

Scripture references linked to Eric Liddell

Below are a range of themes and Scriptures that were important to Eric Liddell or related to his life. These can be used for readings in services, or sermons and Bible Studies.

All will be well

These words were on one of two pieces of paper that Eric Liddell had in his possession as he was dying. They have echoes in a text from First Samuel.
1 Samuel 12:14

Behold wondrous things

Text chosen for preaching after gold medal triumph: fact and fiction

The Sunday after winning his 400 metres Olympic gold medal in Paris, Eric Liddell spoke in the Scots Kirk in Rue Bayard. In *Chariots of Fire*, the suggestion (fictitious) is that he was reading from Isaiah 'They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not be faint'.

His biographer, Hamilton, noted that the actual text chosen was from Psalm 119: 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things'.

Isaiah 40:31 Psalm 119:28

Chariot of fire

The singular version of the title of the film *Chariots of Fire*, about part of Eric Liddell's life, is found in The Second Book of the Kings and refers to Elijah going up into heaven.

2 Kings 2:11

Complete surrender

Towards the very end of his life, Eric Liddell used the words "complete surrender", acknowledging that he was surrendering completely to God's will for him, having given all he could to serve God and others.

Matthew 6:10 Luke 11:2 John 10:15

Contrasting opinions (interviewer vs interviewee) on preferred text on which to preach

In 1932, an interviewer suggested to Eric Liddell that Eric would be inclined to preach on the Scripture quotation "run that ye may obtain" from First Corinthians but, in reply, Eric declared that his own preference was a text from Ecclesiastes: "The race is not to the swift".

1 Corinthians 9:24 Ecclesiastes 9:11

Everyone must choose

Liddell was emphatic that every Christian should live a God-guided life because if one is not guided by God, "you will be guided by something else.". Elsewhere he noted that "Each one comes to a crossroads ... [and] must decide ... for or against his master". Both of these echo the biblical maxim that one cannot serve two masters.

Matthew 6:24

Luke 16:13

Faithful in little things

On one occasion, when Eric Liddell was out and about in China, he was encouraged by the fact that his Bible "fell open at St Luke 16", prompting him to read until he came to verse 10 which "seemed to bring me my answer."

Luke 16:1-10, most notably verse 10.

God is with us

Eric Liddell persistently told his fellow internees that he believed God was in the situation with them, encouraging all of them to "have faith".

Psalms 46: 11

He that honours me, I will honour

Scripture reference given to Eric Liddell as a 'word of encouragement' on the morning day of his 400 metres Olympic final triumph in 1924.

1 Samuel 2:30

Humility and angst

Eric Liddell had such high standards that he sometimes felt he had fallen short, despite the reality that he had coped with extreme stresses and strains. Duncan Hamilton, in his biography, wrote the following words of Eric's: "... just one thing that troubles me," he said. 'I ought to have been able to cast it all on the Lord and not have broken down under it.' Echoes here of an awareness of advice given to us all in the First Letter of Peter.

Psalms 55:22 1 Peter 5:7

Inscription on Eric Liddell Memorial Stone in China

They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary

Isaiah 40:31

Keeping the Sabbath holy

Eric Liddell would not run on Sunday and, in explaining why, he had quoted the Fourth Commandment and the Book of Revelation, the latter referring to the Lord's day

Exodus 20:8-11, 31:15
Luke 23:56

Deuteronomy 5:12-15
Revelation 1:10

Jeremiah 17:21-27

Love your enemies

Eric Liddell regularly read aloud from the Sermon on the Mount and dwelt on one passage, "Love your enemies ...", at the end of Chapter 5 of the Gospel according to St Matthew. His biographer, Duncan Hamilton has noted in *For the Glory* that, early in 1944, Eric began urging the internees to pray specifically for the camp guards, noting that 'I've begun to pray for the guards and it's changed my whole attitude towards them. When we hate them we are self-centred.'

