WEEK OF PRAYER AND WORLD FELLOWSHIP

CALLED FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

8-14 NOVEMBER 2026



WorldYWCA

WORLD YMCA

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Joint Message from the Presidents of World YWCA and World YMCA

Dear friends,

Since 1904, the World YWCA and World YMCA have come together in prayer and fellowship, united by faith and a commitment to serving our communities. This shared tradition gives us space to listen to God and one another, find strength in our global fellowship, and renew our commitment to justice and peace.

This year's theme, "**Called For Such A Time As This**", brings a powerful invitation: **Leadership is influence, and everyone has it.** Each of us can influence the lives of others through our words, choices and actions. In our families, movements, and communities, we are called to consider how we use that influence and whose lives might be changed because we choose to act.

We bring to this week our hopes and gratitude, alongside grief, uncertainty, and concern for our world. We hold in prayer communities experiencing war, displacement, violence, and inequality, and all those working to protect life and dignity. The scale of these challenges can leave us wondering what we have to offer. Yet God meets us in our uncertainty and calls us to respond with the gifts we have, supported by one another.

The seven biblical leaders in this booklet show us different ways to answer that call. **Nehemiah** responds to brokenness with prayer and collective action. **Deborah** leads with courage, while **Moses** discovers that his sense of inadequacy does not place him beyond God's purpose. **Esther** uses her position to speak for her people. **Abigail** intervenes to prevent violence, and **Priscilla** shares her knowledge to strengthen another's ministry, and Jesus shows that true leadership comes from humility, sacrifice, and serving others rather than exercising power over them. Their stories invite us to recognise the opportunities for leadership in our own lives.

For our movements, this invitation also carries a responsibility to nurture the leadership of others. People bring wisdom, experience and vision that our communities need. We must ensure that they have the space, resources and decision-making power to shape our shared future. Through relationships across generations, we can learn from one another, share responsibility and grow together in faith and service.

During this Week of Prayer, we invite you to reflect on a simple question: **How will I use my influence for the good of others?** Perhaps it will mean speaking against injustice, listening to someone whose experience differs from your own, supporting a young leader, or taking a step towards reconciliation. Let our prayers deepen our compassion and move us towards action that upholds dignity, advances equality and builds peace.

We give thanks for everyone who sustains our YWCA and YMCA communities through faithful service, often in ways that go unseen. May this week bring encouragement to those who are weary, companionship to those who feel alone, and renewed courage to all who seek to make a difference.
May God guide us to lead with humility, act with love and use our influence wisely. Together, may we answer the call for such a time as this.

Mira Rizeq
President, World YWCA

Christopher Lewis
President, World YMCA

Introduction

JOIN US FOR A WEEK OF TRANSFORMATION!

Since 1904, the World YWCA and World YMCA have jointly organised the Week of Prayer and World Fellowship. Join us from 9th to 15th November 2026 using this booklet. Follow the daily devotions on your own, gather a small group, or adapt the material for YWCA/YMCA activities throughout the year. The programme offers six daily reflections and an optional shared worship service on day 7.

ABOUT THIS YEAR'S THEME

You don't need a title to be a leader. Leadership is influence—and everyone has it. Leadership involves creating space for others, sharing power, challenging injustice and working together to transform our communities.

This year's Week of Prayer resource invites you to consider **how to use your God-given influence** to make a difference in your family, YWCA/YMCA group, community, and the wider world. Through the stories of seven biblical leaders—three men and four women—we are reminded that **we are called 'for such a time as this'** (Esther 4:14).

God calls each of us to use our influence positively: to lead courageously like Deborah, restore what is broken like Nehemiah, advocate for justice like Esther, pursue peace like Abigail, invest in others like Priscilla, and lead despite our inadequacies like Moses.

Each of these leaders did not work alone. Nehemiah mobilised the community to join in with his vision of restoration; Moses was assisted by Aaron and Miriam who had gifts that he did not possess and Priscilla worked alongside Aquila, Paul and Apollos to spread the Gospel. **Biblical leadership is intergenerational and collective and requires shared power and accountability across the generations**.

Together through intergenerational and collective leadership, the YWCA and YMCA movements are **called to continue to drive change and inspire hope—** something the world needs now more than ever.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

DAYS 1–6

Each of the first six days includes sessions structure as follows:

- INTRODUCTION – to help set the context
- SCRIPTURE – readings from the Bible[1] to connect us with God
- LEADERSHIP LESSONS – thoughts on how to interpret and apply the Bible to our own lives and leadership journey
- REFLECT – reflective questions for group discussion and/or individual journalling
- RESPOND – a prayer, with optional creative activities for youth groups or individual use
- KEY IDEAS – a summary of key takeaways.

We encourage you to adapt the material for your YWCA/YMCA group: for example, as an end-of-evening reflection or part of leadership training. If you are leading a group, read, pray, and prepare in advance, then invite members to read sections such as the Bible passage or prayer. Remember, you can use this resource at any time of year, not only during the Week of Prayer.

DAY 7

Some YWCAs/YMCAs end the week with a shared worship service. We have provided a framework to help you plan a service suited to your local context. Feel free to adapt it creatively.

2027 BIBLE READING PLAN

The final section of this booklet contains a daily Bible reading plan for 2027 to support your reading throughout the year.

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Before and during the week, share your plans, testimonies, and individual or group reflections using the hashtag #WWOP26.

Please also follow the World YWCA and World YMCA to be encouraged and inspired by some great content online. Feel free to share it too! Let's encourage others to use their influence to lead, restore, rebuild and pursue social justice.

Dr Claire Rush
Lead Editor

1 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSV)

DAY 1

Nehemiah: Called to restore brokenness

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, I stood in a Cambodian rubbish dump and watched young girls collect metal to sell instead of attending school. A flicker stirred within me. Two years later, in a home in Kosova, I listened as young women described narrowly escaping kidnapping and trafficking on their way to school. That spark became a flame.

This brokenness was not OK. It is not what God intended.

That flame grew into a deep holy discontent[2] within me.

Holy discontent is a God-given dissatisfaction with the gap between the world as it is and how God intends it to be. It moves a leader from burden to prayer, prayer to vision, and vision to action.

Nehemiah experienced the same holy discontent. He saw what was broken, carried the burden, sought God, received a vision, rallied others, and rebuilt what had been destroyed.

Nehemiah's burden was the ruined state of Jerusalem's walls. Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar II, had conquered Jerusalem around 586 BC, destroying the city and temple and demolishing its walls and gates (2 Kings 25:8–10; 2 Chronicles 36:17–19). The Jewish people were taken into exile, and when Persia later conquered Babylon, King Cyrus allowed them to return. Although the temple was rebuilt, the city walls remained in ruins.

The broken walls were an injustice to the Jewish people because walls provided protection, security, and stability. Without them, the people were vulnerable to attack. The walls also represented dignity and identity, as Jerusalem was central to the life of Israel.

God used Nehemiah's holy discontent to inspire a vision for restoring Jerusalem's walls. He used mine to shape a vision for a world where girls are free to become all He created them to be. That vision has led me to serve in organisations and movements and to lead projects, events, and initiatives that equip and empower girls and young women.

God has placed you where you are for a purpose. Injustices such as violence against women, discrimination, and homelessness surround us. God calls you, with your gifts and experiences, to take part in His work of restoration.

2 This concept is related to "righteous indignation" a common expression in Christian theology, since both arise from love for God and for one's neighbour. However, while indignation is usually an immediate reaction of rejection in the face of sin or injustice (Moses burning with anger and breaking the stone tablets when he saw the golden calf in Exodus 32; Jesus cleansing the Temple, an event recorded in all four Gospels), dissatisfaction is a more sustained sense of unease that leads to prayer, vision, and action. (Translator's note)

Let's delve into Nehemiah's story and consider what holy discontent God may be stirring in your life.

SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 1:3–4

3 They replied, "The remnant there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire."

4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 2:17–18

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace." 18 I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us start building!" So they committed themselves to the common good.

Nehemiah 4:6

6 So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **Let your holy discontent become a call to action**

When Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's walls lay in ruins, he was deeply moved and mourned for days (Nehemiah 1:3–4).

This is significant because Nehemiah was serving as the king's cupbearer. He occupied a position of trust and responsibility within the Persian royal court, where he would have been expected to carry out his duties with composure. Showing visible distress before the king risked endangering his own life. Yet the suffering of his people affected him so deeply that he could not simply carry on as though nothing had happened. His grief became a burden that moved him to act.

