

Every Man's

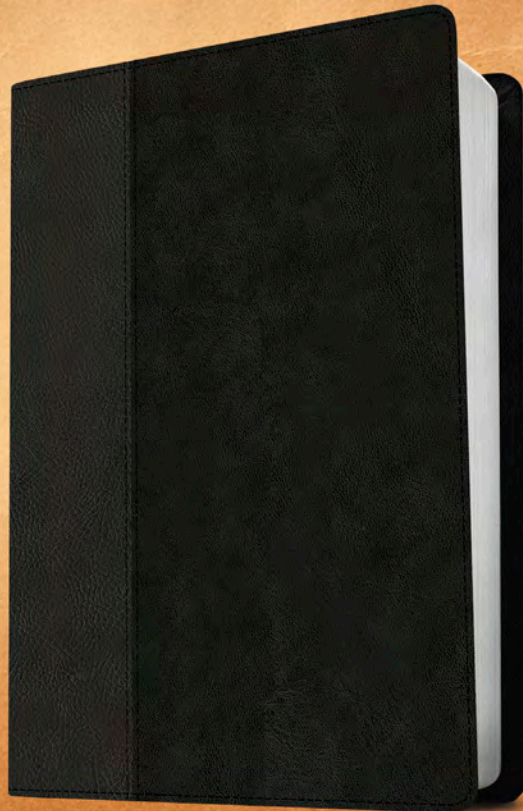
A Bible for Every Battle
Every Man Faces

BIBLE

LARGE PRINT



Deluxe
BLACK & ONYX
Edition



YOUR
WORD
IS A
LAMP
TO GUIDE
MY FEET
AND A
LIGHT
FOR
MY
PATH.

PRESENTED TO

BY

DATE

PSALM 119:105

Every Man's BIBLE

LARGE PRINT

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois



New Living
Translation®

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Tyndale House Publishers and Wycliffe Bible Translators share the vision for an understandable, accurate translation of the Bible for every person in the world. Each sale of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, benefits Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is working with partners around the world to accomplish Vision 2025—an initiative to start a Bible translation program in every language group that needs it by the year 2025.

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2 Timothy	1609
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BIBLE BOOKS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

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2 Chronicles	579	Lamentations	1051
Colossians	1579	Leviticus	143
1 Corinthians	1507	Luke.	1337
2 Corinthians	1533	Malachi	1241
Daniel	1121	Mark	1301
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Ecclesiastes	871	Micah	1193
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Galatians	1549	2 Peter	1663
Genesis	3	Philemon.	1621
Habakkuk	1209	Philippians	1571
Haggai	1223	Proverbs.	831
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Hosea.	1145	Revelation	1687
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3 John	1679	2 Timothy	1609
Jonah.	1187	Titus.	1617
Joshua	285	Zechariah	1227
Jude	1683	Zephaniah.	1215

INTRODUCTION TO THE EVERY MAN'S BIBLE

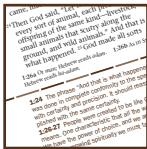
You are holding in your hands the most important—and best-selling—book of all time. The Holy Bible is God’s Word. It is how God chose to reveal himself to humanity. And we live in a time when we desperately need to hear what God has to say. Most important of all, the Bible tells the story of humanity’s sin and God’s incredible plan for redemption through his Son, Jesus Christ. We present this special edition of the Bible with the great hope that it will help you develop a fuller and more enriching relationship with Jesus.

Though God’s Word is relevant to men and women of all ages, throughout all of history, the *Every Man’s Bible* is intended for men. Men face different challenges than women do, and it is important for men to have a deep understanding of the Holy Scriptures. So the features and notes of this edition were written specifically for men. God created men and women with different strengths and different roles. Our desire in presenting the *Every Man’s Bible* is that it will help you better understand God’s general plan for masculinity as well as the special and unique role God has for you.



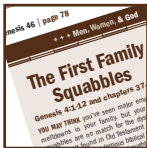
Book Introductions

A brief introduction precedes each book of the Bible. This feature will help you get acquainted with the writer, message, and purpose of the book. It also contains recommended verses to memorize and includes one or more “masculine perspectives”—short insights on the book you are about to read.



Study Notes

Short study notes interspersed throughout the Bible will help you gain a better perspective on a particular verse or passage.



Men, Women, and God

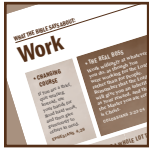
All men struggle in the area of relationships. This feature focuses on two of the most important relationships in every man’s life: his relationship with God and his relationship with his wife—or with women in general.



Someone You Should Know

Have you ever wanted to meet one of your heroes from the Bible? This feature is your chance to do just that—get acquainted with one of the men whose stories are told in this book. You’ll meet 98 men of renown. Some loved God and

serve as role models for us; some didn't and, because of their lack of faith, can teach us valuable lessons about the importance of faith in our own lives.



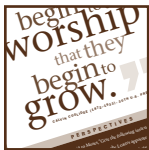
What the Bible Says About . . .

What does the Bible have to say about ambition? What about drinking? Or sports? These 50 features will give you insight into the Bible's vital message on all kinds of topics for daily living.



Spotlight

These 43 charts were created from a uniquely male perspective and are designed to help you visualize important truths presented in God's Word.



Perspectives

All successful men understand the value of learning from others who have had similar experiences. This feature allows you to glean bits of insight from great men who have lived through many of the same issues and struggles that you face. Each of the 26 perspectives is tied to a Bible verse. Want a challenge? Try memorizing all the quotes, their source, and the verse they are identified with.



Personal Gold

This feature consists of "snapshots" taken from books that were written by Christian men about living the Christian life. It is one of the most exciting features in the *Every Man's Bible*. You may recognize many of these authors' names. Some of these men have already finished their earthly race; many others are still alive. All of them will help you as you continue in your quest to become the man God wants you to be.



What's the Point

One thing most men have in common is a desire to get right to the bottom of any issue. We want to get straight to the point. We like to know the bottom line. That's why you'll find a one-sentence summary of each book's message on the page following that book's introduction.

These features were designed to help guide you in your exciting journey through the most important book of all time. Our prayer is that the *Every Man's Bible* will serve as a tool to help you increase your knowledge of the Bible, deepen your relationships with those around you, and gain new insights into your life, your work, and your relationship with God.

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A NOTE TO READERS

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007 and 2013.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

*The Publishers
January 2013*

WHAT IS THE BIBLE ALL ABOUT?

The Bible is the all-time best seller and enjoys the distinction of being the most read book in history! People from all parts of the world turn to the Bible to find answers to life's deepest questions and problems. And many find their lives more meaningful because of the message contained within this book.

But the Bible is more than an answer-book that you can turn to when the pressures of life bear down. It is really a library of books—books filled with inspiring stories, majestic poetry and songs, direct messages and prophecies, and most important of all, the account of God visiting our earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

This particular edition of the Bible is one of the easiest to understand, since it is a thought-for-thought translation. Instead of translating the original Hebrew and Greek texts word for word, the ideas in those texts are expressed here as ordinary people in the early twenty-first century would say them—using our idioms and expressions. As you read, you will better understand the meaning and purpose of your existence along with what God wants you to know for successful living.

The Message of the Bible

The Bible begins by telling how the eternal God created the world and everything in it. He gave people a beautiful place to live and supplied everything they needed. Best of all, he was their friend.

That glorious beginning, however, was ruined when people disobeyed God and plunged into rebellion and sin. This broke humanity's relationship with God and brought judgment and death to the earth, its creatures, and humanity itself. Even so, God did not abandon his disobedient creatures. He set out to reclaim fallen people, much as a shepherd sets out to restore lost sheep to the fold.

The Old Testament provides many references to a special individual who would provide salvation for his people. That special individual, the Messiah, was not to be merely a man, however. The Messiah was to be "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8), which in Hebrew means "God is with us." The Messiah would be both God and man, and those prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, he also removed all guilt produced by that sin and restored the broken relationship between God and humanity. Furthermore, he lives today and speaks continually to God on our behalf. "Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him" (Hebrews 7:25). He gives eternal life to all who trust in him.

How to Read the Bible

Eventually, you will want to read every word of the Bible. However, you don't have to read straight through from the beginning. Since the Bible is a library of books, you can begin almost anywhere.

To help you begin, some of the subjects talked about in the Bible are listed on the following pages. Scan through these topics, and find the topics you're concerned about. Then turn to the page listed to discover what the Bible has to say about your concern.

You can also begin by reading longer sections of the Bible. You can start your reading in the New Testament with the book of Mark (page 1301). It is a short, fast-moving biography of Jesus Christ. Then read about the spread of the Christian faith by reading the book of Acts (page 1431). Next, read the book of Romans (page 1483). This is one of the many letters written by the apostle Paul. In Romans Paul clearly tells how sinful human beings can find acceptance with God.

In the Old Testament, read the book of Genesis (page 3) and Exodus 1–20 (page 85). Then continue with some of the other books named after the main characters—Joshua (page 285), Ruth (page 357), Ezra (page 631), Esther (page 671), Daniel (page 1121), Hosea (page 1145), and Jonah (page 1187). Then turn to the Psalms (page 729), and read enough of them to learn what it means to worship God and pour out your inner feelings to him.

You may want to set up a pattern of daily reading that includes some Psalms along with a section from the Old or New Testament. As you seek God in his Word, you will discover that the Bible is God's personal Word to you. It's relevant to your questions and needs, today and every day.

BAND OF BROTHERS

How to Lead a Men's Bible Study

Guys—for all our supposed independence and isolation—do a lot of things together. We hike or ride bikes together. We compete on the basketball court. We tell each other the jokes we like. We watch sports together, offering our commentary along the way. We fix malfunctioning appliances, car engines, or software together. In the business world, we work at building stronger companies that will make more money. In other words, we're not the "lone rangers" many women think we are.

