

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: February Programme: Ecclesiasticus: Some Notes

The text + commentary books (free) will be with you soon – either by post or by collection from the back of the church on Sunday. I am keeping these additional notes short, so as not to over-load you with reading. Please say if you want something different. The headings mirror what I have already circulated. Happy to extend hosting if there are volunteers. I have a spare book if others join us.

Monday February 12th: Chapter 1 verses 1-30. The ways of Wisdom – Trust in the Lord – Self-control and Self-respect – Virtue rewarded. Host Andy, Lead Miranda. Science has advanced hugely since this book was written, but there are still vast unresolved mysteries; and I guess we all struggle with how the universe started and what it all means. While on the journey of (partial) discovery, it is eminently sensible to focus on living meaningfully in the here and now. We can't explain eternity but we can do good in time. Whatever our circumstances, and whether or not we feel rewarded for doing right, we can declare who we want to be and try to live up to that. In a sense, virtue is its own reward: sometimes defined by following the rules; sometimes defined by following the heart,

Monday February 19th: Chapter 2 verses 1-18: Being tested – The Lord is compassionate and merciful – Stick with it. Host Andy, Lead Brian. One of the tricky things in life is good intention being followed by bad consequences. As children, we ignore guidance about not touching very hot things, and burn ourselves, and learn the hard way. BUT.. Young mother has pan catching fire, with whole kitchen in danger; and she has to grab the pan and throw it out, She got quite badly burned, but she did the right thing. So we can't just have a rule that if it hurts, we stop doing it. Someone who told the Post Office that their system was faulty, lost his job; but he was doing the right thing. Jesus on Good Friday.....

Monday February 26th: Chapter 3 verse 1 – Chapter 4 verse 10: Respecting parents – Yes to humility and No to pride and stubbornness. Host Andy, Lead Toyin. What is cultural and what is universal? What is subject to circumstances and what applies to all (family) relationships? The writer recognises that the old man can lose his marbles. He doesn't specifically recognise the sad reality that some parents do very little to earn respect. The humility/pride thing is a bit complicated too: crude example – son tells father he is not going to join the family crime business! Worker tells boss that what she is being asked to do is wrong! (Post Office again.) Note that alms-giving is to be combined with respect: there are good and bad ways of doing good.