What is your holy discontent? What injustice in your community can you no longer ignore?

The holy discontent that God may be stirring inside of you is an invitation to act and join in with His mission of restoration.

2. **Surrender in prayer**

A God-given vision is cultivated in prayer rather than being driven solely by frustration, ambition, or a desire to fix things quickly. Nehemiah's first response to the news about Jerusalem was not to immediately develop a strategy or approach the king. He stopped, mourned, fasted, and sought God in prayer (Nehemiah 1:4–11).

Nehemiah demonstrates true spiritual leadership by identifying a genuine need but also seeking God's wisdom about how to respond. How he prayed to God also demonstrates humility. He acknowledged God's character and faithfulness, confessed sin, remembered God's promises, and then asked for favour and wisdom for the step he was preparing to take. His vision was therefore rooted in a relationship with God rather than simply in his own ability or determination. Prayer allows us to surrender our agenda to God and ask Him to shape our vision and how we respond to a need.

3. **Vision turns a burden about the present into hope for the future**

Nehemiah did not remain focused only on the devastation he had heard about or simply endlessly complain about it. His burden eventually became a vision for restoration. Nehemiah saw what was broken, but he knew that brokenness did not have to be the end of story.

Vision enables us to look honestly at the present while also imagining what could be possible in the future. It does not deny the reality of suffering or injustice; instead, it asks what restoration might look like. Nehemiah could acknowledge the devastation of Jerusalem while also believing that, with God's help, the walls could be rebuilt.

In the same way, God may give us a vision that begins with something that troubles us but develops into a picture of something we long to see restored. A concern about poverty can become a vision for dignity and opportunity. A burden about loneliness can become a vision for genuine community. A concern about gender injustice can become a vision for greater fairness and equality.

Nehemiah eventually gathered others around this vision, saying, in effect, that they should rebuild together. His personal burden became a shared vision and, ultimately, a collective movement toward restoration.

In alignment with our YWCA and YMCA's movements, sustainable transformation begins by watching and listening to people who experience injustice, recognising their leadership, and working with communities rather than assuming we know what they need.

REFLECT

1. What situations, needs, or 'broken walls' around you currently create a deep sense of burden or holy discontent?
2. What change do you long to see in your community and the world around you?
3. How can surrendering in prayer help you discover and develop your vision?
4. What distractions, fears, or opposition might prevent you from pursuing the vision—and what would it look like to remain faithful and persevere?

RESPOND

Brick challenge

Materials: map of local community, sticky notes, sheets of paper, pens, sticky tac.

Place a map of your local town on the floor and distribute sticky notes to every person. Invite them to reflect on an area or issue of brokenness in your local community and get them to write it down and place on the map.

Facilitate discussion about issues of injustice in your town linking it to the story of Nehemiah. Invite the group to choose one area or issue to respond to e.g. homelessness, sexism, litter, discrimination.

Give each young person a paper 'brick' and ask them to write one thing they can do to help build something positive in their community to contribute to transforming this injustice. They then place their brick together to create a wall.

Connect it to the story of Nehemiah which reminds us that transformation rarely happens through one person's actions alone. The rebuilding of Jerusalem required many people, each contributing to the work. One brick matters when we work together toward a bigger vision.

PRAYER

Dear Lord

Like Nehemiah, give us eyes to see what is broken, hearts that are burdened by what matters to You, and courage to respond. Help us to bring our burdens to You in prayer, to hear Your direction clearly, and to have wisdom to turn vision into action. Give us faith to lead, humility to involve others, and perseverance when we face opposition. Use us to rebuild what is broken and to bring glory to Your name.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- Nehemiah saw Jerusalem's broken walls and allowed the situation to burden his heart. Vision often begins when we become deeply concerned about what is not as it should be.
- Prayer allows us to surrender our agenda to God and ask Him to shape our vision and how we respond to a need.
- Nehemiah began to see what could be rather than only was. Vision turns a burden about the present into hope for the future.
- Nehemiah communicated the vision, involved others, faced opposition and stayed focused. Leadership turns vision into reality by inspiring people to take ownership and persevere together.

DAY 2
Deborah: Called to lead courageously

INTRODUCTION

'Courage, dear heart.'

These are the words spoken by Aslan, the great talking lion and ruler of the World of Narnia, to encourage schoolgirl Lucy Pevensie in the classic fantasy novel The Voyage of the Dawn Treader from The Chronicles of Narnia. In this story, Lucy and her fellow voyagers sail into a thick darkness which surrounds the 'Island where Dreams come true' – a terrifying region where worst nightmares are realised. As the crew panics and struggles to escape, Lucy calls on Aslan to send help. At once, an albatross descends, flying ahead of the ship to guide it out of darkness. Quietly, he whispers to Lucy: 'Courage, dear heart.'

How often do we need to hear this encouragement before standing up or speaking out about the causes we are passionate about? As young leaders who are interested in changing oppressive power structures, advocating against climate-damaging activities, and ending injustice in all its forms, we can encounter both opposition and indifference. The capacity to dream for a better future like Nehemiah or obediently step into God's calling like Moses will lead to little meaningful change unless accompanied by courage – that leadership quality that enables us to rise above fear, put vision into action, and push through the darkness until we see the light.

In today's Bible passage, we find God's people in the middle of their own dark season. For twenty years, they have experienced cruel oppression from Jabin, King of Canaan. As a consequence of disobeying God, the Israelites have lost His protection from foreign rulers. They are threatened by the mighty power of the Canaanite army and their nine hundred iron chariots. It is in this context that the Lord chooses Deborah to lead and help deliver His people from the enemy. A wise judge and anointed prophetess, she listens to the Lord's word for her generation and communicates it with confidence. Her story reminds us that courageous leadership requires speaking out with boldness, taking the initiative when others hesitate, and having confidence that the Lord – like the albatross in Narnia – will go before us when we choose to stand up for His purposes.

SCRIPTURE

Judges 4:4–10

4 At that time Deborah, a prophet, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. 6 She sent

and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Position yourself at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun.[7] I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand.' "[8] Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go."[9] And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.[10] Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand warriors went up behind him, and Deborah went up with him.

Judges 5:7

[7]The peasantry prospered in Israel;
they grew fat on plunder,
because you arose, Deborah,
arose as a mother in Israel.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **Stand up in the face of dominant power structures**

In a traditionally patriarchal society, Deborah led against the cultural stereotypes and dominant power structures of her day. Her story is "the earliest narrative to describe female leadership of such a kind" [3] in the Bible and she is the only female judge mentioned in Judges. Deborah therefore emerges as an unexpected leader. A woman of great wisdom and integrity, she was respected by the people of Israel, who travelled far and wide to have their disputes settled by her at Ephraim. As the Lord's trusted spokesperson, she bore religious and political influence over men and women alike, making bold decisions on behalf of a nation. Deborah defied dominant cultural expectations and lead out of who she was – her skills, her character, and the calling that God had placed on her life. Her story inspires us to stand up against prevailing beliefs that limit who can act, speak, and lead, and to courageously break these stereotypes.

2. **Speak out in the face of persistent inaction**

Deborah heard God's voice clearly and was quick to take action. She swiftly summoned Barak, the Israelites' army general, communicated the Lord's instructions, and prophesied their ultimate victory. In Judges 5:7, she is described as "a mother of Israel" who "arose" for such a time as this - to rescue the Israelites from their enemy after two decades of inaction, oppression, and fear. Deborah was willing to step into the leadership vacuum of her nation and work towards the vision of liberation that she had received from the Lord. Where others may hesitate, freeze, or complain in the face of persistent problems – where they declare a particular situation as hopeless, or too difficult, or too frightening – courageous leaders are called to take the initiative, make a decision, and push forward.

3 Michael Wilcock (1992) The Message of Judges, ed. J.A. Motyer (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 59.

3. **Have courage in cooperation**

Deborah was not afraid of teamwork and faithfully partnered with army general Barak to see her prophetic victory realised. She acknowledged that his skills as an army general and soldier were needed to win the battle against the Canaanites, while he admits his desperate need for Deborah's wisdom and spiritual authority. Their cross-gender partnership is built on mutual respect and dependence, reminding our YWCA and YMCA movements that we are stronger together. By acknowledging our individual strengths and weaknesses, we can maximise our collective skills and expertise, forging interdependent partnerships to work towards the shared objectives of peace, justice, and human rights.

