

May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Verse 16 from the New Testament reading today: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

If we are to be successful at clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience as Paul is exhorting us to AND if we are to be successful at bearing with one another, forgiving one another, loving one another; being at peace... then we need to allow the word of Christ to dwell in us richly.

You see, the behaviours that the apostle Paul is exhorting the Christians in the city of Colossae, and us, to exhibit, are only possible if the word of Christ dwells within, richly. It is the word of Christ’s dwelling within us (his indwelling) that makes all the difference.

And what is the word of Christ? It is, as I understand it, the whole of Scripture!

I wonder how many Bibles you possess at home? I wonder how often you read any one of them? I wonder if you have an easy to understand Bible or do you only have one written in old English?

On this Bible Sunday I make you an offer! If you do not have a Bible that is easy for you to read, then email me, and I’ll get one to you. If the print is too small, or the translation is not in your mother-tongue, or the language is old fashioned, please drop me a message and I’ll do what I can to find a copy for you at no cost.

Having a Bible that you can easily and readily pick up to read is absolutely crucial in the Christian life Without that it is as if you are falling at the very first hurdle of a race.

So let’s assume for a moment that you have an easy to read Bible. What next?

Picking it up and reading it is the next step. Picking it up and reading it regularly; picking it up and reaching it habitually. Picking it up and reading part of it, most days, is ideal in the Christian life.

But the Bible is a complex book – well, as you know, it’s a library of books – and it can’t be treated like any other book. You will need other resources to help you read with understanding; to know which parts of the Bible to read and understand first; to know which parts of the Bible to read like poetry, or which parts to meditate upon, verse by verse.

To know which parts of the Bible to read like a novel based on history, and which parts of the Bible to read like Harry Potter or Tolkein. Again, please email me and I can send you suggestions and resources. There are written resources; there are websites; there are apps.

But crucially important next step is to regularly read the Bible.

Well, you may already be doing this. In which case, I encourage you to consider coming to the twice monthly “Praying the Scriptures” which is taking place this Wednesday at 7pm. In just over half an hour we learn together from God’s word, in directed, shared silence,

praying that God's word would dwell in us richly. You can find details of how to access this on the cathedral website.

Or you might want to meet with others to discuss parts of the Bible and to learn together, in which case, the weekly Bible Study would be good for you. It next meets after the half-term break on Monday 9th November at 7o'clock in the evening. Again, details are on the website.

You may have been coming to church for many years but have yet to get into the good habit of reading the Bible daily. It's never too late and there are many of us, both clergy and lay people, who would be very pleased to support you and to help you, so please be in contact. The best address to use is [bible@bradfordcathedral.org](mailto:bible@bradfordcathedral.org), and we'll get back to you.

In Ephesians chapter 6 the Apostle Paul describes the armour which Christians need to metaphorically wear each day. And alongside the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, there is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God".

Any Roman soldier would take great pride in polishing and sharpening his sword. That sword could pierce the armour of the enemy. For us, knowing the words of scripture, and being able to recall them, protects us when we feel under attack. So memorising scripture is a good thing to do, and one of the easiest ways in which to do that is to memorise songs and hymns and words that we use Sunday by Sunday because almost all of them are direct quotations from scripture.

1. Having a Bible in your native language
2. Reading the Bible daily or regularly with some assistance
3. Studying the Bible with others or praying the Bible with others
4. Memorising verses from the Bible

And lastly. Never give up searching the depths of the Bible.

The Bible is the richest feast you can ever find in any book. No wonder that it is still the world's number one best-selling book.

Writer James Chapman, just a few years ago, found that the Bible far outsold any other book, with a whopping 3.9 billion copies sold over the last 50 years.

The Bible Society is a Christian charity supporting churches around the world. They help with translating the Bible into native languages; they help with the printing and the distribution of Bibles and they provide resources to help read and understand the Bible.

I end, by reading a short story that The Bible Society have provided. There are more stories on a sheet by the door that you're welcome to pick up as you leave.

This story comes from China.

At a church service in Beijing Arlene, now China's mission specialist at the Bible Society, was telling the group, that she was speaking to, about how Bibles had come to China. After Arlene had finished speaking an elderly man approached her with tears in his eyes. He said he'd become a Christian more than 30 years ago but it was the first time that he had heard the story of how his copy of the Bible came to him. He told Arlene – “It's never been easy to be a Christian here in China. Your story really encourages me. Now I feel I am not alone, not forgotten. I now know that there are brothers and sisters across the other side of the world who have been supporting us for such a long time.”

The old man then asked for the address of the Bible printing company. Arlene told him that Amity, the name of the printers that Bible Society helped established, was in Nanjing. She asked him why he wanted to know this.

The old man said: “I just want to simply go there and do whatever I can to serve them. I want to show my appreciation, but I don't know much. I'm old and unskilled but at least I can clean their tables, or make them tea, to show them how thankful I am for my Bible.”

So, let us pray. Let us pray that the words of God may dwell in us richly and that God's word might be available in languages throughout the world.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.