



TRACING THE THREAD

A 52-WEEK JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

YM360



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WHAT IS THIS BOOK ALL ABOUT?

Put simply, this book is a story. Or better yet, it's a guide to the story.

Do you know the story of the Bible? Maybe the better question is whether or not you even realized the Bible was a story. The Bible is the story of God's mission to rescue us, His children, from the separation and death caused by our sin. It's a powerful story that covers thousands of years and thousands of people. Maybe you knew that already.

BUT MAYBE YOU DIDN'T.

The truth is that many students think the Bible is a collection of verses and lists, mixed in with a bunch of rules and stories. Most of these stories are awesome. Some seem kind of weird. Most people are familiar with the Psalms and the few books about Jesus. And they may know that the Apostle Paul wrote a bunch of letters. Oh, and there's Genesis and Revelation. But other than that, they don't grasp the connective threads that hold the story together.

Does this describe your understanding of the Bible?

If it does, don't worry. You're not alone. A lot of young people (and adults) don't get the big-picture story of the Bible. And maybe it's because you've never been told any differently. Maybe you don't understand the story because it's never been shown to you. Well, that is about to change. Because that's what this book is all about.

The book you hold in your hands will guide you through the story of the Bible. Not only that, it will help you pull out some very valuable truths from everything that you'll be reading. You'll be reading the big-picture story of the Bible and applying it to your life. In the process, you'll learn more about God and about yourself. You and your world will be changed as a result.

The Bible's story is amazing. It's God's story, recorded so that we would know God and His ways. Get ready for an awesome journey.

HOW DOES THIS BOOK WORK?

FOR STUDENTS

5 DAYS A WEEK, 52 WEEKS

The goal of this journal is to teach you the story of the Bible and how it relates to your life. It accomplishes this by providing five devotions for each week of the year. That gives you a couple days a week to catch up, if need be.

GO AT YOUR OWN SPEED

You may be reading this as part of a group with other students in your church, and an adult leader. If so, you'll want to stay on track as best as possible. But if you're doing it on your own, feel free to go at your own speed. It may take more than a year to get through the book. There's nothing wrong with that.

HAVE A BIBLE AND A PEN HANDY

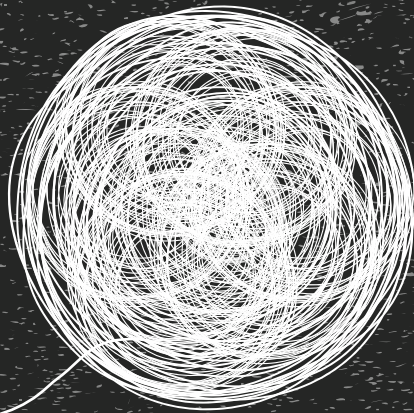
Borrow a real Bible or download a Bible app on your phone or tablet . . . whatever you do, it's important that you have one for this journey you're on. This book uses the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible. You can use the ESV, or another translation if you want. And make sure you have a pen or pencil. You'll need it!

HOW DOES THIS BOOK WORK?

FOR ADULTS

The students who will be working through this book are taking on a big task, one that many adults have never even attempted. They will be more successful at sticking with this journal if you are there to offer encouragement and support. Don't be afraid to take this journey with the students in your life, whether you're a youth worker or a parent. You'll both benefit greatly from it.

This book was produced in conjunction with the Bible study curriculum, *The Thread*. This book is meant to provide a parallel, more in-depth journey through the big-picture story of the Bible. If you're a youth worker teaching *The Thread* curriculum, in every lesson you'll notice reminders at the end to tell students which weeks to read. However, this book was also designed as a stand-alone piece, completely independent of *The Thread* Bible study curriculum. It's a great resource whether you're using the curriculum or not.



LEARNING THE GOSPEL AS YOU GO

In this journal, you'll be learning the big-picture story of the Bible. But you also have the chance to learn the Gospel as you go. Do you know what the Gospel is? Could you define it?