4. **Have confidence in the power of God's presence**

Deborah was confident that if the Lord went before the Israelite army, the victory would be theirs. Recognising her spiritual authority and role as God's mouthpiece, Barak refused to fight unless he was accompanied by Deborah : "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go" (Judges 4:8). We are reminded of Moses' plea to the Lord before he leads the Israelites to Canaan: "If your presence will not go, do not bring us up from here" (Exodus 33:15). We can have confidence that when we choose to speak up or stand out, our God holds the victory – he will equip us with the necessary strength, direction, and vision to lead courageously.

REFLECT

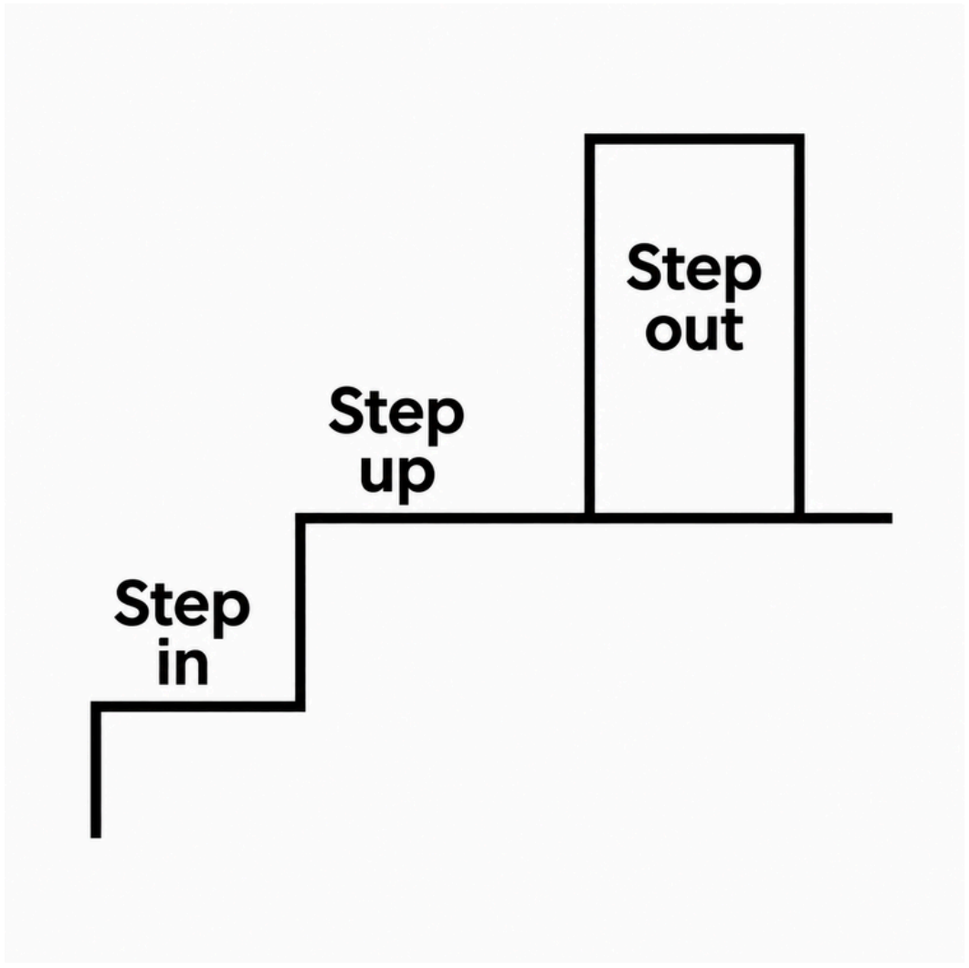
1. Think of a time when you had to speak out, stand up, or take action even though you were afraid. What gave you the courage to do it?
2. What cultural expectations or stereotypes about who can lead do we still encounter in our communities today?
3. Are there issues in the world today where we have become so accustomed to a problem that we have stopped believing it can change? What would it look like for you to "arise" rather than wait for someone else to act?
4. What strengths do you bring to a team? What strengths do you rely on others to provide?
5. How might trusting in God's presence change our response to a difficult, complex, or frightening situation?

RESPOND

Step In, Step Up, Step Out
Materials: coloured paper/card and pens/markers.

- Ask every small group member to draw two steps leading towards a door.
- **Step in:** on the first step, ask participants to write or draw a response to the following: **what situation, injustice, or need do I feel called to step into?**
- **Step up:** on the second step, ask participants to write or draw a response to the following: **what skills, experience, and knowledge can I bring to this situation?**

- **Step out:** on the door, ask participants to write or draw a response to the following: **what courageous action could I take to work towards a practical solution to this situation?**
- Explain that Deborah did not remain passive as Israel was suffering. She stepped into the situation with courage. She stepped up to using her prophetic voice and wisdom to mobilise the right people around her. She stepped out into the battlefield with courage, confidence that God would go with her.
- Ask participants to share what they have written or drawn with the group, where they feel comfortable to do so.



PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus,

We are sorry when we have remained passive in the face of injustice and oppression. Like Deborah, we pray that you would equip us with the necessary courage today to speak up and stand out where others have stayed silent. We pray you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear a fresh word of hope for our generation. Like Deborah, give us the boldness to lead where others have not before, the humility to accept our limitations and call on the help of others, and the confidence to rely on your power and guidance. Thank you that your presence always goes before us.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- Deborah's story inspires us to challenge prevailing cultural expectations about who can exercise authority and leadership.
- Courageous leadership requires taking the initiative where others have lost hope in a particular situation.
- We are stronger when we partner with those who have complementary skills, strengths, experiences, and knowledge to our own.
- Our courage is not rooted simply in our own abilities, but in the confidence that the Lord goes before us. Remember: 'Courage, dear heart.'

DAY 3
Moses: Called beyond inadequacy

INTRODUCTION

"I did question at times if I was the right person…'

These are the words of Jacinda Ardern, former prime minister of New Zealand, describing how she felt when she took on the role at the age of 37.

Perhaps these are words that you've uttered too? Called to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, Moses could definitely relate to Ardern's feelings.

As we've seen through the lives of Deborah and Nehemiah, God calls His people in different ways to help restore His world; whether to promote peace and reconciliation, stand up against injustice, or transform power structures which are oppressing His people.

However, we can often feel inadequate when it comes to using our gifts, talents and responding to God's calling. We may question whether we have what it takes to lead, whether we are the right person for the role, or whether someone else would be better suited. In fact, many people in the Bible experienced these same feelings—including Moses, whom God called, much to his surprise, to lead the Israelites out of captivity and towards the Promised Land.

After generations of living in Egypt and experiencing increasing oppression, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance. God responded by calling Moses to lead them out of slavery. From a human perspective, Moses could hardly have seemed like an obvious choice for the task God gave him. He had a complicated identity: born a Hebrew but raised in Pharaoh's household, Moses lived between two worlds. After killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, he fled Egypt (Exodus 2:11–15). His past hardly matched the background we might expect of a future national leader.

Moses' story encourages us to recognise that leadership does not require perfection. We may feel unprepared, inexperienced or inadequate, but God can still use our gifts, our personalities, and even our weaknesses to make a difference in the places where He has called us to lead.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 3:1–12

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian;
he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb,[a] the
mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire

out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.
3 Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the
bush is not burned up.” 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see,
God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I
am.” 5 Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the
place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 He said further, “I am the God
of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”
And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I
have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their
sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to
bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing
with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites,
the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now
come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Now go, I am
sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” 11 But
Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the
Israelites out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for
you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt,
you shall serve God on this mountain.”

Exodus 4:10–12

*10 But Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in
the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of
speech and slow of tongue.” 11 Then the Lord said to him, “Who gives speech to
mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?
12 Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.”*

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **We may see our limitations – but God knows our potential**

For around 40 years, Moses lived in Midian as a shepherd. His life during this season probably looked nothing like preparation for leading an entire nation. He was not a conventional military, political or public leader. Pharaoh was one of the most powerful rulers in the ancient world, while Moses was a shepherd with no army, throne or political influence.

Moses didn’t even think of himself as a leader. When God called him, Moses asked, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?’ (Exodus 3:11). Rather than focusing on what he could offer, Moses focused on what he lacked. His insecurity made him reluctant to accept the responsibility God was placing before him. Moses was also concerned about his ability to communicate. In Exodus 4:10, he tells God, ‘I am slow of speech and tongue.’ How could someone who struggled with speaking stand before Pharaoh and communicate God's message to the Israelites?

