

Living in the Library - October 2018 (30 September - 27 October)

The Bible is a strange kind of book. If you ask people to think of a book - chances are the Bible is one of the first books they will call to mind. But the Bible is much older, stranger and wilder than the category 'book'. It is more of a library than a book - a collection written over thousands of years across a number of different cultures, spanning multiple genres. The Bible, inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit, is history, poetry, theology, legal text, true crime, songbook, biography and more... It features compelling characters and gripping stories that continue to inspire countless generations of artists and writers.

But we often miss the twists and turns, moments of high drama, compelling characterisation and arresting dialogue, too keen to rush on to a succinct moral message. Instead of living in the library (wandering the shelves so to speak...) we dash to the exit looking for a neat answer. The Bible does offer ethical guidance but its narrative is also meant to capture the heart and imagination.

So this month we are going to borrow the tools of literature to get to grips with these stories and rediscover them so we can engage with the language and stories afresh. Each week we will focus on different aspects of narrative. We will be asking our Daily Worship writers to draw connections between the readings and their favourite stories. For instance, what can the Bible tell us about *Treasure Island*? And what can *Treasure Island* tell us about the Bible? We will celebrate how the Bible has inspired countless works of ingenuity, compassion and wonder; re-engaging with the sweeping narrative of longing, loss, grace, and redemption that sparks and sustains our culture.

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

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
30 September	Reversal of fortune	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22 2. Psalm 124 3. Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29 4. Psalm 19:7-14 5. James 5:13-20 6. Mark 9:38-50 7. Luke 19: 1-10 	<p>What makes many of the stories in the Bible so rich and compelling is that they feature sudden and dramatic reversals of fortune. These reversals have inspired many stories in popular literature.</p> <p>Take a look at the readings and prompts and make connections between the Bible and your favourite stories and authors. Bring the two into conversation with one another to see what one says about the other.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A dramatic reversal in fortunes 2. Escape against the odds. 3. Hearing from an unexpected voices or voices. 4. Gratitude for intervention of the law. 5. Bringing back a sinner from wandering... 6. Sometimes drastic action is required for fortunes to change. 7. A reversal from from periphery to centrality - fringe to mainstay. Zacchaeus reverses his own financial fortune.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
07 October	Tension and suspense	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job 1:1, 2:1-10 2. Psalm 26 3. Genesis 2:18-24 4. Psalm 8 5. Hebrews 2: 5-12 6. 1 Corinthians 10: 13 7. Mark 10: 13-16 	<p>All stories rely on tension and suspense. Will Arthur pull the sword from the stone? What will Itsy Bitsy Spider do, having been flushed down the water spout?</p> <p>Biblical narratives often feature moments of tension and suspense. Take a look at the readings and prompts and make connections between the Bible and your favourite stories and authors. Bring the two into conversation with one another to see what one says about the other.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The suspense of how the protagonist will respond to disaster. 2. The tension of a character wanting to be proven/ tried/tested. 3. The suspense of who Adam's partner is going to be (The original 'meet-cute' as romcom writers call the moment when the two leads first meet) 4. The tension between creator and created. 5. The suspense of incarnation - Jesus living in the tension between the divine and the human. 6. The tension of freewill. 7. The suspense - the children are causing a commotion and the disciples are annoyed - how will Jesus respond?
14 October	Comeuppance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proverbs 1: 20-33 2. Isaiah 50: 4-9a 3. James 3: 1-2 4. Galatians 6: 7-10 5. Mark 8: 34-38 6. Psalm 73 7. Ephesians 2: 8-9 	<p>Comeuppance. Instant karma. What goes around comes around. You broke it - you buy it. The boy who cries wolf ends up eaten by one.</p> <p>Many stories tell the stories of what becomes of those who deserve what they have coming to them. They may get away with it for now - but they'll get theirs in the end. These stories are cathartic and the Bible is full of such instances - of people "reaping what they sow". But it also complicates this story, because sometimes the wicked don't 'get theirs'.</p> <p>The Gospel of Grace upends this story - not only do people not get what they deserve - they also get what they don't deserve... Take a look at the readings and prompts and make connections between the Bible and your favourite stories and authors. Bring the two into conversation with one another to see what one says about the other.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People getting their 'just desserts'. 2. Trusting in future vindication. 3. Those who teach held to a higher standard. 4. You reap what you sow. 5. Losing your life to save it... 6. Wanting the wicked to come to ruin. 7. Getting what we don't deserve - grace undermines the idea of comeuppance. We get something we have not and cannot earn.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
21 October	Reality check	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job 38:1-7, (34-41) 2. Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c 3. Isaiah 53: 4-12 4. Psalm 91: 9-12 5. Hebrews 5:1-10 6. Mark 10: 35-45 7. Exodus 3: 1-17 	<p>Thinking about those moments in the story when your jaw drops. When the central character, or we as the readers, encounter something bigger and stranger than anything we have ever known.</p> <p>Take a look at the readings and prompts and make connections between the Bible and your favourite stories and authors. Bring the two into conversation with one another to see what one says about the other.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The gobsmacking moment of 'meeting your maker'. 2. Overawed by the majesty of creation. 3. The wonder of sacrifice. 4. Considering angels. 5. Getting our heads around the incarnation - God incarnate in physical human form suffering as a human. 6. A startling new paradigm. Confronting a new counterintuitive, countercultural concept of leadership. 7. Surprised by Holy Ground where we are not expecting it.