The term gospel comes from the Greek phrase that means "good news." So, the Gospel is essentially the Good News of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the payment of our sins. That is, after all, really good news. But what does it have to do with the big-picture story of the Bible? Great question . . .

The Gospel is the fullest expression of God's grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. And if you begin to look for it, you see signs of the heart behind the Gospel all throughout the Bible. See, the Bible really is the story of God's desire to rescue us from the penalty of our sins, and to restore us to a perfect relationship with Him. As we read the Bible, we can see the thread of the Gospel weaving itself through the entire story of Scripture. It's pretty cool, actually.

One of the goals of this journal is to highlight where we see evidence of the Gospel as you read the Bible's story. You'll do this in the form of weekly memory verses.

On the first day of each week, you'll be challenged to memorize a verse or two of Scripture. Take this chance seriously. Being able to meditate on God's Word as you go through your day is a vital aspect of growing in your faith. And the best way to think about the Bible is to "hide it in your heart," as the psalmist says.

So, embrace the idea of learning the Bible more. You're about to get your first chance to do so.

WEEK



01

DAY 1

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.” (JOHN 1:1)

Have you ever wondered why the Bible is so big and what is actually in it? In the coming days, you will learn about the most important truth found in the Bible: The Gospel.

The term gospel comes from the Greek phrase that means “good news.” In Scripture, the Gospel is the good news of Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross for the payment of our sins. The Gospel is the fullest expression of God’s grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. But what does it have to do with the big-picture story of the Bible? Great question . . .

Many people think the Gospel can be boiled down to something you find in one of the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) or a certain passage in one of Paul’s letters. But the Gospel is so much more than that! And if you begin to look for it, you see signs of the heart behind the Gospel all throughout the Bible. The Bible really is the story of God’s desire to rescue us from the penalty of our sins and to restore us to a perfect relationship with Him. As we read the Bible, we can see the thread of the Gospel weaving itself through the entire story of Scripture.

These devotions are meant to highlight where we see evidence of the Gospel throughout Scripture. Each week, you’ll do this in the form of memory verses.

On the first day of each week, you’ll be challenged to memorize a verse or two of Scripture. Take this opportunity seriously. Being able to meditate on God’s Word as you go through your day is a vital aspect of growing in your faith. And the best way to think about the Bible is to “hide it in your heart” (Read Psalm 119:11) by thinking about it throughout your week.

Today, memorize John 1:1.

It’s an important verse that speaks to the foundational role Jesus (the Word) played in creation.

01

DAY 2

“IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.” (GENESIS 1:1)

Read Genesis 1:1 again.

With these verses, the Bible comes to life and begins its long, winding journey from Genesis to Revelation. However, these words also speak to another beginning. These words speak to the beginning of all things. And who do you see in the middle of the action?

God.

The first four words of the Bible are “In the beginning God . . .” In the beginning, God was. And there was only God. Before anything else existed, God existed. Nothing created Him. He wasn’t born. He simply was. And even now, He simply is.

The same God that was before time and creation still exists today. He is active. He is moving in world affairs, in natural events, and in all circumstances. Most importantly for you, He is working in your life. The God who spoke everything into existence knows you, and even more amazingly, He loves you. He wants you to know and love Him more, too.

So, today, sit back and reflect on the awesomeness of God. Take a walk outside. Do you see trees? A sunset? Squirrels chasing one another around the sidewalk? His handiwork.

Something To Think About . . .

- Today, think about what it means that God created all things and that He chose to include you in His creation.

01

DAY 3

“THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM AND VOID, AND DARKNESS WAS OVER THE FACE OF THE DEEP. AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS HOVERING OVER THE FACE OF THE WATERS. AND GOD SAID, ‘LET THERE BE LIGHT,’ AND THERE WAS LIGHT.” (GENESIS 1:2-3)

There are times when we read the Bible, and we struggle to wrap our brains around what we’ve read. This is due to the fact that the Bible was written thousands of years ago in a cultural context different from ours. We occasionally have to work to find the central truth of what we’re reading and then find out how to apply it to our lives. But in many cases, the point of the passage is so clear that we can be blown away by what we read simply because God is overwhelmingly awesome to our human brains.