And men all across the nation are finding value in opening the Bible together on a regular basis. After all, it's clearly a "guy book," with males taking up at least 90 percent of the spotlight, from Adam to Noah to Moses to Samson to David to Daniel to Jesus, Peter, and Paul. It speaks to the real issues that guys face in our contemporary world. When men bring those issues into a small group of friends they can trust, great things happen.

If you'd like to form such a band of brothers, here are the practical steps to take:

Recruiting and Organizing

Write a list of possible participants. Go through the Contacts list in your phone or on your computer; think about guys you've met on the job, in the community, at church—and imagine what would happen if you said, "Hey, I'm thinking about getting a group together to dig into *Every Man's Bible* and see how it can help us be better Christ-followers. Would you be interested in giving it a try?" Then start making phone calls.

Don't be discouraged by "Yeah, well, but I'm awfully busy" (which may or may not be the real reason for staying away). Take what you can get. As few as three recruits (plus yourself) is enough to move forward.

Settle the logistics—time, place, frequency, and duration. Ask everyone for input: What day of the week would work best? What time of day—early morning? Over lunch? An evening or a weekend afternoon? Can you make this happen on a weekly basis (the best option), or would it have to be biweekly?

Where's a good place to meet—a coffee shop? Somebody's office or lunchroom? Somebody's home? Even outdoors?

What about a trial period of, say, six meetings, so guys don't feel pressure to commit to "forever"? You can evaluate at the end of the period and see if your group wants to keep going.

Set the first meeting time (with adequate advance notice). Be prepared that not everyone who sounded positive will actually show up. It will take a few weeks for the group to sort itself out and settle into a committed core.

Opening Minutes

When guys come together, there's a social dimension but also a task (or purpose) dimension to pursue. The first minutes will no doubt be social in nature, along the lines of "Hey, what's up?" . . . "How 'bout them Cowboys (or Steelers, or Broncos)?" . . . "How was your business trip last week?" This is fine as a way to get comfortable with one another—so long as it doesn't consume a major chunk of time. Your group is intended for more than just "hanging out."

Soon enough, it's time for you as the leader to say, "Okay, let's dig into our topic for today, which is _____."

The Main Content

In the following pages you'll find ten sample sessions that draw upon the resources of this Bible. Each kicks off with a warm-up question to set the stage. Then you'll proceed to what the Word of God actually says, with illumination from the extra *Every Man's Bible* features.

Five of the sessions are keyed to "Someone You Should Know" features, profiles of intriguing *personalities* from both the Old and New Testaments whose lives demonstrate valuable lessons for us. The other five are about *issues* men face, drawn from the "Men, Women, & God" feature boxes in the text. (By the way, these ten sessions are printed here in no particular order. Feel free to pick and choose as you wish.)

The Fine Art of Asking Questions

This group is not a place for you to do all the talking. Each session includes suggested questions to draw out the thinking of your group members. The questions have been carefully crafted to elicit responses; they are neither too easy nor too difficult. Use them as written, unless you're sure you have a better idea.

Then, once you ask the question, wait for answers. Don't be afraid of silence. It often means people are deep in thought. If they observe that you quickly get antsy and jump in to answer your own question, they will sit back and let you continue to do so.

Time Control

A leader must exercise gentle but intentional control of the clock. While you don't want to cut somebody off in the middle of expressing his sincere thoughts, you cannot allow rambling. If you sense the frustration level building in the group, go ahead and intervene: "That's good, Jim—let me just add something here that relates to the next area we want to consider . . ." And quickly move to regain direction.

Also, be careful about ending the meeting on time, or as close to it as possible. It's always better to have people wishing the session were longer than for them to be dreading how long it will drag on.

What about Food?

Yes, snacks are a good way to build camaraderie in a group, provided that they don't take up an inordinate amount of time. If you decide to have food

at the beginning of a meeting, be diligent in starting the actual study without too much delay. If you eat at the end of a meeting, of course, members can linger as long as they wish.

Praying Together

Regardless of a meeting's official topic, people often arrive with a distracting personal problem or concern. That's why it is good to offer an opportunity to hear these, so you can pray together at the end. This is not "off the subject." This is ministering to one another as you journey together. Use whatever format your members find most comfortable.

Other Options

Here are two additional components that you might choose to build into the mix, time permitting:

- Feedback on the previous session: How did it actually go as you all lived out the lessons during the week? If, for example, your group had talked about dealing with our desire for quick gratification (the Esau session), you can ask in the following week, "So how did that work out for you? What did you learn about yourself?"
- Some kind of *action* that guys enjoy—whether for pure fun (a sport) or for ministry (taking up a project for needy kids or a single-parent family, or perhaps something at church). When guys use their hands, it often loosens up their thoughts and helps them to express themselves.

Someone You Should Know: Esau

Warm-up Question: “Today’s marketing is very good at telling us we need a certain product or service ‘Right Now!’ . . . ‘For a Limited Time Only!’ . . . ‘Don’t Wait!’ What are some examples you’ve seen or heard recently?”

After hearing a few responses from your group, continue with: “And did you respond? Did you do what the ad-makers wanted you to do?”

Meet Esau: Read aloud (either you or one of the group members) the story of a critical day in Esau’s life, as told in Genesis 25:27-34.

Then get a fuller picture of this rugged man by having everyone turn to the profile on page 43 entitled “The Poster Child for Instant Gratification.” It will develop what’s really going on here, including an explanation about the birthright and what it meant. You’ll probably want to have everyone read this page silently, although you could take time for an oral reading if you prefer.

Talk About It:

- Why do a lot of guys make snap decisions without looking down the road to the consequences?
- Is there sometimes a physical angle to all this, such as fatigue, lack of sleep, messed-up eating habits (Esau was starved), or other factors? Like what?
- Anybody want to tell a story about themselves? (Maybe, maybe not!)
- What are some wise ways to prevent this kind of misstep in our lives?
- What kind of siren call is tempting *you* this very week?
- Read aloud the New Testament summary about Esau in Hebrews 12:16-17; then discuss: Why would the Bible call this man “godless”?
- Notice the bottom line of the profile on page 43, entitled “The Point.” It says: “We gain nothing by choosing the immediate over the significant.” What does that mean to you? How would you phrase that in your own words?

Pray About It: Close your meeting with some honest prayers about resisting the lure of instant gratification. Don’t embarrass anyone, but try to be specific before God. Ask him to help each of you live a life without future regrets.

Someone You Should Know: Gideon

Warm-up Question: “Think about the current personnel across the NFL (or NBA, or Major League Baseball, depending on what time of year it is). Of all the players and coaches you’ve watched, who would you say is clearly ‘in over his head’? Who is woefully underqualified to be doing what he’s doing? And why?” (This should trigger a lively exchange of opinions!)

Meet Gideon: Say, “Here is a man whose life takes up several pages in the Old Testament book of Judges—more than we have time to read today in the group. (You might want to do it on your own, though, covering chapters 6-8.) For now, let’s get the background and opening scene of Gideon’s story.” Read Judges 6:1-6, then skip down to verses 11-16.

“In the *Every Man’s Bible* feature entitled ‘Unlikely Hero’ (page 331), the writer gives a colorful profile of this man.” Ask someone to read aloud *the first five paragraphs only* (down through “. . . become what he never dreamed he could be”).

Then discuss:

- Does this angel sound a little overly optimistic in talking to Gideon? After all, qualifications should count for something, shouldn’t they?
- So why would God send his angel to pick out *this guy*, of all the possibilities?
- What do you make of the angel’s phrase in verse 14, “Go with the strength you have”?

Gearing Up for the Big Moment: “Now we need to take notice of several intermediate steps in the rise of Gideon. He didn’t just run out the next day and attack the enemy. God walked him through a series of events leading up to his dramatic moment. Listen as we read the rest of the ‘Unlikely Hero’ account.” (Resume with the paragraph that starts “Gideon didn’t become . . .”)

Then discuss:

- Do you see Gideon starting to grow in confidence? In what ways?
- At what points do you see Gideon still hesitating?
- Does this disqualify him as far as God is concerned?

Are You a Gideon?

- Think across all the segments and aspects of your life. What is the hardest, scariest thing God has asked you to attempt so far?
- How have you responded?
- What strength do you personally draw from the Gideon story?

Pray About It: Express to the Lord your willingness to try what he wants you to do—in spite of your misgivings. Invite him to overcome your fears.

Bad, Good, Better, Best

Warm-up Question: “On a scale of 30 mph to 110 mph, how busy have you been this past week? How fast have you been running down the road of your life?”

An Intriguing Word Picture: Say: “Our discussion today is going to center on what things get our time and attention versus what gets left out. Listen to this analogy from the feature box on page 1566, entitled ‘The Full Life.’ I’m going to read just the middle paragraph . . .” (Start with “Suppose you’re walking along the beach . . .”)

“Now let’s read the main Scripture for the day, Ephesians 5:3-20. As we go through this passage, take note of which things are ‘sand,’ needing to be dumped . . . and which things are ‘gold coins,’ to be tightly clasped.” (Assign three different readers—one for verses 3-9, one for verses 10-14, one for verses 15-20.)

Talk About It:

- What “sand” items did you hear along the way?
- What “gold coins” did you notice?

(If people aren’t quite getting the concept, help them along by reading aloud the other paragraphs—1, 2, 4, and 5—of “The Full Life” feature box. This will spell out the clear distinction.)

- In all that we’ve talked about so far, what connects to your personal situation? What “exchanges” would you like to undertake?
- What help does the passage offer us in making these changes for the better and best? (See verses 18-19 especially.)