Moses looked at himself and saw someone who wasn't important enough, capable enough or prepared enough. But God wasn't asking Moses to accomplish the task through his own strength. God's response was: 'I will be with you.' (Exodus 3:12). We can feel inadequate because we're looking at what we can't do, while God may be looking at what can be accomplished with Him.

2. **We don't need to lead alone**

When God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses immediately focused on his own limitations. He questioned whether he was capable and even expressed concern that he was not a good speaker. Rather than telling Moses that he had to overcome every weakness himself, God provided Aaron to stand alongside him.

This is an important reminder because leadership can sometimes feel like we have to have all the answers, make every decision and carry every responsibility ourselves. We may feel that asking for help is a sign that we are not strong enough or capable enough to lead. Moses' story suggests the opposite.

Recognising when we need others is not a weakness; it can be an essential part of effective leadership.

3. **We need to rely on God and not ourselves**

One of the central themes of Moses' calling is that God repeatedly says, in effect, 'I will be with you.' Moses' adequacy wasn't ultimately based on Moses being impressive; it was based on God's presence and provision.

Moses' story isn't really about God turning an insecure man into someone who suddenly felt completely confident. Moses learned to lead despite his inadequacies, with God's help and with other people around him.

God can work through people who feel inadequate, and sometimes our greatest leadership growth begins when we stop pretending we are sufficient on our own and lean on God.

REFLECT

1. Where might God be calling me to lead, even though I don't yet feel ready or capable?
2. In what areas of my life am I allowing inadequacy to speak louder than God's calling?
3. Do I genuinely believe that God's presence is more important than my perfection?
4. What is one courageous step that I can take this week despite feeling inadequate?

RESPOND

Inadequacy wall

Materials: large sheet of paper, post-it notes, pens.

Put up a large sheet of paper titled: 'Lies I sometimes believe about myself.' Give everyone sticky notes and let them anonymously write things that can make young people feel inadequate in terms of speaking out, following God's calling and stepping up into leadership —no names required. Examples might include:

- "I'm not confident."
- "I'm not clever enough."
- "I'm not pretty enough,'
- "I'm not popular."
- "I don't know the Bible well enough."
- "I've messed up before."

Read some aloud and then connect them to the example of Moses. Underneath the wall, write: "But God can still use me."

Explain that God didn't choose Moses because he had no weaknesses. Moses' story reminds us that God can work through people who feel inadequate—and sometimes our greatest leadership growth begins when we stop pretending we are sufficient on our own.

Leadership does not require us all to communicate, think, move, learn or contribute in the same way. In Exodus 4:10, Moses tells God, 'I am slow of speech and tongue.' How could someone who struggled with speaking stand before Pharaoh and communicate God's message to the Israelites? Although the Bible doesn't expressly say that Moses had a disability, God did partner him with Aaron who was an excellent orator.

Moses' story reminds us that feeling inadequate does not necessarily mean we are unsuitable for leadership. Sometimes, our awareness of our limitations can actually lead us to depend more deeply on God and recognise the value of others who can support us.

OR

Which Voice Am I Listening To?

Materials: Paper and pen, small stone, candle.

Take a moment to think about an area where you feel inadequate or hesitant to lead. Complete the sentence on a piece of paper: 'Inadequacy tells me...' Write down any thoughts or fears that come to mind.

Read Exodus 3:11–12 where God promises Moses that 'I will be with you.' Complete the sentence on a piece of paper: 'God reminds me...' What does God's promise of His presence mean for the situation you're facing?

Think of one fear that has been speaking the loudest. Place a small stone, candle, or piece of paper in front of you. Hold it as you pray: 'God, I give You the things that
tell me I am not enough.' Place it down and then say, 'I receive Your promise: 'I will be with you.'

Finish by writing: 'Because God is with me, my next step is...' Choose one small, courageous action you can take this week.

PRAYER

Dear Father,

Like Moses, we sometimes look at ourselves and ask, "Who am I?" We see our weaknesses, our failures, our lack of confidence and all the reasons we feel unqualified. Help us not to allow those voices to become louder than Your calling. Remind us that You don't ask us to lead through our own strength. You promise to be with us. Give us courage to trust You, humility to ask for help and faith to take the next step—even when we don't feel ready.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- God can call us into leadership in our schools, communities and beyond, even when we feel unprepared, inadequate or unsuitable.
- Leadership isn't about being the most capable; it's about being willing to step forward, recognise your weaknesses, accept help and trust God.
- Moses felt like the wrong person for the job, but his willingness to step forward mattered more than his feelings of inadequacy.
- Feeling inadequate doesn't mean we're unsuitable for God's calling. Our limitations can draw us closer to God and to others.

DAY 4
Esther: Called to advocate hope

INTRODUCTION

‘Who runs the world? Girls!’

In 2011, everyone was singing these catchy lyrics from Beyoncé, the globally celebrated singer, songwriter and performer, known for her powerful music, artistry and influence on popular culture.

However sadly the reality is that in many countries around the world, leadership still looks very male and masculine. Think about your own country? How many women are in your Parliament or national assembly? According to UN Women (2026), women serve as Heads of State or Government in only 28 countries worldwide. Women hold 22.4% of cabinet positions and 27.5% of parliamentary seats globally. Only 14 countries have achieved gender parity in their cabinets, while just seven countries have reached at least 50% women in their lower or single parliamentary chamber.[4]

Historically, women have also held the highest positions in states, but most often as substitutes for men, maintaining power on behalf of their husbands, sons, or brothers. They occupy a relatively small part of history books, and quite often royal wives and mothers were not even remembered by name. Similarly, in the Bible, many women are described through their relationships with men – as daughters, wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, and sisters – yet they remain nameless, even when they play significant roles.

Queen Esther is different – her name was recorded and remembered. In fact, Ruth and Esther are the only two books of the Bible named after women. Both are particularly significant when discussing women and leadership, because neither Ruth nor Esther leads through military power or political office in the way some male biblical leaders did. Their influence is demonstrated through courage, wisdom, loyalty, faith and action, often within circumstances they did not control.

Esther’s story begins in a world where a woman’s value could be reduced to her beauty and her usefulness to men in power. Taken into King Xerxes’ palace to be part of his harem as a very young woman and chosen for her beauty, Esther had little control over the circumstances that shaped her life. Esther’s experience raises serious questions about consent, coercion, sexual exploitation and the limited agency available to young women within systems controlled by powerful men. Like many women today, Esther was expected to conform to a very narrow cultural version of femininity: to be beautiful, obedient and pleasing to the king. Yet beneath these expectations was a woman who would ultimately find the

4 https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation

courage to use the limited position she had been given to speak, act and save her people.

'In the Book of Esther, the Jewish people face a deadly threat when Haman, a powerful official in King Xerxes' court, becomes angry with Esther's cousin Mordecai, who refuses to bow to him. Haman responds by persuading the king to issue a decree allowing the Jews throughout the Persian Empire to be destroyed. Esther is then faced with a difficult choice: remain silent and protect herself or risk her position and possibly her life by approaching the king to plead for her people.

SCRIPTURE

Esther 4:10–16

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that, if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law: to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." 12 When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, 13 Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." 15 Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **Leadership can emerge from unlikely places**

Esther is a particularly powerful example of how leadership can emerge in unlikely places. She did not begin her story as a leader. She was a young Jewish woman living within the Persian Empire, taken into the king's palace and placed in a position she had not chosen for herself. Her circumstances were shaped by forces beyond her control, and she was expected to fulfil a particular role within a male-dominated royal system.

Yet, when the crisis came, Esther's position gave her an opportunity to influence events. She could have remained silent, especially because revealing her Jewish identity and approaching the king carried serious personal risk. Instead, she recognised that her position gave her access and influence that others did not have.

2. **Use the influence you have where God has placed you**

Esther demonstrates a very different type of leadership. She had no army, no weapons, and did not fight through force or violence. In fact, even though she

was a 'queen', it was not a real position of power and she remained vulnerable to the changing feelings of the King (Vashti, the previous Queen, had been exiled by Xerxes when she didn't comply with his request). And yet she finds a way to influence the person who held the ultimate decision-making power. She knows that she may put herself in danger, but she chooses to take the risk.

Esther worked within the circumstances she found herself in. She used her relationships, her voice, her wisdom, her strategic mind and her courage. Her leadership was not based on having formal authority or being the most powerful person in the room. Instead, she used the influence available to her to advocate for people who had very little power themselves.

