

# BORDERING ON...



October 2019 (29 September - 2 November)



This October as we pray and read the Bible together we are going to think about borders, barriers, edges, horizons — the *liminal* spaces between one thing and the other.

Our creator God is at the heart of creation, but also at the edges and the places in-between — where things blur and bleed and blend. Those places where we are longing, or waiting, or wondering.

Many of our readings this month reflect on loss and uncertainty. We don't want to shy away from that reality, but as we travel the borderlands we will also take the opportunity to look for signs of hope and encouragement.

Jesus is next to us at home but he also walks alongside us through the wilderness. The Spirit guides us when we are flying high at the top of our game, but also sighs with us, using words from a deep language when we find ourselves falling between this and that, here and there, now and then, gazing towards the glimmer of the horizon.

*Each week of the theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.*

## Crossing borders (29 September)

Our lives are marked and constrained by all kinds of borders — by our sense of time, by our understanding of reality, by the mystery of divinity, by our own limitations, by death and rejection... and yet our God is not subject to any of these borders.

The Creator of all that is — is above our borders, above our in-fighting, above time, above death, above distinctions between divine and human.

No border can separate us from the love of God.

1. Jeremiah  
32:1-3a, 6-15

1. **The border between then and now...** The invaders are coming, never mind all that let's buy and sell land! Acting in the border between how things are now and the future that has not yet been realised.

2. Psalm 91

2. **Living in the shadow of the almighty...** Times of destruction, trouble and rescue.

3. Amos 6:1-7

3. **Lounging about** — the dangers of bordering on complacency.

4. Psalm 146

4. **Our Lord is above all borders**, all limitations, all constraints..

5. 1 Timothy  
6:6-19

5. **'You can't take it with you.'** The border between this life and the next.

6. Luke 16:19-31

6. **The chasm? An uncrossable border?** Considering who is speaking, is verse 31 ironic?

7. Romans 8:  
38-39

7. **No border can separate us from the love of God. None.**

# Wormwood and gall! The borderlands of grief

## (06 October)

The cry “Wormwood and gall!” (Lamentations 3: 19) vividly express the crawling, uncomfortable feeling of finding yourself in the borderlands of grief.

The border between one thing and the next — the loss of today and the dawn of a new day — can be a bitter, bitter place to be.

### 1. Lamentations 1:1-6

1. **The ambiguity of loss.** Much of the Bible is not a story of people in comfortable, secure positions — often the individuals and communities described are in precarious and insecure places.

### 2. Lamentations 3:19-26

2. **The frustration and discomfort of loss** when we find ourselves on the border - unwilling to go forward and unable to go back. Bitter disappointment and loss is an uncomfortable place to be.

### 3. Psalm 137

3. **By the rivers of Babylon...** Weeping on the riverbank.

### 4. Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

4. **Standing at the watch post.** Despair, faith, waiting, expectation...

### 5. Psalm 37:1-9

5. **Do not fret!** Easier said than done.

### 6. 2 Timothy 1:1-14

6. **Rekindle the gift of God that is within you** — thinking back to our September theme, we are reminded to *guard the good treasure*, even through dark times.

### 7. Psalm 34: 18

7. **The Lord is near to the broken-hearted...**

# Settling in to the unsettling border places (13 October)

Borders can be uncomfortable places to be politically, physically and emotionally; but they can also be creative, dynamic and enriching places to be. The borders between nations, between humanity and divinity, between mainstream and fringe; clean and unclean, acceptable and unacceptable, can be unsettling but exactly where God is calling to be, taking advantage of our unique perspective.

## 1. Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

1. **A citizenship that crosses national borders.** A calling to cross the mental borders as well as the political ones, to be hospitable and welcoming, to be invested — to build, plant, and work together with one another.

## 2. Psalm 66: 1-12

2. **Through fire and water to a spacious place!** Our God works on a whole other level, high above all our national borders.

## 3. Psalm 111

3. **The border between us and God...** a place of promise, covenant, fear and praise...

## 4. 2 Timothy 2:8-15

4. **The word of God is not chained!** Whether or not we are faithful to God, the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit has faith in us.