Looking Ahead:

- At the end of your life, how do you want to be remembered? In other words, what do you hope they say at your funeral?
- In order for that to come true, what needs to happen now?

Pray About It: This might be a good time for you to split up the group into pairs. Have everyone turn his chair to face just one other guy. Then each man can pray quietly but honestly about the exchanges he wants to make, asking for the Holy Spirit’s empowerment on a daily basis.

Building Your Legacy

Warm-up Question: “Raise your hand if you grew up in what you would call ‘a Christian home.’ . . . Now raise your hand if either of your *parents* grew up in what you would call ‘a Christian home.’” (Some in your group may be undecided on whether to raise their hands or not; they may want to explain that their forebears went to church occasionally but didn’t really live the teachings of Christ. That’s not unusual. Just use the discussion to focus everyone’s attention on the theme for this study, which is family legacy.)

Main Content: Say, “Joshua was definitely one of the Bible’s heroes—the general who led the Israelite nation into the Promised Land. Today we’re going to focus on the last scene from his life. He’s made his mark, he’s conquered his enemies, he’s settled the tribes in their new real estate—and now he feels he has one final message from God to deliver before he passes on. Turn to Joshua 24, and we’ll pick up God’s words in verse 11 . . .”

Read down through verse 18. (Feel free to skip over trying to pronounce all the “-ites” in verse 11 if you want!)

Talk About It:

- You might think that Joshua’s question about which god to serve would be a no-brainer for these people. Good grief, they had seen the Lord God do amazing miracles on their behalf (at Jericho, also the day the sun stood still so they could finish a battle, etc.). Why is Joshua even raising the inquiry?
- The people’s answer (verses 16-18) seems solid enough. But from what you know of Bible history, was it really?
- What is it about kids that so often leads to their discounting Dad’s faith? (Mom’s, too, for that matter.)

At this point, stop and read aloud the feature box on page 316, entitled “My Family Will Serve the Lord.” Then discuss:

- We could get off on a big sidetrack here, talking about how the public schools ought to be more wholesome, the politicians should pass better laws, the teen culture shouldn’t be so raunchy, etc., etc., etc. But would Joshua listen to our complaints? What do you think he’d say in response?
- What’s the best thing you’ve done in the past year to shore up your family’s commitment to follow God? Go ahead and share some ideas . . . (No doubt you’ll all want to take notes on what you can borrow from others in the group.)
- Here’s a tough question that I don’t want you to answer out loud. Keep this to yourself, okay? As you look down the road 20 years from this day . . . what are the odds that your kids will be serving the Lord? You can’t say for sure, of course. But what would you predict?
- What would you like to do at this point in the life of your family to encourage the legacy you hope for?

Pray About It: Spend time asking God for practical wisdom for setting your family on a godly path for the future.

TYNDALE BIBLE VERSE FINDER

Abortion

God cares for the unborn (Exodus 21:22-25)	116
We should protect the helpless (Psalm 82:3-4)	788
Children are from God (Psalm 127:3)	819
God forms every child (Psalm 139:13-16)	824
God plans the future of every child (Jeremiah 1:5)	974

Abuse

God cares about minorities (Exodus 22:21)	117
God protects those who are helpless (Psalm 12:5)	736
Jesus was abused (Matthew 26:67-68)	1296
Abuse has no place in family relationships (Ephesians 5:21-6:4)	1567

Accountability

God will judge our work (2 Chronicles 19:5-10)	602
Sin has consequences (Ezekiel 18:20)	1080
God will hold us accountable for our sin (Ezekiel 18:30)	1080
We are accountable for every word that we speak (Matthew 12:36)	1271
Confronting others with their sins should be done in private (Matthew 18:15)	1281
We should hold each other accountable (Luke 17:3)	1373
We are accountable for what we believe (John 3:18)	1394
God holds Christians accountable (Romans 14:11-12)	1503
God will reward Christians for their good deeds (1 Corinthians 3:8)	1512
God will examine our actions (2 Corinthians 5:10)	1538

Accusations

Satan accuses God's people of doing wrong (Zechariah 3:1)	1230
Jesus was falsely accused (Matthew 26:59-60)	1296
Christians' sins are forgiven (Colossians 1:22)	1580
Accusations against church leaders must come from more than one person (1 Timothy 5:19)	1606
Satan is known as the Accuser (Revelation 12:10)	1701

Adolescence

Young people should worship God (1 Kings 18:12)	484
God can give hope to young people (Psalm 71:5)	778
Young people should remember God (Ecclesiastes 12:1)	883

Young people should be an example to others (1 Timothy 4:12)	1603
Young people should run from their youthful lust (2 Timothy 2:22)	1613

Adoption, Spiritual

God helps his children grow (Deuteronomy 8:5)	253
God’s children should obey him (Deuteronomy 26:18)	272
God disciplines his children (2 Samuel 7:14)	422
Do not despise God’s discipline (Proverbs 3:11-12)	834
God is our Father (Matthew 6:9)	1261
Christians are God’s children (John 1:12)	1390
God’s Spirit leads his children (Romans 8:14-17)	1495
Christians should be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17-18) . . .	1540
All of God’s children are equal in God’s eyes (Galatians 3:28)	1554
God’s children will receive a spiritual inheritance (Galatians 4:4-7)	1554
God chose us to be his children (Ephesians 1:4-5)	1562
Jesus is our spiritual brother (Hebrews 2:11)	1627

Adultery

God forbids adultery (Exodus 20:14)	114
Adultery has consequences (Proverbs 6:26)	839
Adultery is foolish (Proverbs 6:32)	839
Adultery is disgusting to God (Jeremiah 7:9-10)	988
God considers lust as sinful as adultery (Matthew 5:27-28)	1260
Divorce often leads to adultery (Mark 10:11-12)	1322
God can forgive the adulterer (John 8:1-11)	1406

Advice

Leaders should consider the advice of others (Exodus 18:13-26)	110
Older people often give wise advice (1 Kings 12:1-11)	472
Stay away from people who give wicked advice (Psalm 1:1)	730
God’s advice is best (Psalm 73:24)	780
Wise people seek advice (Proverbs 1:5)	832
Advice helps provide success (Proverbs 11:14)	844
Foolish people do not listen to advice (Proverbs 12:15)	845
Give advice to those in need (1 Thessalonians 5:14)	1592

Alcohol

Being controlled by alcohol is foolish (Proverbs 20:1)	855
Becoming drunk is sin (Romans 13:13-14)	1502
God hates drunkenness (Galatians 5:19-21)	1558
Church leaders should not be controlled by alcohol (Titus 1:7)	1618

Angels

Angels carry out God’s judgment (2 Samuel 24:16-17)	449
Angels serve God (Psalm 103:21)	800
Angels praise God (Psalm 148:2)	828

Angels are messengers (Daniel 4:17)	1130
Angels protect God's people (Daniel 6:22)	1134
Angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30)	1289
Angels do not die (Luke 20:36)	1380
Angels will be judged by people (1 Corinthians 6:3)	1515
Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14)	1546
Angels encourage Christians (Hebrews 1:14)	1626
Angels who sinned were thrown into hell (2 Peter 2:4)	1665
Angels are holy (Jude 1:14)	1684
Angels are in the presence of God (Revelation 4:8)	1693
Angels should not be worshiped (Revelation 22:8-9)	1712

Anger

Anger can lead to murder (Genesis 4:3-8)	11
Anger leads to evil actions (Psalm 37:8)	753
Showing anger is foolish (Proverbs 12:16)	845
Gentle words can soothe anger (Proverbs 15:1)	850
Being quick-tempered is foolish (Ecclesiastes 7:9)	878
God becomes angry when we are ruled by anger (Amos 1:11)	1173
Anger is like murdering someone (Matthew 5:21-22)	1259
Jesus grew angry at sin (John 2:13-17)	1393
Anger can give Satan a place in your life (Ephesians 4:26-27)	1565
Christians should get rid of anger (Colossians 3:8)	1582
Leaders in the church should not be quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)	1618
Be slow to become angry (James 1:19)	1646

Antichrist

Many will claim to be God's messenger (Matthew 24:5)	1291
Many will have miraculous powers (Matthew 24:24)	1291
Many will claim to be Christ (Luke 21:8)	1380
The Antichrist will be lawless and deceitful (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10)	1594
There are many antichrists (1 John 2:18)	1671
The Antichrist will oppose God (1 John 4:3)	1674
The Antichrist will curse God (Revelation 13:1-8)	1701
The Antichrist will be punished by God (Revelation 20:10)	1710

Appearance

God is not impressed by someone's appearance (1 Samuel 16:7)	390
Physical beauty fades (Proverbs 31:30)	870
Do not worry about clothes (Matthew 6:25-34)	1262
Appearances can be deceiving (Matthew 23:27)	1290
Christians should care more about their spiritual welfare than their physical appearance (1 Timothy 2:9-10)	1599
Do not judge others by their appearance (James 2:2-4)	1646
Inner beauty is more important than physical beauty (1 Peter 3:1-6)	1658