3. **Let's work together to continue to break down barriers**

The Book of Esther tells the story of a young woman who was not prepared to become queen at all. She is brought to the royal palace without the right to make decisions about her own life, kept under constant supervision, and treated almost like one of the many possessions belonging to King Xerxes. From our contemporary perspective, her situation is deeply troubling and reflects a profound lack of freedom and autonomy. Yet, in the world described in Esther, this was part of the reality experienced by many women, whose lives were largely controlled by men and the structures around them. Sadly, in some parts of the world, many girls, young women and women continue to experience similar restrictions today.

Today, women can hold the highest political offices in many countries, although equality is still far from universal. Such progress has been shaped by people who were willing to challenge existing expectations, speak up for others and insist that women should have the freedom and opportunity to lead. With women still underrepresented in public leadership roles in many countries, how can we intentionally encourage, support and equip the girls and young women in our YWCA/YMCA groups who feel called to lead?

REFLECT

1. Who might God have called me to advocate for?
2. How can I use my influence to improve someone else's situation?
3. Silence can mean accepting violence and exclusion. What can I do to overcome my fear and speak up?
4. What barriers to influence exist, and how can we help remove them for those who have traditionally been excluded from power?

RESPOND

Esther: Who Belongs?

Materials: Colourful sticky notes, stickers, or small pieces of coloured paper.

Ask everyone to sit in a circle and close their eyes. Place one coloured note on each participant's forehead, making sure that some colours have many people while one or two colours have only one person.

Tell participants not to look at their own colour, but they may look at everyone else's. Without telling them how to organise themselves, ask them to form groups.

Allow them to experience what happens naturally. Some will quickly find their 'group,' while someone with a unique colour may be left standing alone.

Bring everyone back together and ask:

- How did it feel to find your group?
- How might it feel to be the person left on their own?
- Did anyone notice someone being left out?
- Did anyone invite them to join their group? Why or why not?
- Was it easier to stay with people who were like you?
- What could someone do if they saw another person being excluded?

Explain that in the story of Esther, the Jewish people were a minority living in Persia. They were different from the majority around them, and eventually they faced a terrible threat because of who they were. Esther was in a position where she could have stayed silent and protected herself. Instead, she chose to speak up for her people. Her cousin Mordecai challenged her to consider that perhaps she had become queen 'for such a time as this' (Esther 4:14). Esther used the position she had been given to stand up for people who were vulnerable and in danger.

PRAYER

Good God,

You know our fears and weaknesses better than anyone. You know when we doubt ourselves and fail to appreciate who we are. You also know us and our abilities better than we know ourselves. You believe in us when we lack faith in ourselves. You are with us, regardless of what is happening around us.

We ask for Your grace and support. Give us strength and confidence that we can face the challenges You place before us. Help us to be the voice of those who have none – those who are overlooked, humiliated, and forgotten. Use us as Your instruments in the world. Give us courage, just as You once gave courage to Esther, to stand against injustice and violence.

Support us in our struggle for peace, equality, and a world in which people are guided by love for one another rather than hatred; a world in which people support one another instead of fighting against one another; a world in which no one is judged on the basis of gender, age, background, sexual orientation, faith, or any of the other divisions we have created on earth.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- Esther is an example of how godly leadership can emerge in unlikely places.
- Courageous leadership means using your position for the sake of others.
- Change can begin with one person who is willing to use whatever influence they have, particularly when remaining silent would mean allowing injustice to continue.
- God does not divide people. He loves us all and has a place for every person in His Kingdom.

DAY 5
Abigail: Called to pursue peace

INTRODUCTION

And so they rise
Dressed in all white
Women have come to carry the light
Love knows no sides
Putting an end to all the fight
– Mon Rovia, 'Pray the Devil back to Hell' from Bloodline (2026)

In the final verses of his song, 'Pray the Devil back to Hell', Afro-Appalachian folk singer Mon Rovia powerfully honours the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, the non-violent women's movement that played a pivotal role in ending the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003. Thousands of women from different tribes and religions took part in daily, non-violent protests, wearing white as a visible symbol of peace. Participants staged demonstrations and prayer rallies in public spaces, directly confronted warlords, and formed human barricades outside buildings where peace talks were taking place. In 2011, the Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to the movement's organisers: Leymah Gbowee, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Tawakkol Karman. Gbowee's Nobel acceptance speech featured the profound statement of Dr Martin Luther King: "Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem; it merely creates new and more complicated ones."

As leaders who are in the pursuit of peace, unity, and reconciliation, Dr. King's words continue to resonate. With over 110 armed conflicts active around the world today,[5] we are a long way from realising the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Think about the conflicts that are impacting your life today: those that exist on a global level, in your communities, or in your homes. The world is crying out for peacemakers – those courageous leaders who respond to conflict with neither timid passivity nor violent aggression, but move towards reconciliation with creativity, wisdom, and humility.

Like the Women of Liberia, the woman at the centre of today's Bible study is caught between two warring factions. In 1 Samuel 25, we are told that the 'intelligent and beautiful' Abigail is married to Nabal, a wealthy and selfish landowner. While David was roaming the wilderness of Paran with his men, he offered protection to the shepherds tending to Nabal's flocks. He sends messengers to Nabal to request provisions for his men in return for their assistance. When Nabal refuses David's request and responds with insults instead, a furious David sets out with 400 men to kill him and his household. A servant tells Abigail of Nabal's response, and through wisdom, courage, and skilled negotiation, she saves her household from destruction.

5 https://archives.geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts.html

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 25: 18-28

18 Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep
ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins,
and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys 19 and said to her
young men, "Go on ahead of me; I am coming after you." But she did not tell her
husband Nabal. 20 As she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the
mountain, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. 21 Now
David had said, "Surely it was in vain that I protected all that this fellow has in the
wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, but he has
returned me evil for good. 22 God do so to David and more also if by morning I
leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from the donkey and fell
before David on her face, bowing to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said,
"Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears
and hear the words of your servant. 25 My lord, do not take seriously this ill-
natured fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is
with him, but I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you
sent. 26 Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives and as you yourself live, since
the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from taking vengeance with your
own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be like
Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be
given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your
servant, for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is
fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you
live."

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **Peace-making requires an active, not passive, response.**

Abigail's response was decisive, courageous, and urgent in the face of impending danger. She does not sit idly by or attempt to escape, but "hurries" towards a plan that will successfully defuse David's anger (1 Samuel 25:18). She prepares enough food to satisfy the needs of David's 400 men and sends the supplies ahead of her as a peace offering. Her resistance is not passive, but strategic; courageously, she approaches the source of conflict, mounting a donkey and riding into the mountain ravine to greet David and his armed men. We are reminded that peace-making does not mean hiding away from conflict but moving towards its resolution: as David writes in Psalm 34:14, 'seek peace and pursue it.' This idea is captured in the Hebrew word shalom which features approximately 250 times in the Old Testament. Rather than the simple absence of war and conflict, shalom refers to wholeness, completeness, and restoration. As peace-making leaders, shalom should be our goal.

2. **Peace-making does not use the weapons of the world, but creative alternatives**

Unlike David, Abigail does not bear a sword or send an army of men ahead of her. Her weapons of choice are raisin cakes, and some carefully prepared words! Her gift of food catered to the physical needs of David's men, while also addressing the source of the conflict by offering restitution for the supplies initially denied to him. She also sought to make amends with her words: acknowledging the source of conflict, asking for forgiveness, and publicly declaring David's greatness, in contrast to her husband's insults. Crucially, she reminds David of who He is in the eyes of God, and that killing her household would not be consistent with this identity. Rather than meeting aggression with aggression, Abigail inspires us to approach conflict with peaceful, creative, and unconventional tools: our words, our diplomacy, our resources, and our prayers.

3. **Peace-making requires great humility**

Abigail humbles herself in David's presence, bowing at his feet and asking for his permission to speak. She positions herself as a servant and addresses him as 'my lord'. In her willingness to take personal responsibility and punishment for her husband's behaviour, we see her selfless attitude and Christ-like humility. In verses 1 Samuel 25:32 – 35, we learn that David also has the humility to accept Abigail's God-given wisdom and blesses her for her courageous intervention. Riding into the mountain ravine on a donkey, Abigail's example points us towards Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His ultimate act of self-sacrificial love. We are reminded that effective conflict resolution requires the humility to acknowledge our wrongdoings, ask for forgiveness, and lead with love. Peace-making should never require someone experiencing violence or abuse to put themselves in danger, accept responsibility for another person's harmful behaviour, or remain in an unsafe situation. Seeking safety and support can itself be an act of courage and wisdom.

