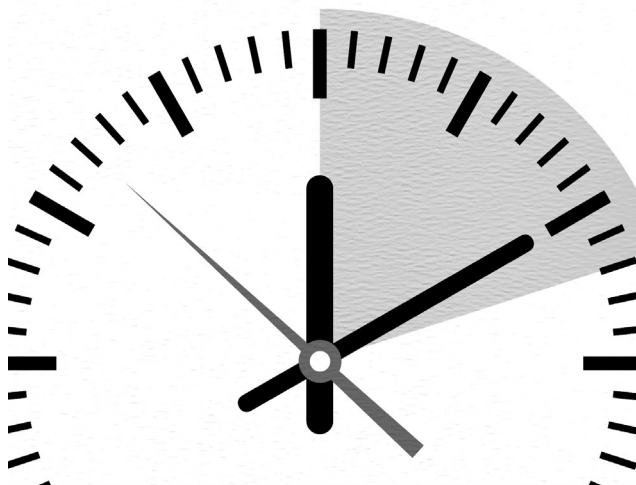


# First Order of Business

12-Minute Bible Reflections  
to Open Church Meetings



Judith Marsh Carlson



CHURCH  
PUBLISHING  
INCORPORATED

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Church Publishing  
19 East 34th Street  
New York, NY 10016

[www.churchpublishing.org](http://www.churchpublishing.org)

Cover design by Jennifer Kopec, 2Pug Design  
Typeset by Denise Hoff

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Carlson, Judith Marsh, author.

Title: First order of business : 12-minute bible reflections to open church meetings / Judith Marsh Carlson.

Description: New York, NY : Church Publishing, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018017821 (print) | LCCN 2018030090 (ebook) | ISBN 9781640651067 (ebook) | ISBN 9781640651050 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Church meetings--Prayers and devotions. | Bible--Meditations.

Classification: LCC BV652.15 (ebook) | LCC BV652.15 .C37 2018 (print) | DDC 264/.7--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018017821>

*Printed in the United States of America*

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## NUMBERS 11:16–17, 24–29 (NRSV)

So the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting\*, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.”

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!”

*\*The place where Yahweh could be “encountered” or the place where Yahweh’s word could be proclaimed to assembled Israel.*

## **Reflection**

1. Listen as the passage is read aloud. Then listen as it is read again, if possible by someone of a different gender.
2. Respond: (10 minutes)
  - What word, phrase, or thought in this passage particularly strikes you today? (*Just the word/phrase—no other comments.*)
  - What person in this story did you find yourself interested in or did you identify with?
  - What “leadership issues” within Moses’s religious congregation strike you as important here?

*Close the reflection with prayer or simply say “Amen.”*

## **DEUTERONOMY 6: 1-2, 4-9, 20-25 (NRSV)**

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children’s children, may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign

on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right.”

## **Reflection**

1. Listen as the passage is read aloud. Then listen as it is read again, if possible by someone of a different gender.
2. Respond: (10 minutes)
  - What word, phrase, or thought in this passage particularly strikes you today? (*Just the word/phrase—no other comments.*)
  - This “recipe for right living” among the people of Israel—is it applicable for people today? Why?
  - “Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?” How does hearing this question at a baptism affect you?

*Close the reflection with prayer or simply say “Amen.”*

## 1 KINGS 8:1-4, 6, 22-23, 53-58 (NRSV)

*The Ark of the Covenant was a wooden chest covered in gold containing the tablets on which the Commandments were inscribed. Built at God's command, it was carried during Israel's desert sojourn, always placed in the Tabernacle where they camped. When Solomon's Temple was built, both the Ark and tablets were permanently placed inside.*

Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes . . . to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. All the people of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the festival in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests carried the ark. So they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart. . . . For you have separated them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as you promised through Moses, your servant, when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O LORD God."

Now when Solomon finished offering all this prayer and this

plea to the LORD, he arose from facing the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven; he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice: "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he not leave us or abandon us, but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our ancestors."

### ***Reflection***

1. Listen as the passage is read aloud. Then listen as it is read again, if possible by someone of a different gender.
2. Respond: (10 minutes)
  - What word, phrase, or thought in this passage particularly strikes you today? (*Just the word/phrase—no other comments.*)
  - Have you ever been part of a grand and historic dedication? What feelings did it evoke among leaders or participants?
  - What have the people of Israel gained? What have they lost?

*Close the reflection with prayer or simply say "Amen."*