

Bible Readings for a Funeral or Memorial Service: A Printable Planning Guide

A calm place to begin when choosing Scripture readings and planning a service that honours a life and offers comfort to those who gather.

Scripture note

A note on the Scripture: the verse summaries in this guide are plain-English paraphrases, not quotations from a particular Bible translation. Read each passage in your preferred Bible for its full wording and context.

Choosing readings

Choose words that feel fitting for the person being remembered and for those who will be present. You may use one reading or several, and you can ask a trusted family member, minister, or celebrant to read. The short descriptions here can help you decide what to read in full.

Churches and crematoria differ in what is allowed. A minister or celebrant can help you check the arrangements for your service.

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Readings for comfort

These passages speak of care, help, honest grief, and strength for the way ahead.

Psalm 23

The psalm pictures God as a caring shepherd who gives rest, stays near in danger, and welcomes the traveller home.

Mood: reassurance and belonging.

Psalm 121

The writer looks to God for help and trusts that God's care continues through every step and season.

Mood: steady care.

Psalm 130

From a place of deep need, the writer waits for God's mercy and holds on to hope.

Mood: honest grief and patient hope.

Isaiah 40:28-31

The passage describes the everlasting Creator renewing the strength of those who feel weary.

Mood: renewal and endurance.

Isaiah 43:1-3

God calls the people by name, promises to be with them through danger, and assures them they are precious.

Mood: presence and cherished worth.

John 14:1-6

Jesus comforts troubled hearts with the promise of a home with God and a way into life with God.

Mood: comfort and homecoming.

John 11:21-27

In a conversation shaped by loss, Jesus meets Martha's grief and speaks of life that death cannot finally overcome.

Mood: compassionate hope.

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Readings for hope and reflection

These readings reflect on enduring love, resurrection hope, blessing, and the seasons of life.

Romans 8:31-39

Paul expresses confidence that nothing in life or death can separate people from God's love in Christ.

Mood: steadfast love.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

The passage looks towards a transformed life and celebrates the Christian hope that death will not have the final word.

Mood: victory and resurrection hope.

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1

Though outward life changes and hardship is real, Paul points towards renewed inner life and a lasting home with God.

Mood: perspective and lasting hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul acknowledges sorrow while encouraging the community with the hope of being together with the Lord.

Mood: shared grief and hope.

Revelation 21:1-7

A vision of a renewed creation promises God's presence, the end of suffering, and a future made new.

Mood: renewal and consolation.

Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus blesses those who mourn and those who seek mercy, peace, and what is right.

Mood: tenderness and blessing.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The poem recognises that human life holds many seasons, each with its own time and experience.

Mood: reflection and acceptance.

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A service to remember

Use these prompts to gather the details that matter to you. Leave out any part that does not suit your service.

Churches and crematoria differ in what is allowed. A minister or celebrant can help you check what is possible and guide you through the arrangements.

Order of service

Welcome

Who will welcome everyone, and what would you like included?

Hymn or song

Title, performer, or person choosing it: _____

Reading

Passage and reader: _____

Prayer

Who will lead it, or what would you like the prayer to hold? _____

Tribute

Speaker or speakers, and any notes: _____

Committal

Words or arrangements to discuss with the minister or celebrant: _____

Blessing

Who will offer the closing blessing? _____

If you need support, you can speak to your minister, GP or Cruse Bereavement Support (UK).

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