REFLECT

1. Who are the peacemakers from history or in your life today that inspire you? What did/do they do that made a difference?
2. Why do you think it can sometimes feel easier to avoid conflict than to move towards it?
3. What peaceful tools do you have available to you when you encounter conflict? (prompts: listening, hospitality, generosity, prayer, storytelling etc).
4. Think of an ongoing conflict in your life or your community. Are there areas where you, or others, need the humility to apologise, forgive, or listen?
5. Where do you see a need for peace, reconciliation, or restoration in the world around you?

RESPOND

<u>Banner of Peace</u>

Materials: white sheets of paper/card, coloured pens, hole punch, and ribbon/string/twine.

- Give every person a sheet of paper/card and pen.
- Ask participants to write or draw their answer to the following: 'If you could bring peace to one conflict in your community or world, what would you want to change?;
- On the reverse, ask participants to write or draw: 'What action could I take towards peace?'
- Hole punch the top corners of each sheet of paper and thread them through a long piece of ribbon or twine.
- Display your banner of peace in a public place to inspire your young people: in your church, community hall, or youth club.

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus,

We thank you that your Kingdom is one of peace, humility, and love. We pray for your Kingdom to come and your will to be done in all areas of active armed conflict today. We pray for the conflicts in our own homes, schools, colleges, and communities. Please embolden us like Abigail to be the peacemakers the world needs today – to move towards conflicts with courage and urgency, to use the non-violent tools in our hands, and to challenge aggression with humility. We seek your perfect shalom where there is hatred, violence, and division.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- Peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the presence of wholeness and restoration.
- Effective peace-making requires us to use creative, non-violent tools available to us: our words, our hospitality, and our prayers.
- Impactful conflict resolution requires the humility to acknowledge our wrongdoings, ask for forgiveness, and lead with love.

DAY 6
Priscilla: Called to invest in others

INTRODUCTION

We've explored several strong Biblical leaders, like Deborah and Moses, who served God in a very public way. But what does leadership look like when it happens behind the scenes? Some of the most meaningful leadership I've experienced hasn't happened on a stage or in front of a crowd. I've seen it in the quiet moments—encouraging someone who was struggling, volunteers coming early to help set up for youth group, stepping in to help when something needed to be done, or simply supporting others without needing recognition. Leadership doesn't always mean being the person at the front; sometimes it means faithfully influencing and serving from behind the scenes.

Priscilla's life offers a powerful example of this. She was a strong and influential leader who served alongside her husband Aquila during the mid to late first century. They were Jews originally living in Rome but all Jews, including this couple, were forced to leave Rome in AD 49, during the reign of Emperor Claudius. This led the couple to move to Corinth where the Apostle Paul first met them on one of his missionary journeys.

Priscilla and Aquila were two ordinary people, who like Paul, were tent makers by trade. Due to this, Paul ended up staying with them and they became very good friends. Once Paul had to leave and go to Syria, the couple decided to go with him and aid him on his missionary journey.

This couple reminds us that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. You don't have to be in full-time ministry to be involved in God's work. Those who are nurses, teachers, pilots, engineers or other professions all have opportunities to be involved in God's work both in and out of their jobs. We all have gifts and God chooses to use us, ordinary people, for His great plans. Are you open to being used in extraordinary ways?

Priscilla and Aquila are only mentioned seven times in the Bible, five of which Priscilla was mentioned first which highlights her leading work in their ministry. Although we do not get many details of them, their importance is not hidden or to be mistaken. There is much to learn of what it means to be a leader who supports and builds others up to minister.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 18:24–26

24 Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos from Alexandria. He was

an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. [25] He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord, and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. [26] He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.
Romans 16:3-5 [3] Greet Prisca and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus, [4] who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the gentiles. [5] Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. **Leadership does not always involve being in the forefront.**

Priscilla was a strong leader who was closely connected with the Apostle Paul and all the missionary ministry he was involved with. Paul spoke highly of both Priscilla and her husband Aquila, even encouraging the church in Rome to greet them (Romans 16:3). Priscilla's leadership did not however necessarily lead her to work in the spotlight, but rather serve in the background. We read of her supporting and equipping Apollos to serve boldly in the synagogue (Acts 18:26). Rather than publicly humiliating him or making a loud scene, Priscilla and Aquila invited Apollos into their home to explain the "Way of God to him more accurately" (Acts 18:26). They cared about the ministry so much and they chose to support Apollos in it rather than being in the forefront themselves. This kind of leadership does not always lead to recognition, however, the work of supporting someone else in ministry is a selfless and humble form of leadership. It is an act of uplifting someone else to allow them to fulfil what God is doing with and in them. Priscilla knew this work was not about her but knew she still had a part to play in it and to build up Apollos. She played an equally important and vital role in this particular ministry, even though she may not have been noticed by many.

2. **Doing God's work can be costly.**

Priscilla had to make sacrifices for the ministry she was involved in. She and her husband had to sacrifice their comfort for the sake of doing God's work. Priscilla and Aquila were already foreigners in their land due to their faith in God (Acts 18:1-2) but then chose to move around again to accompany Paul in his missionary work in Syria (Acts 18:18). Instead of choosing the easier and more comfortable option, they decided to sacrifice a particular lifestyle to serve God. Along with their comfort, they also sacrificed their very safety. It is written by Paul that they "risked their necks for my life" (Romans 16:4). What did this mean or look like? We do not know. Did they publicly defend Paul? Did they smuggle him out of prison or maybe borrow a large sum of money? The details are not specified but it was a great act of bravery which Paul thought to mention even years later. Being a part of God's work is a real privilege but it can be costly and sacrificial. Sometimes our time, energy, money, social status, comfort, or even our safety can be a cost in doing God's work. But like with Priscilla and Aquila, God recognises our sacrifices and blesses us in that.

3. **God can use anybody for His mission, even those who seem unexpected.**

Women of the first century Roman world were not seen as equal to men. They did not have the same rights as men socially or politically and legally remained under the control of the male head of the household. Even though women did not have the same standing as men in society, God chose to use both Priscilla and Aquila equally. Both were involved in God's mission and were written about as completely equal. This would have been quite revolutionary and radical at the time. No matter who anyone is, God can use them and their gifts to help build His Kingdom on earth. God does not view people or compare them to the same standards we do today. Rather, everyone has a place in His work on earth and He chooses to include everyone, even if it seems unexpected. We were all born with gifts and talents; everyone has the capacity to contribute to collective leadership.

REFLECT

1. When you think of 'leadership' or a 'leader' who do you imagine Someone in the forefront seen by others, or someone building others up in the background?
2. Who could become stronger because you choose to invest in them?
3. Who are you intentionally mentoring or helping become the person God has called them to be?
4. What could you do to serve God in the background instead of in the foreground?
5. In what ways can you encourage others today?

RESPOND

<u>Encouragement sticky notes</u>

Materials – pens, container, paper, sticky notes

Ask each person to write their name on a small piece of paper, fold it, and place it in a container (e.g. a hat or plastic tub). Mix the names, then have everyone draw one. If anyone draws their own name, ask them to choose another.
Give each person a sticky note and pen. Ask them to write an encouraging message for the person whose name they drew, then give it to them. This activity helps participants practise encouraging and building one another up.

OR

If your group would prefer anonymous encouragement, adapt the activity slightly. Instead of drawing names, ask everyone to write a general message of encouragement for an unknown recipient. Have participants place their completed sticky notes on the wall. When all the notes are displayed, invite each person to choose one at random.

If participants are comfortable, invite them to pray first and listen for what God

may want them to write. An anonymous note can become a deeply personal and timely word of encouragement.

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank You for allowing us to be part of Your work here on earth. Help us to view each situation through Your eyes in how we can support those around us. Give us the wisdom to know when to serve in the background and to build someone else to serve from the front. Allow us to develop a humble heart for this kind of leadership. Give us the right words to say when we encourage those around us. Help us to be a leader more like Priscilla in how she was able to build up and equip other people like Apollos for ministry. Thank You for helping us to do Your work. Remind us that everyone has a part to play in Your work.

Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- Leadership does not always involve being directly involved in a particular ministry, but sometimes building someone else up to do the work.
- Everyone has a place in doing God's mission – it is not just for some people, our roles just might look different.
- God can use the most unexpected person for His work. What does it look like to be ready for Him to use us in unexpected ways?
- We were all born with gifts and talents; everyone has the capacity to contribute to collective leadership.

DAY 7
Collective Worship Service

Service Theme: 'Called to Follow'

The details below have been provided as a guide to help YWCAs/YMCAs create their own local worship service during or at the end of this year's World Week of Prayer, and based on our theme, 'Called for Such a Time as This.' Please adapt it to your context.