ONE YEAR READING PLAN

January 1

Genesis 1:1–2:25
Matthew 1:1–2:12
Psalm 1:1-6
Proverbs 1:1-6

January 2

Genesis 3:1–4:26
Matthew 2:13–3:6
Psalm 2:1-12
Proverbs 1:7-9

January 3

Genesis 5:1–7:24
Matthew 3:7–4:11
Psalm 3:1-8
Proverbs 1:10-19

January 4

Genesis 8:1–10:32
Matthew 4:12-25
Psalm 4:1-8
Proverbs 1:20-23

January 5

Genesis 11:1–13:4
Matthew 5:1-26
Psalm 5:1-12
Proverbs 1:24-28

January 6

Genesis 13:5–15:21
Matthew 5:27-48
Psalm 6:1-10
Proverbs 1:29-33

January 7

Genesis 16:1–18:15
Matthew 6:1-24
Psalm 7:1-17
Proverbs 2:1-5

January 8

Genesis 18:16–19:38
Matthew 6:25–7:14
Psalm 8:1-9
Proverbs 2:6-15

January 9

Genesis 20:1–22:24
Matthew 7:15-29
Psalm 9:1-12
Proverbs 2:16-22

January 10

Genesis 23:1–24:51
Matthew 8:1-17
Psalm 9:13-20
Proverbs 3:1-6

January 11

Genesis 24:52–26:16
Matthew 8:18-34
Psalm 10:1-15
Proverbs 3:7-8

January 12

Genesis 26:17–27:46
Matthew 9:1-17
Psalm 10:16-18
Proverbs 3:9-10

January 13

Genesis 28:1–29:35
Matthew 9:18-38
Psalm 11:1-7
Proverbs 3:11-12

January 14

Genesis 30:1–31:16
Matthew 10:1-23
Psalm 12:1-8
Proverbs 3:13-15

January 15

Genesis 31:17–32:12
Matthew 10:24–11:6
Psalm 13:1-6
Proverbs 3:16-18

January 16

Genesis 32:13–34:31
Matthew 11:7-30
Psalm 14:1-7
Proverbs 3:19-20

January 17

Genesis 35:1–36:43
Matthew 12:1-21
Psalm 15:1-5
Proverbs 3:21-26

January 18

Genesis 37:1–38:30
Matthew 12:22-45
Psalm 16:1-11
Proverbs 3:27-32

January 19

Genesis 39:1–41:16
Matthew 12:46–13:23
Psalm 17:1-15
Proverbs 3:33-35

January 20

Genesis 41:17–42:17
Matthew 13:24-46
Psalm 18:1-15
Proverbs 4:1-6

January 21

Genesis 42:18–43:34
Matthew 13:47–14:12
Psalm 18:16-36
Proverbs 4:7-10

January 22

Genesis 44:1–45:28
Matthew 14:13-36
Psalm 18:37-50
Proverbs 4:11-13

January 23

Genesis 46:1–47:31
Matthew 15:1-28
Psalm 19:1-14
Proverbs 4:14-19

January 24

Genesis 48:1–49:33
Matthew 15:29–16:12
Psalm 20:1-9
Proverbs 4:20-27



OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? Firsts—the universe, people, families, nations. Genesis means “beginning,” and the book of Genesis is the foundation for the rest of the Bible.

+ **WHO WROTE IT?** Christian and Jewish traditions say the author was Moses.

+ **WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** This book covers from the beginning of time up through the 1400s B.C.

+ **WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** At the head of the line, both historically and spiritually.

+ THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapters 1–3: Creation; Adam and Eve; sin
- Chapters 4–5: Genealogies
- Chapters 6–9: Noah
- Chapters 10–11: Growth of nations; Tower of Babel
- Chapters 12–23: Abraham
- Chapters 24–26: Abraham and Isaac
- Chapters 27–36: Jacob
- Chapters 37–50: Joseph

+ **KEY CONCEPTS** The words *This is the account of . . .* are used often to mark off main sections of the book.

+ SCORECARD

- **Adam:** The first man
- **Eve:** The first woman
- **Cain:** The first murderer
- **Noah:** God used him to save humans and animals.
- **Abraham:** God chose him to be the father of the Jewish people.
- **Isaac:** Abraham's son
- **Jacob:** Isaac's son; his name was changed to Israel
- **Joseph:** Jacob's favorite son; God used him to save Jacob's family from famine

+ **READING TIME**  1:45
IN HOURS :30 | 1:00 | 1:30 | 2:00 | 2:30

WORTH MEMORIZING

• THE BIBLE'S OPENING WORDS IN 1:1.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

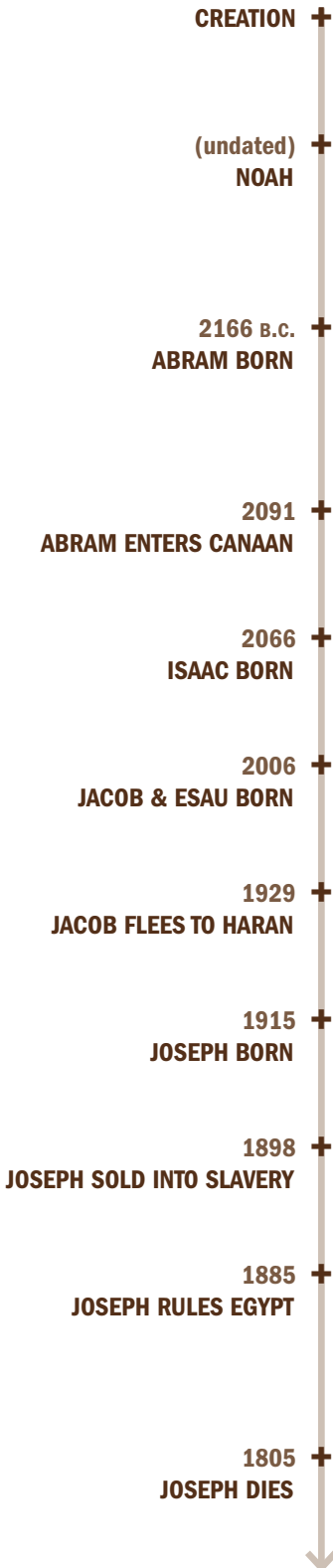
• **JOSEPH'S WORDS IN 50:20.** “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• **WORK IS A GOOD THING.** God gave Adam an important job to do, and Adam did it well. It's no accident that men find fulfillment in their work; God designed it that way.

• **MARRIAGE IS A GOOD THING.** Adam was, in a sense, incomplete until God created Eve.

• **SIN IS A REALITY EVERYONE MUST FACE.** Since Adam and Eve sinned, we're all corrupted. This means we can't always trust our instincts about what's right and what's wrong. Instead, we need an independent moral rudder—God's Word.



1 The Account of Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”
And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.”
And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds

1:1 Or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .

1:1 The Hebrew name for God that is used here, *Elohim*, demonstrates the enormity of God’s power to transform lives. This name for God is in the plural form, signifying his strength and might. It also hints that God is in some sense plural—a community unto himself (see also 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). But though this name is plural, it is treated grammatically as singular, revealing God’s unified and personal nature. He is omnipotent in power but personal in his touch. He is able and willing to provide the help we need.

1:2 This verse describes the earth before it was shaped by God’s creative hand. It was shapeless, chaotic, and dark. These three characteristics forebode nothing but trouble. But then we are told that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” This fourth characteristic is a source of hope and promises new life. The presence of the Holy Spirit was a necessary element in the events of all six days of creation. In the same way, his presence in our lives is necessary before any spiritual renewal can take place.

will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

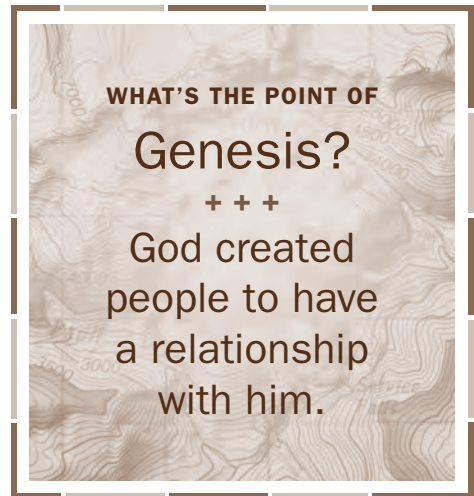
¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts

1:26a Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. 1:26b As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*. 1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.



of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that

1:24 The phrase “And that is what happened” (also in 1:9-11, 14-15) shows us that God’s creative activity was done in complete conformity to the specifications he had originally intended. God accomplishes his will with certainty and precision. It should reassure us to know that God’s good desires for us can be accomplished with the same certainty.

1:26-27 People were created to be like God. Oceans of ink have been used attempting to explain what this means. One characteristic that all the writers agree upon is the ability of people to make moral decisions. We have the power of choice, and we are accountable to God and to others for the choices we make. To continue growing spiritually we must take responsibility for this aspect of God’s nature that is alive and well in each of us.

Time

+ GOD OUTLASTS TIME

You must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. **2 PETER 3:8**

+ GOD CREATED TIME

God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years."

GENESIS 1:14



+ GOD IS WITH US THROUGHOUT TIME

Lord, through all the generations
you have been our home!

PSALM 90:1

+ + +

[Jesus:] "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:20

+ OUR TIME IS LIMITED

Seventy years are given to us!
Some even live to eighty.

But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble;
soon they disappear, and we fly away.

PSALM 90:10

+ + +

Teach us to realize the brevity of life,
so that we may grow in wisdom.

PSALM 90:12

+ + +

Our days on earth are like grass;
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.

The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.

PSALM 103:15-16

+ TIME: USE IT WISELY

Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools,
but like those who are wise. Make the most of
every opportunity in these evil days.

EPHESIANS 5:15-16

scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden,

2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. 2:6 Or *mist*. 2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of the man’s side*.

watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man’s ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

2:2-3 This is the first mention of Sabbath rest—one day of rest in seven. By his example, God encourages us to designate a portion of our lives to rest and spiritual rejuvenation. Without proper rest, it is very difficult to deal with the other matters in our lives and maintain the balance necessary to preserve spiritual gains.

2:4 Here a new Hebrew name for God is introduced: “The LORD” (*Yahweh*). This is the personal name for God; it is his relationship name. It describes the God who chose Abram and established a covenant with him. It describes the God who chose to relate to the Israelites and make them his people. It is the name that reminds us that God wants to have a relationship with us.

