cover image © iStock.com/shapecharge



brf.org.uk