0:00 Welcome and Introduction

Acts 18:24–26

The Leader welcomes the participants and introduces the service by inviting the congregation to think of a person they look up to.

What makes them someone you admire?

What makes them someone you want to connect with?

What makes them someone you want to follow?

The Leader shares an icon or figure they look up to and why they look up to them and introduces the theme of the World Week of Prayer.

0:05 Opening Prayer

Leader: May the compassion, hope, and confidence from the Giver of Life, the Sustainer of Creation and Saviour of our World Jesus Christ be with you.
All: And also with you.
Leader: This is the very day that God spoke.
All: Let's celebrate a life of purpose and promise.

0:06 Song

Jesus, Strong and Kind / Jesus Loves Me by Cityalight
https://youtu.be/zS9w_frp674?si=JGgT0BqPJaJ5u4L0

0:11 A Prayer for Young People Following the Way of Jesus
Adapted from 'To Light Their Way' by Kayla Craig

O God, we want to raise up a generation
Who know they are loved
By their Creator
With a love so huge

It would take a lifetime
To swim in the ocean of Your grace –
And even then
It wouldn't be enough.

We want our young people to know,
Even as they stumble and fall,
That they reflect the image of God:
Created and known and loved.
We pray that they would know You
As an anchor to their souls.
May they know Your love,
A love big enough to absorb it all –
Every question, every doubt, every fear.
For in Jesus Christ,
Sin has been wiped clean,
And we have been made whole.

Thank You for the faith of a young person,
For the open, curious hearts
That many of us grown-ups lose as years go by.
Give our young people comfort when they feel most alone.
Give them courage when they need to stand for what's right.
Give them compassion when they meet someone in need of mercy.

May we honour the humanity
Of our young people.
May we remember You are always in pursuit,
May we point our young people to You
In times of great rejoicing and deep sorrow.
For as long as we have the gift of guiding them on this earth,
Walking them home to You,
May they see You in every star
And every cloud.
May they feel You in the breeze
And in the ground under their feet.

May they ask questions
With no easy answers,
And may we be rooted in You.
Firm enough in our foundations
To sit in the mystery with them.
Help us learn together.
Bring us into Your living Word,
And awake us to Your truth,
O Word that became flesh.
Amen.

0:13 Scripture Readings

Three readers are chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of the congregation.

John 10:11–18

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12
The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he
sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf
attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand
and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as
the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.
16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They
too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The
reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No
one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it
down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

John 13:13–17

13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I,
your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one
another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for
you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a
messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things,
you will be blessed if you do them.

Mark 10:45

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give
his life as a ransom for many.”

0:18 Creative Activity

The Leader co-ordinates an interactive activity involving feet and or shoes, introducing the idea of walking, being on a journey, being on the way somewhere.

This might involve taking off your shoe and holding it in the air, asking participants to get into groups according to their shoe sizes, swapping your shoes with someone else, or using paper cut outs of feet with verses on them, to demonstrate how the Christian life involves us to go on an ongoing journey with Christ.

0:25 Sermon

Invite a local YWCA/YMCA leader or Christian minister to speak on our theme, ‘Called to Such a Time as This,’ using one of the Scripture Readings as a key passage.

0:35 Reflection

The Leader can thank the visitor speaker for the sermon and leads the congregation in a moment of reflection.

Now is a good opportunity to refer to the week of devotionals we have looked at during this year's World Week of Prayer:

Nehemiah: Called to restore brokenness
Deborah: Called to lead courageously
Moses: Called beyond inadequacy
Esther: Called to advocate hope
Abigail: Called to pursue peace
Priscilla: Called to invest in others

The service leader highlights the unique and diverse spiritual callings of these characters. The leader alludes to the challenges we are often faced with when following our own spiritual calling, and suggests that following Christ's call often requires boldness and inner growth.

A brave leader and hero of the Christian faith, Martin Luther King Jr. famously said [6],

'Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase' and defined courage as 'an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles.' *

Spend a moment in quietness to give thanks for a caring and compassionate God and to ask ourselves, and God:

Where do we go from here?

What are the barriers and where are the bridges, to a closer walk with Christ?

0:40 Song

'I Have Decided to Follow Jesus' performed by Lydia Walker.
https://youtu.be/L7XHeCZB5KU?si=PwZIdtS4cowuTfXW

0:44 Benediction based on Isaiah 61: 1-9 The MSG

Leader:

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on us.
He has sent us to announce the year of his grace.
To plant and nurture "Oaks of Righteousness" which display his glory.
To rebuild the old ruins, and to raise a new city out of the wreckage.
Blessed are we, that when we are unsure, we find our way in Him and with Him.
And how blessed are we to know the caring and compassionate Christ. He is worthy to follow.

6 Although the quote is widely attributed to Martin Luther King Jr., it has not been possible to verify it in his speeches, sermons, or writings published before his death in 1968.

Go forward in the Spirit of the Lord.

All: Amen

0:45 CLOSE

Bible Reading Plan 2027

JANUARY

1	Psalm 8
2	Genesis 1:1–13
3	Psalm 100
4	Genesis 1:14–25
5	Genesis 1:26–2:4a
6	Psalm 72
7	Genesis 2:4b–17
8	Genesis 2:18–25
9	Genesis 3:1–13
10	Psalm 71
11	Genesis 3:14–24
12	Genesis 4:1–16
13	Genesis 4:17–26
14	Genesis 5:1–32
15	Genesis 6:1–4
16	Genesis 6:5–22
17	Psalm 105:1–15
18	Genesis 7:1–16
19	Genesis 7:17–24
20	Genesis 8:1–12
21	Genesis 8:13–22
22	Genesis 9:1–17
23	Genesis 9:18–29
24	Psalm 105:16–45
25	Romans 1:1–7
26	Romans 1:8–17
27	Romans 1:18–23
28	Romans 1:24–32
29	Romans 2:1–16
30	Romans 2:17–29
31	Psalm 111

FEBRUARY

1	Romans 3:1–20
2	Romans 3:21–31
3	Romans 4:1–12
4	Romans 4:13–25
5	Romans 5:1–11
6	Romans 5:12–21
7	Psalm 60
8	Romans 6:1–11
9	Romans 6:12–23
10	Romans 7:1–6
11	Romans 7:7–13
12	Romans 7:14–25
13	Romans 8:1–17
14	Psalm 64
15	Romans 8:18–25
16	Romans 8:26–30
17	Romans 8:31–39
18	Romans 9:1–5
19	Romans 9:6–13
20	Romans 9:14–29
21	Psalm 25
22	Romans 9:30–10:4
23	Romans 10:5–15
24	Romans 10:16–21
25	Romans 11:1–10
26	Romans 11:11–24
27	Romans 11:25–36
28	Psalm 34

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Bible Reading Plan 2027

MARCH		APRIL	
1	Romans 12:1–8	1	1 Samuel 2:12–26
2	Romans 12:9–13	2	1 Samuel 2:27–36
3	Romans 12:14–21	3	1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a
4	Romans 13:1–7	4	Psalm 116
5	Romans 13:8–14	5	1 Samuel 4:1b–11
6	Romans 14:1–9	6	1 Samuel 4:12–22
7	Psalm 84	7	1 Samuel 5:1–12
8	Romans 14:10–23	8	1 Samuel 6:1–7:1
9	Romans 15:1–13	9	1 Samuel 7:2–17
10	Romans 15:14–21	10	1 Samuel 8:1–22
11	Romans 15:22–33	11	Psalm 23
12	Romans 16:1–16	12	1 Samuel 9:1–14
13	Romans 16:17–27	13	1 Samuel 9:15–10:16
14	Psalm 69:1–16	14	1 Samuel 10:17–27
15	Matthew 26:1–16	15	1 Samuel 11:1–15
16	Matthew 26:17–30	16	1 Samuel 12:6–25
17	Matthew 26:31–35	17	1 Samuel 13:1–23
18	Matthew 26:36–46	18	Psalm 33
19	Matthew 26:47–56	19	1 Samuel 14:1–15
20	Matthew 26:57–68	20	1 Samuel 15:1–35
21	Psalm 69:17–37	21	1 Samuel 16:1–13
22	Matthew 26:69–75	22	1 Samuel 16:14–23
23	Matthew 27:1–14	23	1 Samuel 17:1–30
24	Matthew 27:15–30	24	1 Samuel 17:31–58
25	Matthew 27:31–44	25	Psalm 108
26	Matthew 27:45–56	26	1 Samuel 18:1–16
27	Matthew 27:57–66	27	1 Samuel 20:1–23
28	Matthew 28:1–10	28	1 Samuel 20:24–21:1
29	Matthew 28:11–20	29	1 Samuel 21:2–10
30	1 Samuel 1:1–20	30	1 Samuel 24:1–23
31	1 Samuel 1:21–2:11		