2:8-14 God provided a perfect environment for the first people. We often blame our outward circumstances for our difficulties. It is important to note here that in spite of their ideal surroundings, our first parents fell—they failed. Although the environment we live in can certainly add to our problems, it is never entirely at fault. We need to take responsibility for our own mistakes and failures.

2:16-17 God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from a single tree. Why did he do this? Why didn’t God create a world where people couldn’t sin? Or why didn’t he make people so they couldn’t disobey his commands? The answer lies in the very nature of God. God is love and desires to have a loving relationship with his creatures. He wants us to respond to him with love in return. But a loving response is only possible when we have the choice to do otherwise. He wants us to obey because we love him, not because we have no other choice.

Making a Man and a Woman

Genesis 1:27 and 2:15-25

GOD MADE EVERYTHING in the cosmos, from the microscopic amoeba and tiny insects to the vast planets and galaxies. But his work wasn't done until he had designed his most amazing creatures.

The first two chapters of Genesis give us two slightly different descriptions of the process God used to create humanity.

The sound bite in Genesis 1:27 tells us that people were created in God's own image. That doesn't mean humans are gods, but it does mean we have some of the Creator's characteristics—including our own kind of God-given creativity.

The longer Genesis 2 account provides more details about God's creation of Adam and Eve; Adam came first, and one of his ribs was used in the later creation of Eve.

People have argued about the Genesis creation stories for centuries. Skeptical scientists say the Bible is riddled with errors, but theologians say Genesis was never intended to be a science book.

Feminists and traditionalists have also fought bitter battles over these two brief passages. Feminists prefer Genesis 1, which supports their claims of gender equality, while those who support male leadership in the home and society prefer Genesis 2, which suggests women may have been dependent on men from the beginning of time.

These passages won't settle the raging scientific and moral debates, but they do make one thing perfectly clear: God created both the male and female and declared them "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Adam was pretty pleased, too. "At last!" he exclaimed when he first saw Eve (2:23).

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

3 The Man and Woman Sin

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

3:8 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

3:1-5 The account here pictures for us the process of temptation. The serpent offered as a very attractive option something that had been forbidden by God. The serpent also caused Eve to doubt God and the truth of his Word. During the debate, Eve offered some halfhearted opposition, but her growing doubt in God weakened her resolve. In the end, she gave in. Satan strengthened his temptation by weakening Eve's faith in God. Staying close to God and preserving our faith in him will weaken the power of temptation in our life.

3:10 Adam admitted that he was hiding from God. One of the terrible consequences of our sin is the isolation that results. We want to hide from other people; we want to hide from God. Our failures will always make us want to hide. But we must bring our sin out into the open; this will then bring us back into our relationships—with others and with God—which helps us preserve our spiritual gains.

Coming in First

MOST OF THE TIME, it's *good* to come in first.

It feels great when you're the first with a creative solution to a tough problem.

It feels great when you're the first to taste some fabulous new dish.

It feels great when you're the first to explore new territory, to harvest a unique plant, to watch a sunset from a breathtakingly beautiful perch.

Adam, the first human being ever to open his eyes, experienced all of these firsts, as well as countless more. As the original representative of a new race, Adam became the first to hold a steady job (Genesis 2:15), to play the name game (2:19-20), to enjoy a dynamic relationship with God (2:15ff), and to get married (2:21-25). God had created Adam to reflect something of his own divine magnificence (1:26-27), and as a result, this first man and his wife enjoyed a unique role as rulers over every other creature living on earth (1:26). Had the *Guinness Book of World Records* existed in Adam's day, he would have filled it with a dazzling multitude of exploits.

Too bad he didn't stop while he was ahead.

Most of us would like to forget the one first for which Adam is most remembered. But we can't, since the results of *that* first continue to harass us to this day. Adam

chose to disobey the explicit instructions of God—and as a consequence, he earned himself and his posterity the death penalty (2:16-17; 3:17-19).

The Bible
fingers Adam
as the one
responsible
for bringing sin
and chaos into
the world.

While the Bible fingers Adam as the one responsible for bringing sin and chaos into the world, some guys would rather blame Eve, Adam's wife, who did in fact break God's command before her husband did. They wonder, *Why does the Bible lay the fault squarely at Adam's feet?* Scripture offers two primary answers: First, God gave his commandment directly to Adam, not to Eve; and second, while a devilish deception hoodwinked Eve into disobedience, Adam consciously and willingly *decided* to disobey (1 Timothy 2:14). For this reason, the apostle Paul

says, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned" (Romans 5:12).

We'll never know what might have happened had Adam chosen God over sin. In the end, Adam returned to the ground from which he was taken after his death at a whopping 930 years of age (Genesis 3:19; 5:5).

And yet, was it really "the end"? No. The Bible is nothing if not a book of hope, and it tells us of a "last Adam," Jesus Christ, who through a first of his own has undone for us what Adam did to us: "Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life" (1 Corinthians 15:22). As "the first to rise from the dead," Christ proclaims "light to Jews and Gentiles alike" (Acts 26:23)—a light that allows us, through faith in him, to enter a kind of life superior even to that which Adam forfeited so long ago.

THE POINT: It's good to be first—but only in the right things.

Naked and Unashamed

Genesis 2:25

THE EARLY DAYS in the Garden of Eden were a time of innocence and joy for humanity's first husband and wife. Wouldn't it be nice if we could bottle some of their happiness and pour it all over our own sex-saturated, love-starved world?

Here's how British thinker C. S. Lewis once described the problem of runaway sexual appetites:

"You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theater by simply bringing a covered plate onto the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food? And would not anyone who had grown up in a different world think there was something equally queer about the state of the sex instinct among us?"

That was half a century ago. Today, technology has accelerated the sale of sex, especially on the Internet, where anyone can view material once considered illegal or unthinkable.

Sex is the means by which humans and other creatures reproduce. But it's obvious that when God designed human sexuality, he added lots of interesting extra features. That's because there's more to human sexuality than breeding.

God created sex as a means for a man and a woman to experience a kind of soul-to-soul intimacy that can't be known any other way. Sex was also designed to make men and women praise God.

For Adam and Eve, sexuality was innocent and joyful. What would it take for us to experience sex in that way today?

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike* your head,
and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.*"

¹⁷And to the man he said,

"Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.
All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return."

3:15 Or *bruise*; also in 3:15b. **3:16** Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.*

3:15 In his grace, God promised that the offspring of the woman would defeat Satan. He promised that he would take charge of the redemption of their lives and overcome the enemy. This is good news—the first mention of the gospel of grace that would eventually be fulfilled by the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

²⁰Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

4 Cain and Abel

Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD’s help, I have produced* a man!” ²Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

3:20 *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “to give life.” **3:22** *Or the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. **4:1a** *Or the man*; also in 4:25. **4:1b** *Or I have acquired*. *Cain* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “produce” or “acquire.” **4:8** As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks “*Let’s go out into the fields.*” **4:13** *Or My sin*. **4:16** *Nod* means “wandering.”

⁶“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.”* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. ¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment* is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

¹⁵The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

3:20 There was no reason for Adam and Eve to expect to live on after their failure. God had clearly stated that the consequences of their sin would be death (see 2:17). Yet Adam displayed his faith in our gracious God by naming his wife Eve, which sounds like a Hebrew word that means “to give life.” He believed that she would live to be the mother of the human race. Adam’s faith in God gave him hope for the future, even when his past gave him little reason to hope.

4:4 Abel killed an innocent substitute as his offering, and God accepted his offering. Abel was obedient to God’s instructions. Our relationship with God can be established by accepting God’s gracious forgiveness and allowing the innocent sacrifice of his Son to stand in our place. Abel’s sacrifice of one of his lambs was the second death mentioned in the Bible.

4:6-8 When God rejected Cain’s offering, Cain reacted first with disappointment, then with anger. God did not reject Cain for his strong feelings but offered him an opportunity for a new start. How sad that Cain refused this second chance and went out instead to kill his brother. We need to be careful when we face obstacles in life. We need to carefully weigh the strong feelings we encounter before acting on them. If we don’t, we may be passing up an excellent opportunity for a fresh start. God is not put off by our strong feelings. Our spiritual renewal is based on God’s grace, which always offers us an opportunity to begin again.

4:15 The mark on Cain was not, as some have taught, a badge of guilt. It was a sign that God gave Cain for his protection. Even after Cain’s great failure, God desired to protect him from harm. Many of us look back and marvel at how God protected us before we began seeking him. He wants us to be restored and often protects us in the midst of evil so that we are not destroyed. Even after our greatest failures, our gracious God desires only our healing and restoration.

Passing the Buck

Genesis 3:8-13

THIRTY YEARS AGO, the conversation went like this:

“Tommy, where’s your math assignment?”

“Uh, I think my dog ate it.”

Today, it may be more like this:

“Honey, where are the car keys?”

“Uh, I think the baby must have hidden them somewhere.”

Passing the buck has been a popular guy tradition for a long time. In fact, the origins of buck passing go back to the dawn of human history. Adam, the first man God created, was also the first man to avoid taking responsibility for his failures.

After God created the earth, he told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. “If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die,” said God (Genesis 2:17).

But the serpent enticed Eve into eating the fruit. Then Eve persuaded Adam. This was the beginning of sin and disobedience on earth. Theologians call this event the Fall.

When God asked what happened, he was given history’s first buck-passing session.

“Eve gave it to me,” said Adam.

“The serpent deceived me,” said Eve.

We can only imagine what might have happened if Adam had said, “God, I confess. I messed up. I’m sorry.” He didn’t, and he paid the price. So do we.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷ Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸ Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹ His brother’s name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²² Lamech’s other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging

tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. ²³ One day Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.