## 5. Luke 17: 11-19

5. **Outside in.** Of the ten lepers, already social outcasts, it was the outsider Samaritan who grasped the significance of what was going on. Often in the Gospels it is those on the fringes and margins, of low status that have the greatest insights while the privileged wealthy insiders get things wrong time and again. The fringes and borders can be a space of wisdom and perceptive clarity. ????

## 6. Mark 5: 25-34

6. **The border between clean and unclean...** An ostracised woman on the periphery of society, likely shunned as 'unclean' due to her condition, reaches out to Jesus in an act of bravery (and perhaps desperation). Jesus affirms her remarkable faith and tenacity.

## 7. Luke 8: 1-3

7. **Women accompanying and providing.** It's historically significant to observe the crucial role of women in Jesus' ministry. In the ancient world public life had quite an ambivalent relationship with women, often tightly prescribing what they could and couldn't do. Jesus took advantage of the border space that women of means such as Joanna and Susanna occupied — people both in and out of the mainstream — to act creatively. Male benefactors more deeply invested in the status quo may have been more cautious in supporting him. Jesus is not constricted to Main Street, mainstream, or the mainline; he can and does use the fringes and the borders, those who find themselves on the edges of society.

## Borders and pain (20 October)

When we find ourselves hurting, lost or caught-in-between, God is our constant companion — accompanying as we cross the borders of loss, hurt, bitterness, nightfall, dawn.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Jeremiah 31:<br>27-34   | 1. <b>Remembering sin no more...</b> The borders of memory. Sometimes the borders we guard most forcefully are the ones between <b>now</b> and <b>then</b> . Something we have done or something someone else has done — that still haunts us and we can't let go. Our God is willing to cross that border for us and say it no longer matters. |
| 2. Psalm 119:<br>97-104    |   |
| 3. Genesis 32:<br>22-31    | 2. <b>Sweeter than honey!</b> God's laws and commandments as a navigation system when we find ourselves in the border between one thing and the next.   |
| 4. Psalm 121               | 3. <b>Borders and pain</b> — How many of us have found ourselves wrestling with God until daybreak? Daybreak itself is a natural borderland.  |
| 5. 2 Timothy<br>3:14 - 4:5 | 4. <b>God does not slumber.</b> When we are in pain, lost, exhausted and despairing the Lord is constant.   |
| 6. Luke 18:<br>1-8         | 5. <b>The temptation to wander into myth.</b> What are the myths we are drawn to wander into today?   |
| 7. 2 Corinthians<br>1:3-4  | 6. <b>Don't lose heart!</b> Persistence in the borderlands of injustice.  |
|                            | 7. <b>Our consolation allows us to console others</b> who find themselves traveling through the difficult or painful borderlands between one thing and the next.  |

## New horizons... (27 October)

Much of life is lived looking at the horizon — both the literal horizon and that distant meeting point between two other realities such as happiness and sadness, pain and comfort, belonging and longing.

Our God is God of the horizons — with us in the delight and sorrow and those confusing places in-between where the two seem to blend, dropping behind the curvature of the Earth...

### 1. Psalm 65

1. **The distant horizon...** between sea and sky, between mountain and valley, iniquity and transgression, morning and evening, hill and meadow, tears and joy.

### 2. Jeremiah 14:

1-10 (see also 19-22)

2. **The disorientation of drought and desperation.** When God feels distant — on the vanishing point.

### 3. Psalm 84

3. **Looking to the horizon for home...**

### 4. 2 Timothy 4:

6-8

4. **The last horizon?** Having fought the good fight and run the good race, Paul consider the last horizon. But this border between life and death is not the end...

### 5. Luke 18:

9-14

5. **The borders between people** can be a place of jealousy, envy, pride and condescension. We should guard against superiority and practice humility, being less concerned with status anxiety and instead broaden our minds to consider new horizons.

### 6. Ephesians 1:

15-23

6. **Keeping the eyes of our heart...** on God's horizon.

### 7. Luke 6:

20-31

7. **The Beatitudes in the borderlands.** When we find ourselves in the borderlands of poverty and wealth, hunger and fullness, belonging and exclusion — the Beatitudes point us towards the shining horizon of the Kingdom.