Matthew 5:43-48 *Matthew 18:21-22* *Romans 12:14*

Passing on the torch of the Gospel

Stephen A Metcalf, who had received a gift of Eric Liddell's old running shoes, noted that, far more importantly, he also received from Eric "his missionary baton of forgiveness and the torch of the gospel". This handing on of the Good News can be traced all the way back to the Gospel of John, chapter 17.

John 17:1-26

Prayer

Eric Liddell's advice was always 'First of all, have a prayer hour. Secondly, keep it.' This echoes the dismay of Jesus, at Gethsemane, that His disciples could not stay awake in prayer for one hour.

Matthew 26:40 *Mark 14:37*

Profound beatitude: concern for lost sheep / love of enemies

For Eric Liddell, his captors were "... sought as sheep far from the fold". He was not an enemy to them but was perceived as an enemy.

Jeremiah 50:6

Remembering that Eric Liddell had let his light shine

In 1946, after his death, at a commemoration attended by 13 former Scottish Internationals from rugby clubs in the Scottish Borders, D.P. Thomson – who had been at Armadale with Eric many years before – spoke on the fact that Eric had let his light shine 'for the glory of God'.

Matthew 5:16

Sermon on the Mount

This is a part of Scripture that was an anchor and mainstay for Eric Liddell and featured again and again and again in his preaching and teaching. Moreover, its lessons and themes were guiding principles for him throughout his life. A key pointer to its importance for him is found in his own book, *The Disciplines of the Christian Life*, wherein he wrote: "I have come to the conclusion that what we call the Sermon on the Mount is the way a Christian will act, that it constitutes the technique of being a Christian ..."

Matthew, chapters 5 to 7

Sincerity

In his public discourses, Eric Liddell sometime(s) used a reference to 'sine ceres' (without wax) as evidence of workmanship which was authentic (not relying on wax to cover up flaws, as ancient sculptors had done); his message was that one's faith must be sincere. Biblical mentions about being sincere include texts in Second Samuel and Psalm 18.

2 Samuel 22:26-28 Psalm 18:25-27

Spirit of sportsmanship and perseverance

In April 1932 in Hawick, Eric Liddell spoke on the fact that to persevere is more important than to win: life is about striving and courage is key.

Romans 12:12 Hebrews 12:1-2 Philipians 2:16 2 Timothy 4:7

The Beatitudes ... quoted at his graveside

The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer (both found in the Sermon on the Mount) were prayed at Eric Liddell's graveside on the day of his burial.

Matthew 5:3-12 Matthew 6:9-13 Luke 11:2-4

The three sevens

Noting that First Corinthians is the seventh book of the New Testament, Eric Liddell would refer to the undernoted biblical reference as 'the three 7s', a text which acknowledges that people receive different gifts from God, the challenge being for us to use whatever gifts we have been given for the glory and service of God.

1 Corinthians 7:7

Three goals – to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God

This is a text that featured in one or more letters written by Eric Liddell: 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord ... walk humbly with thy God?'

Micah 6:6-8

Timely encouragement from Eric Liddell's sister, Jenny, ahead of his first public address as a Christian speaker at Armadale, West Lothian

Letter from his sister Jenny included a quotation from Isaiah, which Eric Liddell subsequently saw as 'a light-beam illuming his path'.

Isaiah 41:10

Winner of the second mile

David Michell has noted the following: "Acknowledged as a champion of two distances in running - the 100 metres and 400 metres - he is rightly also a winner of the second mile."

This is a reference to a statement in The Sermon on the Mount, and led Michell to state: "Eric was a second-mile person, helping anyone he could."

Matthew 5:41

Witnesses to the ends of the earth

During his life, Eric Liddell, as both athlete and missionary was a witness to and for Christ 'unto the uttermost part of the earth'.

Acts 1:8

Words at the foot of Eric Liddell's parents' gravestone

In his presence is fulness of joy

These are very similar to texts found in First Chronicles and Psalm 96

1 Chronicles 1:27 Psalm 96:6

Write down what comes to you – advice of Eric Liddell

Eric Liddell's advice to many was to take a pen and pencil and write down what comes to you, equivalent to prayer journalling, and with echoes of an instruction given to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 30:1-2