I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴ If someone who kills Cain is punished
seven times,
then the one who kills me will be
punished seventy-seven times!”

The Birth of Seth

²⁵ Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,* for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel,

4:18 Or *the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse. **4:25** *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.”

4:19-24 Some people insist that the human race is developing and becoming better and better. When we compare Lamech with his ancestor Cain, it is obvious that the trend has usually gone in the opposite direction. Without God’s help, we only get worse. It is only by following God’s plan and receiving his grace that we can hope to escape the natural slide toward pain and destruction.

whom Cain killed.”²⁶ When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

5 The Descendants of Adam

This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings,* he made them to be like himself.² He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth.⁴ After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.⁵ Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh.⁷ After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters.⁸ Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan.¹⁰ After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel.¹³ After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters.¹⁴ Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared.¹⁶ After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters.¹⁷ Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch.¹⁹ After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and

he had other sons and daughters.²⁰ Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah.²² After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

²³Enoch lived 365 years,²⁴ walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech.²⁶ After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters.²⁷ Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son.²⁹ Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief* from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.”³⁰ After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters.³¹ Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6 A World Gone Wrong

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them.² The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives.³ Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with* humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

5:1 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2. 5:6 Or *the ancestor of*; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:7 Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26. 5:29 *Noah* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.” 6:2 Hebrew *daughters of men*; also in 6:4. 6:3 Greek version reads *will not remain in*.

5:1-32 This chapter has often been called the obituary column. Its recurring refrain is, “And then he died.” Although Adam’s physical death did not occur on the day he sinned, it did eventually come. Adam had reestablished his relationship with God, but the physical consequences of his sin could not be avoided forever. We may hope that after reestablishing our relationship with God, our troubles will be over. But a relationship with God rarely frees us from the consequences of past sin. The consequences will catch up with us sooner or later. But if we suffer for past mistakes, we can know that God will be with us each step of the way.

5:21-24 Little is said about the spiritual state of these patriarchs of the human race. But the account of Enoch’s life provides us with a bright spot in this otherwise dismal chapter. Enoch was said to have “lived in close fellowship with God.” His life should give us hope. He wasn’t trapped by the mistakes or apathy of his peers and ancestors. Instead, he constantly walked with God.

Work

+ CHANGING COURSE

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

EPHESIANS 4:28

+ THE REAL BOSS

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

+ THE FIRST “JOB DESCRIPTION”

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

GENESIS 1:28

+++

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. **GENESIS 2:15**

+ HOW WORK GOT TO BE A WHOLE LOT TOUGHER

And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,

the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.

By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat

until you return to the ground from which you were made.” **GENESIS 3:17-19**



+ PRAYING ABOUT YOUR JOB

May the Lord our God show us his approval and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!

PSALM 90:17

+ SLACKING OFF

A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.

PROVERBS 18:9

+ WORK HABITS

Jeroboam was a very capable young man, and when Solomon saw how industrious he was, he put him in charge of the labor force from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph.

1 KINGS 11:28

+++

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” ⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. ¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. ¹³So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴“Build a large boat* from cypress wood* and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.* ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening* below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with

a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

7 The Flood Covers the Earth

When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice,* and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the

6:14a Traditionally rendered *an ark*. **6:14b** Or *gopher wood*. **6:15** Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] *long*, *50 cubits* [23 meters] *wide*, and *30 cubits* [13.8 meters] *high*. **6:16** Hebrew *an opening of 1 cubit* [46 centimeters]. **7:2** Hebrew *of each clean animal*; similarly in 7:8.

6:5-6 After years of patience, God saw that the human race still refused to live according to his plan. Here we see that things were getting worse, not better. This broke God’s heart because of the great love he had for his creation. It should encourage us to know that God doesn’t punish us simply out of anger. He loves us very much and desires that we should follow him.

6:7 God promises to judge his fallen and sinful creation. Even though God is patient with us and gives us many chances to change our ways, we cannot act with impunity. God is righteous, and he judges sin.

6:8-10 God did not destroy the righteous with the wicked. These verses are another statement of God’s grace. God extended grace to Noah and his family. Noah knew Enoch’s secret. He lived his life in constant fellowship with God. He broke the mold set by his ancestors and neighbors by drawing close to God. As a result, Noah lived through the Flood and became the second father of the human race.

6:22 One has to wonder whether God’s instructions made any sense to Noah. God told him to build a gigantic boat far from the nearest body of navigable water. But here we see that Noah was obedient even though God’s instructions were hard to understand. This is one of the secrets of success in life. We may not understand how everything works, but we must always be faithful to do what God tells us to do. When we walk by faith as Noah did, God will watch over us.

various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet* above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

8 The Flood Recedes

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede.

7:20 Hebrew *15 cubits* [6.9 meters]. 8:4 Hebrew *on the seventeenth day of the seventh month*; see 7:11. 8:5 Hebrew *On the first day of the tenth month*; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. 8:13 Hebrew *On the first day of the first month*; see 7:11. 8:14 Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. 8:20 Hebrew *every clean animal and every clean bird*.

²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began,* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later,* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began,* the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by,* and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.* ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice

8:1 Noah had listened to God and obeyed all his requests. Now the boat was floating over the earth on the floodwaters—not an ideal situation to be in. But God didn’t forget about Noah. It is comforting to know that when we obey God, he will not forget us. He will stand by us until his plans for us are complete.

Trouble in Paradise

A JOKE PRINTED in the *St. Louis Pennant* back in 1840 serves as the first known record of a phrase still in use today.

“Why have we every reason to believe that Adam and Eve were both rowdies?” asked the editors.

“Because . . . they both raised Cain.”

Today the phrase “raise Cain” means to cause a lot of trouble—as the biblical Cain surely did. This first human baby, the eldest child of Adam and Eve, grew up to become the world’s first cold-blooded murderer (Genesis 4:1-8).

What drove Cain to kill his younger brother, Abel? Uncontrolled anger. And what caused his anger? The Bible gives a surprising answer: religion.

Scripture tells us that while Cain raised crops, his brother managed livestock. At some point both men wanted to offer the results of their labor as a sacrifice to God. But while God accepted Abel’s offering, he rejected Cain’s—an event that led directly to the world’s first homicide.

Why did God reject Cain’s sacrifice? Apparently it had little to do with the actual items offered. Rather, it came down to the watershed issue that always separates true religion from its deadly counterfeit: faith in God versus confidence in self. The book of Hebrews

tells us that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain “by faith” (Hebrews 11:4). His genuine faith prompted him to give to God not second-rate leftovers but the very first and best of his flocks (Genesis 4:4). Cain, meanwhile, hoped to impress God and to earn divine favor with his own gifts, but discovered that God cannot be bought. The divine rejection made him so angry that he took out his rage on his brother, then lied about his crime (4:8-9).

Manmade religion—that is, trying to impress God by what we have done—always ends in disaster. We all have a choice when God warns us against trying to impress him with our puny efforts. Will we listen to him, trust him instead of trying to wow him, and do things his way? Or will we insist on our own plans, get angry when they don’t work, blame God for our failures, and then strike out at others?

Make no mistake: We face this choice every day. The New Testament writer Jude warned his readers against following “in the footsteps of Cain” (Jude 1:11). He meant that we always face the temptation of choosing self-aggrandizing effort over genuine faith. Every one of us must repeatedly make scores of decisions about whether to trust God and follow his instructions, or depend on ourselves and our ability to get God to stand and applaud.

Some time before Cain struck down his brother, God advised him to do what was right and warned him that he stood in a precarious place. Cain ignored the warning and wound up a murderer. If we ignore similar warnings, do we really think we’ll wind up any better?

Cain hoped to impress God, but discovered that God cannot be bought.

THE POINT: Nothing impresses God except genuine faith.

and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

9 God Confirms His Covenant

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings* in his own image. ⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is

9:6 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.

the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

Noah’s Sons

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

²⁶Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem,
be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!

9:1-17 Noah and his family were the only people left after the Flood. The comforts of civilization had been washed away. They had to start all over again. God gave Noah his special blessing and instituted a plan that, if followed, would result in a healthy society. God has given us his Word, which contains the ultimate blueprint for healthy living. And just as God gave the human race a new start with Noah, he can give each of us a new start, too.

9:9-13 God assigned Noah the monumental task of rebuilding human society on earth. But God didn’t just hand Noah the task and walk away. As we see in this passage, God gave Noah hope and set a rainbow in the sky as a seal of his promise. As we are rebuilding our lives in keeping with God’s design, we can be sure that God will support us with his presence and promises. And we should keep an eye out for the “rainbows” along the way. God often leaves us signs to remind us of his loving presence and care.

9:20-21 With all the talk of Noah’s righteousness and his fellowship with God, it is surprising to read that, by his choice, he fell prey to the excesses of alcohol. The account of Noah’s drunkenness and shame comes as a shock to the reader, but it is a reminder that even in ideal conditions it is easy for us to slip and fall. We can never relax and feel as if we have it made, for that is when we become most vulnerable to sin.

A Bright Star in a Dark Sky

VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS. Corruption in the halls of power. Greed. Hatred. Debauchery. All in all, a stinking cesspool of evil and wickedness.

Welcome to the time of Noah.

We may bemoan the collapse of morality in our own age, and rightly so, but human society in Noah's time had so degenerated that God looked down and saw that "everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil" (Genesis 6:5, emphasis added). Human behavior had so badly decayed that "the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart" (6:6). And so the holy God of the universe decided to unleash a worldwide flood to wipe humanity from the face of the earth—all, that is, except for one exceptional man and his family. Scripture introduces him simply: *But Noah found favor with the LORD* (6:8).