Read Genesis 1:2-3.

Create an image of these verses in your mind. A time before light? What do you think the “surface of the deep” means? The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as alive and active, in motion, hovering, existing, being . . . Hovering over the waters? What waters? And then BOOM! God says, “let there be light,” and there was light.

It’s human nature to want to understand things. We aren’t comfortable with the unknown. This comes from the farfetched belief that if we know all there is to know about something, we can somehow control it. But God doesn’t work that way. While we can know a ton about God, we’ll never understand all of Him. He’s too awesome for that. And we will certainly never be in charge of Him.

When we read verses like these, it’s a great reminder that we don’t have all the answers. And that’s okay. That is part of what makes God majestic and wonderful! In these moments, it’s okay to sit back and marvel at who God is and how amazing His ways are. It’s actually a healthy part of knowing and loving God.

Something To Think About . . .

- Try doing this today. Be amazed by God. Go to Him in prayer and tell Him how awesome He is!

01

DAY 4

“GOD CALLED THE DRY LAND EARTH, AND THE WATERS THAT WERE GATHERED TOGETHER HE CALLED SEAS. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.” (GENESIS 1:10)

If someone lets you borrow something they value, what is your attitude toward it? For instance, maybe your friend lets you see their new phone. Hopefully, if you are a kind and considerate friend, you will not likely toss it back to her in the air. Since she values it, you value it. You respect the fact that this is a new, good thing, and you treat it with caution and care.

Read Genesis 1:6, 9-10.

This is a bit of a combination of what God did on days two and three of creation. The creation account pictures God crafting and shaping the Universe. The cool thing about the account is how often God steps back at the end of a day and summarizes the work He just did.

Throughout the creation account, God looks at His handiwork and proclaims it “good.” God was pleased with the work He did. Here’s a question you should ask yourself... how do you view God’s handiwork? What is your attitude toward the world God has made?

God values His creation. That includes the Earth, animals, and other people. As we said at the beginning of this devotion, you most likely try to value the things of value to people you care about. So, when you think about it, the way you treat God’s creation (Earth, animals, other people, etc.) says a lot about how you feel about Him.

Something To Think About . . .

- Do you see yourself as someone who tries to take care of the world around you? If it’s God’s creation, shouldn’t this be something you are intentional about?
- Do you look at other people and see what God sees? If not, what keeps you from doing so?

01

DAY 5

“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE. IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.” (GENESIS 1:27)

What’s your most valuable possession? Is it a piece of technology, such as a phone or a gaming system? Is it your car? Or is it something more sentimental, like a gift given to you by someone you love? Whatever it is, visualize it for a moment. Once you have it in your mind, ask yourself these questions: Why is it so valued? What feelings do you have about it? What would you feel like if you were suddenly without it?

Read Genesis 1:26-27.

We’re nearing the end of the creation account in Genesis 1. Before He was finished, God made Adam and Eve. There are a couple of things to note here. First, all of humanity was made in God’s image. No other part of God’s creation is described this way. We are unique in this aspect, and it hints at our extreme value to God. While all of God’s creation is beautiful, humans are the crowning achievement of God’s creative work. Also, if you were to look down a little further in the passage, you’d see that when God looked back over all creation, with humans in the mix, He pronounced it very good. God was pleased.

Sometimes, we can allow ourselves to give in to shame, and we develop a hatred of ourselves. When we make mistakes, do dumb things, blow opportunities, or act like dorks, we can be our own worst critics. Then to hide this hatred of ourselves, we take it out on others, or we keep ourselves away from opportunities to worship God. But the fact of the matter is this: God loves you immensely. You were made in His image. He created you with Himself in mind. If you ever find yourself filled with shame or self-hatred, remember that you are an image bearer of God.

Something To Think About . . .

- What causes you to feel down or to have a low opinion of yourself?
- What does it do to your self-worth knowing God created you and loves you unendingly?