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Bible Reading Plan 2027

MAY

1	1 Samuel 25:1–17
2	Psalm 62
3	1 Samuel 25:18–44
4	1 Samuel 27:1–28:2
5	1 Samuel 28:3–25
6	Psalm 110
7	1 Samuel 30:1–31
8	1 Samuel 31:1–13
9	Psalm 27
10	Philippians 1:1–11
11	Philippians 1:12–26
12	Philippians 1:27–30
13	Philippians 2:1–4
14	Philippians 2:5–11
15	Philippians 2:12–18
16	Genesis 11:1–9
17	Psalm 150
18	Philippians 2:19–30
19	Philippians 3:1–11
20	Philippians 3:12–21
21	Philippians 4:1–9
22	Philippians 4:10–23
23	Psalm 113
24	Tobit 1:1–14
25	Tobit 1:15–22
26	Tobit 2:1–10
27	Tobit 2:11–3:6
28	Tobit 3:7–17
29	Tobit 4:1–21
30	Psalm 115
31	Tobit 5:1–17a

JUNE

1	Tobit 5:17b–23
2	Tobit 6:1–19
3	Tobit 7:1–17
4	Tobit 8:10–21
5	Tobit 9:1–6
6	Psalm 10
7	Tobit 10:1–14
8	Tobit 11:1–18
9	Tobit 12:1–22
10	Tobit 13:1–9
11	Tobit 13:10–18
12	Tobit 14:1–15
13	Psalm 103
14	Matthew 4:18–25
15	Matthew 5:1–12
16	Matthew 5:13–16
17	Matthew 5:17–20
18	Matthew 5:21–26
19	Matthew 5:27–32
20	Psalm 83:2–9, 14–19
21	Matthew 5:33–37
22	Matthew 5:38–48
23	Matthew 6:1–4
24	Matthew 6:5–15
25	Matthew 6:16–18
26	Matthew 6:19–24
27	Psalm 101
28	Matthew 6:25–34
29	Matthew 7:1–6
30	Matthew 7:7–11

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Bible Reading Plan 2027

JULY		AUGUST	
1	Matthew 7:12–23	1	Psalm 74
2	Matthew 7:24–29	2	Matthew 12:46–50
3	Matthew 8:1–4	3	Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23
4	Psalm 82	4	Matthew 13:10–17
5	Matthew 8:5–13	5	Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43
6	Matthew 8:14–17	6	Matthew 13:31–35
7	Matthew 8:18–22	7	Matthew 13:44–46
8	Matthew 8:23–27	8	Psalm 30
9	Matthew 8:28–34	9	Matthew 13:47–52
10	Matthew 9:1–8	10	Matthew 13:53–58
11	Psalm 107:1–22	11	Matthew 14:1–12
12	Matthew 9:9–13	12	Matthew 14:13–21
13	Matthew 9:14–17	13	Matthew 14:22–36
14	Matthew 9:18–26	14	Matthew 15:1–20
15	Matthew 9:27–34	15	Psalm 79
16	Matthew 9:35–10:4	16	Matthew 15:21–28
17	Matthew 10:5–15	17	Matthew 15:29–39
18	Psalm 107:23–43	18	Matthew 16:1–12
19	Matthew 10:16–26a	19	Matthew 16:13–20
20	Matthew 10:26b–33	20	Matthew 16:21–28
21	Matthew 10:34–42	21	Matthew 17:1–13
22	Matthew 11:1–19	22	Psalm 112
23	Matthew 11:20–24	23	Matthew 17:14–21
24	Matthew 11:25–30	24	Matthew 17:22–27
25	Psalm 63	25	Matthew 18:1–14
26	Matthew 12:1–14	26	Matthew 18:15–20
27	Matthew 12:15–21	27	Matthew 18:21–35
28	Matthew 12:22–32	28	Matthew 19:1–12
29	Matthew 12:33–37	29	Psalm 78:1–31
30	Matthew 12:38–42	30	Matthew 19:13–15
31	Matthew 12:43–45	31	Matthew 19:16–30

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Bible Reading Plan 2027

SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER	
1	Matthew 20:1–16	1	2 Samuel 15:13–37
2	Matthew 20:17–28	2	2 Samuel 16:1–14
3	Matthew 20:29–34	3	Psalm 104
4	Matthew 21:1–11	4	2 Samuel 16:15–17:4
5	Psalm 78:32–55	5	2 Samuel 17:5–23
6	Matthew 21:12–17	6	2 Samuel 18:1–18
7	Matthew 21:18–22	7	2 Samuel 18:19–19:9a
8	Matthew 21:23–27	8	2 Samuel 19:9b–41
9	Matthew 21:28–32	9	2 Samuel 21:1–14
10	Matthew 21:33–46	10	Psalm 119:1–8
11	Matthew 22:1–14	11	2 Samuel 23:1–7
12	Psalm 78:56–72	12	2 Samuel 24:1–25
13	Matthew 22:15–22	13	Proverbs 10:1–10
14	Matthew 22:23–33	14	Proverbs 10:11–21
15	Matthew 22:34–46	15	Proverbs 10:22–32
16	Matthew 23:1–12	16	Proverbs 11:24–31
17	Matthew 23:13–28	17	Psalm 19
18	Matthew 23:29–39	18	Proverbs 14:29–34
19	Psalm 114	19	Proverbs 15:13–18
20	2 Samuel 1:17–27	20	Proverbs 16:1–9
21	2 Samuel 2:1–11	21	Proverbs 17:1–17
22	2 Samuel 5:1–16	22	Proverbs 18:8–17
23	2 Samuel 5:17–25	23	Proverbs 19:16–23
24	2 Samuel 6:1–23	24	Psalm 16
25	2 Samuel 7:1–16	25	Proverbs 20:19–24
26	Psalm 4	26	Proverbs 24:10–20
27	2 Samuel 7:17–29	27	Obadiah 1–21
28	2 Samuel 11:1–27	28	Nahum 1:1–14
29	2 Samuel 12:1–25	29	Nahum 2:1–14
30	2 Samuel 15:1–12	30	Nahum 3:1–19
		31	Psalm 22:1–22

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Bible Reading Plan 2027

NOVEMBER		DECEMBER	
1	James 1:1–12	1	Isaiah 43:1–7
2	James 1:13–18	2	Isaiah 43:8–13
3	James 1:19–27	3	Isaiah 43:14–21
4	James 2:1–13	4	Isaiah 43:22–28
5	James 2:14–26	5	Psalm 80
6	James 3:1–12	6	Isaiah 44:1–5
7	Psalm 22:23–32	7	Isaiah 44:6–20
8	James 3:13–18	8	Isaiah 44:21–28
9	James 4:1–12	9	Isaiah 45:1–8
10	James 4:13–17	10	Isaiah 45:9–17
11	James 5:1–6	11	Isaiah 45:18–25
12	James 5:7–12	12	Psalm 85
13	James 5:13–20	13	Isaiah 46:1–13
14	Psalm 70	14	Isaiah 48:1–11
15	Matthew 24:1–14	15	Isaiah 48:12–22
16	Matthew 24:15–28	16	Isaiah 49:1–6
17	Matthew 24:29–31	17	Isaiah 49:7–13
18	Matthew 24:32–44	18	Isaiah 49:14–26
19	Matthew 24:45–51	19	Psalm 40
20	Matthew 25:1–13	20	Isaiah 50:4–11
21	Psalm 126	21	Isaiah 51:1–8
22	Matthew 25:14–30	22	Isaiah 51:9–16
23	Matthew 25:31–46	23	Isaiah 51:17–52:6
24	Isaiah 40:1–11	24	Isaiah 52:7–12
25	Isaiah 40:12–31	25	Luke 1:46–55
26	Isaiah 41:1–7	26	Luke 2:29–32
27	Isaiah 41:8–20	27	Isaiah 52:13–53:5
28	Psalm 117	28	Isaiah 53:6–12
29	Isaiah 42:1–9	29	Isaiah 54:1–10
30	Isaiah 42:10–25	30	Isaiah 55:1–5
		31	Isaiah 55:6–13

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