In the middle of a violent, corrupt, and sordid society, what was different about Noah? The Bible describes three personal traits that set him apart:

- He was "a righteous man."
- He was "the only blameless person living on earth."
- He "walked in close fellowship with God" (6:9).

When God told him to build an enormous ship in which his family and a pair of every kind of animal might safely ride out the flood—even though the gargantuan vessel would

remain landlocked until the deluge came—Noah obeyed. "Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him" (6:22), Scripture says. Noah wasn't perfect; no one is. But because of his faith, God declared Noah righteous. The writer of Hebrews says, "It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

We can only imagine the ridicule and abuse that Noah endured before "the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky" (Genesis 7:11). Noah lived among a vile people, yet he managed to resist their corrupt influence. How? By walking with God.

Noah's life was a wonderful example of the kind of life all believers are exhorted to live in 1 Peter 4:2-5:

You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. . . .

Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.

In spite of his culture, Noah continued to walk with God.

Noah is an ancient role model for us, as through a living faith we strive to live "clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people" (Philippians 2:15).

Noah lived
among a
vile people,
yet managed
to resist
their corrupt
influences.

THE POINT: A vital walk with God enables a man to find God's favor.

²⁷ May God expand the territory of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity of
Shem,*
and may Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸ Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

10 This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

Descendants of Japheth

²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.* ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. ⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world,* his name became proverbial. People would say, “This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world.” ¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia,* with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh.

¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria,* building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).

¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.*

9:27 Hebrew *May he live in the tents of Shem.* **10:4** As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*. **10:9** Hebrew *a great hunter before the LORD*; also in 10:9b. **10:10** Hebrew *Shinar*. **10:11** Or *From that land Assyria went out*. **10:14** Hebrew *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorites*. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. **10:15** Hebrew *ancestor of Heth*. **10:21** Or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*. **10:24** Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*. Compare Luke 3:36.

¹⁵Canaan’s oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,*

¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Descendants of Shem

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,* and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means “division”), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother’s name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

³²These are the clans that descended from Noah’s sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

10:1-32 This chapter is often called the Table of Nations. It is refreshing to realize that the God we worship is not a local deity. He is sovereign over all ethnic and language groups, nations, and political entities. The God who holds kings and empires in his hands surely has the power to hold us, too.

Personal Gold

from GORDON MACDONALD

ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

I get the feeling we are a tired generation. Evidence abounds in a multitude of articles about health problems related to overwork and exhaustion. *Workaholism* is a modern word. No matter how hard we are willing to work in our competitive world, there always seems to be someone willing to put in a few more hours than we are.

What is strange about our general fatigue is the fact that we are such a leisure-oriented society. We actually have what is called a leisure industry, and it is among the most profitable in our economy. Whole companies, organizations, and retail chain stores are committed to providing the goods with which people can pursue fun and good times.

We probably have more time for leisure than we ever had before. So why is there so much exhaustion and fatigue today? Is it real? Imagined? Or is the contemporary form of exhaustion evidence that we no longer understand genuine rest, which is different from the pursuit of leisure?

There is a biblical view of rest that needs to be uncovered and examined. In fact, the Bible reveals God Himself to be the first “rester.” “On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work.” An even more enlightening comment is made by Moses in Exodus 31:17—“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was refreshed” (NLT). The literal translation suggests the phrase “He refreshed himself.”

Does God indeed need to rest? Of course not! But did God choose to rest? Yes. Why? Because God subjected creation to a rhythm of rest and work that he revealed by observing the rhythm himself, as a precedent for everyone else. In this way, he showed us a key to order in our private worlds.

This rest was not meant to be a luxury, but rather a *necessity* for those who want to have growth and maturity. Since we have not understood that rest is a necessity, we have perverted its meaning, substituting for the rest that God first demonstrated things called leisure or amusement.

I am not by any means critical of the pursuit of fun-filled moments, diversion, laughter, or recreation. I am proposing that these alone will not restore the soul in the way that we crave. Although they may provide a sort of momentary rest for the body, they will not satisfy the deep need for rest within the private world.

*Diversion,
laughter, or
recreation alone
will not restore
the soul in
the way that
we crave.*

11 The Tower of Babel

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia* and settled there.

³They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

⁵But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel,* because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

The Line of Descent from Shem to Abram

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of* Arphaxad. ¹¹After the birth of* Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he

became the father of Shelah. ¹³After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

¹⁴When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Family of Terah

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. ²⁹Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai,

11:2 Hebrew *Shinar*. 11:9 Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." 11:10 Or *the ancestor of*; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. 11:11 Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25. 11:12-13 Greek version reads ¹²*When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan*. ¹³*After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died.* Compare Luke 3:35-36.

11:3-4 Whatever else the Tower of Babel might have represented, it was a mighty monument to human pride. It was a symbol of man's rebellion against the revealed will of God. This type of pride is always destructive to human community and to God's plan of redemption.

11:5-9 The Tower of Babel incident records the progression of broken communication that began back in the Garden of Eden. After sin entered the world, Adam and Eve began to hide the truth. They tried to blame each other and God for their mistakes, resulting in separation from God and barriers between that first couple. The sinful pride of the people of Babel caused another great rift in human communication. Numerous languages now divided them into various groups, making their cooperation difficult, if not impossible. But the story doesn't end there. God is in the business of restoring broken communication. He chose the nation of Israel and spoke to them, giving them his laws. His Son was born through this nation so he could speak to us and walk among us. And when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, the diversity of language was no longer a barrier to communication (Acts 2:5-12). Following God's plan enhances our communication with him and the people around us.

Living by Faith

NO NAME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT shines more brightly than that of Abraham.

The apostle Paul referred to Abraham as “the spiritual father of those who have faith” (Romans 4:11). Hundreds of years after Abraham’s death, Levite worship leaders lauded him as one who “had proved himself faithful” (Nehemiah 9:8). God himself called Abraham “my friend” (Isaiah 41:8).

Who was this man who willingly left a comfortable life to homestead in a strange land? And why did God promise to bless the whole world through him?

Abraham grew up in pagan Mesopotamia. During his early adult years, his father, Terah, took Abraham (then called Abram) and his young bride Sarai, westward toward Canaan. They got no farther than a town named Haran, however, and settled there, on the banks of a tributary of the Euphrates River.

Many years later, God called the 75-year-old Abraham to “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). Abraham immediately got up and “went without knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). Because Abraham trusted God and obeyed him, the Lord gave Abraham an astonishing promise that continues to bless and shape the world today:

“I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:2-3)

Despite Sarai’s inability to have children (11:30), God promised Abraham that his descendants would become as numerous as the stars in the night sky—and Abraham “believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith” (15:6). In this way Abraham became the chief biblical example of a man who banked his whole future on the Lord’s promises. In the apostle Paul’s words, Abraham “was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises” (Romans 4:21).

Abraham is the chief biblical example of a man who banked his entire future on God’s promises.

Did this make him perfect? Did Abraham’s strong faith keep him from ever stepping out of God’s will? Far from it. The Bible forthrightly tells us, for example, that fear of a powerful ruler drove Abraham to lie about his relationship to his wife—not once, but twice (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

Abraham and his wife also struggled when God seemed to delay keeping his promise. After ten years went by and they still had no son, they agreed to “help God out” by using a surrogate mother named Hagar. Nine months later, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn son—but it was not God’s intention to honor his promise in this way (16:1-16). Not until another 14 years passed did God enable Sarah to have a son, Isaac, and so the promised child was finally born to a man who “figured his body was as good as dead” (Romans 4:19).

Abraham, perhaps more than any other Old Testament figure, shows us what a life of faith looks like. When we live by faith, we “share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith” (Galatians 3:9).

THE POINT: Faith means believing—and acting—on the promises of God.

Abraham Didn't Stop to Ask Directions

Genesis 12:1-9

GOD GAVE ABRAHAM an unusual assignment: “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

Abraham (who was going by the name Abram at the time) didn’t wait around for God to give him a detailed map and itinerary. And back then, they didn’t have GPS technology to pinpoint their location.

Instead, Abraham told his wife and family to pack up and hit the road without asking for further directions. “Abram departed as the LORD had instructed,” says Genesis 12:4.

For centuries, women have been criticizing men who set out on a trip without consulting a map and refuse to stop and ask for help. Is it possible that this near-universal male trait is ancient Abraham’s legacy to modern man?

Perhaps, but there’s a bigger message to be found by examining Abraham’s travel habits. More than anything else, he took God at his word. He believed God, and he based his life on that belief.

That’s why the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews praises Abraham as a model of faith. “It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8).

That doesn’t mean women are always wrong when they ask men if they know where they’re going. But there may be times in a man’s life when he must follow God into uncharted territory.

and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor’s brother Haran.)³⁰ But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram’s wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran’s child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there.³² Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

12 The Call of Abram

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse

those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.”* And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There

11:32 Some ancient versions read *145 years*; compare 11:26 and 12:4. 12:7 Hebrew *seed*.

12:4 This verse indicates the beginning of Abram’s radical obedience to God. Having discovered God’s will, Abram became willing to do what God’s plan required of him. Our spiritual renewal begins when we learn to seek God’s will and follow it without reservation.

Too Close to the Edge

A LOT OF MEN today like to live on the edge. Tired of routine and bored with a seat-belted culture, they seek out the daring, the daunting, and the dangerous.

Lot would have felt right at home with guys like this. But when he applied this attitude to his spiritual life, he paid a tremendous price.

Lot grew up in the care of his grandfather, Terah, after his father died. When Terah moved his family to Haran, Lot went along, and when Abraham and Sarah left for the Promised Land, Lot accompanied them (Genesis 11:28, 31; 12:4).

Both Lot and Abraham prospered along the way, and soon Abraham had to say to his nephew, in essence, “Boy, this town ain’t big enough for the both of us. Which way do you want to go?” (13:8-9). Lot looked over his options, then took his livestock in the direction of a town named Sodom.

Yes, *that* Sodom. As in, “Sodom and Gomorrah.”

We notice a sad progression in Lot’s fascination with living on the edge. At first he lives in tents outside the city. Then he owns a house inside the city walls. And before we know it, we see him sitting at the entrance to the city (19:1), an indication of Lot’s importance and high status in the community. Lot seems to have embraced Sodom’s evil culture—even though “the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD” (13:13).

There is a sad progression in Lot’s fascination with living on the edge.

Eventually God decided to put an end to Sodom. He sent two angels to drag Lot and his family out of the doomed city. Lot tried to warn his two future sons-in-law of their peril, but they laughed at him and assumed he was joking. As zero hour approached, Lot hesitated and tried to delay his departure; finally, the angels literally grabbed his wrist and forced him to leave, along with his wife and two daughters.

And even when the angels told him to flee to the mountains,

Lot tried to negotiate a better deal: “I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there. . . . See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead” (19:19, 20). During their flight, Lot’s wife disobeyed the angels’ instructions and looked back at the home they were leaving. Her refusal to let go of her life in sinful Sodom was instantly and severely punished as God turned her into a pillar of salt (19:26).

Soon after Sodom and Gomorrah went up in smoke, Lot took his two daughters to live in a cave. Shortly thereafter, the girls decide to carry on their family line. But with no other men around, they faithlessly chose to get Lot drunk and into bed with each of them. (You didn’t think the Bible would mention incest?) The girls gave birth to illegitimate sons who founded two nations, Moab and Ammon, which would ultimately harass Israel for centuries to come.

That’s what can happen when you live too fast and too dangerously. And keep in mind that Lot was a *believer*. Peter calls him “a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him” (2 Peter 2:7).

Even a man like Lot can be seduced by the flash and excitement of living on the edge. But beware! The drop-off may lie closer than you think.

THE POINT: When you live close to the edge, you’re only a pebble away from falling.

he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’ ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

13 Abram and Lot Separate

So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ²(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) ³From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

⁵Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! ⁹The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks

12:10 We may wonder what Abram expected the Promised Land to be like. In this passage, we see that he arrived to find the land ravaged by famine. It probably wasn’t what he had expected or hoped for, but it was the place that God had intended for him and his descendants. There will be times when things are difficult. We may need to do things that we are not comfortable doing. But we need to follow God—even when his plan doesn’t lead us down the paths we had expected or hoped for.

12:11-13 The lie that Abram told here showed that he lacked faith in God. He didn’t believe that God would protect him, so he took things into his own hands. We may feel that a little lie is justified if it is intended to protect something important to us. We may even succeed in getting away with it for a while, but all lies reap long-term consequences. It is best to trust God to protect us as we tell the truth. The God of truth will stand with us as we dare to speak the truth.

13:5-11 A conflict developed between the families of Abram and Lot over pastureland for their flocks. To strengthen the strained family relationship, Abram offered Lot first choice of the land. Abram realized that people were more important than possessions, so he sacrificed his right to the best land to maintain harmony between their families. We need to learn this important lesson: Our relationships are more important than the things we own.

13:11-13 One bad choice often leads to another. The choices Lot made here and in the following chapters led him toward his later fall. Here, he selfishly chose the best land and the easy lifestyle that would accompany it. In 13:12-13, he chose to move closer to the wicked city of Sodom. In 19:1-18, he chose to become an important man in a wicked place. In 19:30-38, his fall reached its final depths as he had incestuous relations with his daughters. We need to think ahead, reflecting on the probable consequences of our present decisions.

and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹²So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants* as a permanent possession. ¹⁶And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! ¹⁷Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

14 Abram Rescues Lot

About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ²fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in

Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea*). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashtheroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.* ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram’s nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

13:15 Hebrew *seed*; also in 13:16. 14:1 Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. 14:3 Hebrew *Salt Sea*. 14:8 Hebrew *Siddim Valley* (see 14:3); also in 14:10.

SPOTLIGHT

ABRAM HITS THE ROAD

Abram and his clan walked from Ur to Haran (600 miles), on to Canaan (400 miles), then down to Egypt (325 miles), and back to Canaan again. A comparable hike today:



Childless and Hopeless

Genesis 16 and 19:30-38

GOD MADE A solemn promise to Abraham and Sarah that he would give them a child. He promised that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

But by the time Abraham and Sarah had reached the age of rocking chairs and walkers, they still hadn't been given a child.

Like many contemporary couples who experience difficulty conceiving, Abraham and Sarah probably went through their share of sadness, suffering, and self-doubts. Had God really promised them a child? If so, whose fault was it that no child had come?

Eventually, Sarah decided to take matters into her own hands. She had Abraham sleep with her servant Hagar, who gave birth to a son named Ishmael. By the time Abraham and Sarah's own son, Isaac, was born a few years later, this family's storyline was already more complicated than a soap opera.

Today, Jews consider themselves descendants of Isaac, while Arabs consider themselves descendants of Ishmael. Some have suggested that today's geopolitical tensions stretch back to Sarah's impatience to have a child.

You would think this experience would serve as a lesson. But some of Abraham's family members made similar errors later on. Jacob's wives convinced him to sleep with their servants to produce children, and his family became so dysfunctional that eventually ten of his sons sold their brother Joseph into slavery. Lot's daughters became so desperate for children that they slept with their own father, producing two more ethnic groups that tormented the people of Israel for centuries.

It is dangerous to lose faith in God and take matters into our own hands.

¹³ But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴ When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵ There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

¹⁷ After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸ And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,* brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹ Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

²² Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ ²⁴ I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

14:18 Hebrew *El-Elyon*; also in 14:19, 20, 22.

14:14-16 A number of important character traits emerge as we examine Abram's prompt military action. He proved himself to be a man of courage, always ready to act when the situation demanded it. He was willing to give up certain luxuries in order to follow the plan God had laid out for him. These are important traits for us to emulate as we seek to maintain spiritual gains.

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WHAT'S THE POINT QUICK REFERENCE LIST

- Genesis** God created people to have a relationship with him.
- Exodus** God loves his people enough to demand holiness.
- Leviticus** God pays attention to detail.
- Numbers** The road to God's best may not be short.
- Deuteronomy** On your way to a great future, don't ignore the past.
- Joshua** To be a winner, listen to God and show a lot of courage because God is with you.
- Judges** Without the Lord, today's victory won't last long.
- Ruth** God reverses tragedy for his people.
- 1 Samuel** God blesses the man who serves him 100 percent.
- 2 Samuel** Even a superstar can shoot himself in the foot.
- 1 Kings** If leaders don't listen to God, they'll wish they had.
- 2 Kings** Men become like what they worship.
- 1 Chronicles** A godly man can achieve much.
- 2 Chronicles** Those who rely on the Lord make a huge difference in life.
- Ezra** Time in the Word and in prayer is time well spent.
- Nehemiah** Starting all over is hard—but not impossible.
- Esther** God enjoys setting up dramatic results.
- Job** When your life explodes, trust is more important than logic.
- Psalms** God deserves our greatest passion.
- Proverbs** Life is complex—play it smart.
- Ecclesiastes** The externals aren't as great as they look.
- Song of Songs** The love of a good woman is worth cultivating.
- Isaiah** Sin is serious, but God will forgive and restore.
- Jeremiah** When nothing goes right, keep doing right.
- Lamentations** It's no fun to be humbled.
- Ezekiel** When God's favor is squandered, the result is not pretty.
- Daniel** A godly man can thrive under pressure.
- Hosea** God goes the extra mile to rescue his own.
- Joel** Judgment is coming—but so is the Holy Spirit.
- Amos** It takes more than "religion" to impress God.
- Obadiah** Grudges eventually backfire.
- Jonah** It's not smart to dodge God's directive.
- Micah** God is not a soft touch in the face of disobedience.
- Nahum** One generation's revival guarantees nothing for the next.
- Habakkuk** God's justice system can get a little complicated—but it's always perfect.
- Zephaniah** Actions lead to consequences.
- Haggai** God isn't content to play second string.

- Zechariah** The coming Messiah gave Israel a reason for hope.
- Malachi** Don't "play games" with God.
- Matthew** God kept his many promises to send us a Savior.
- Mark** Jesus does more than talk; he makes things happen.
- Luke** Jesus cares about the individual.
- John** This Man is like no other. What will you do with him?
- Acts** The unstoppable grace of God in Christ Jesus is for every race and nation.
- Romans** Everybody has offended God—but God has a solution.
- 1 Corinthians** Sex, money, and power—they all must yield to God's control.
- 2 Corinthians** A tough man can endure tough times.
- Galatians** Working to impress God doesn't work.
- Ephesians** Your potential is huge. Reach for it.
- Philippians** Run for the highest prize.
- Colossians** Christ is Number One—so live like it.
- 1 Thessalonians** Hang tough; your Master is coming back.
- 2 Thessalonians** While you're waiting for the Second Coming . . . get to work!
- 1 Timothy** Character is more important than talent.
- 2 Timothy** Run a strong race and finish well.
- Titus** Give the gospel a good name in the world.
- Philemon** Take time to help the guy who's messed up.
- Hebrews** Jesus is the best. Never take your eyes off of him.
- James** Real Christians don't just stand around.
- 1 Peter** God's people won't always be popular—and that's okay.
- 2 Peter** Don't yield to critics and con men.
- 1 John** Love God intensely, and the rest of life straightens out.
- 2 John** Not every polished speaker knows what he's talking about.
- 3 John** Be a gracious, yet discerning, host.
- Jude** Don't put up with sloppy teaching.
- Revelation** In the end, the Great One wins.