

The background is a textured, abstract composition of various shades of green and blue, resembling a watercolor or digital paint effect. A white, hand-drawn thread-like line meanders across the center, looping around the word 'thread' and passing through the word 'THE'.

# TRACING THE thread

**A 52-WEEK JOURNEY THROUGH  
THE STORY OF THE BIBLE**



## **Tracing The Thread: A 52-Week Journey Through The Story of The Bible**

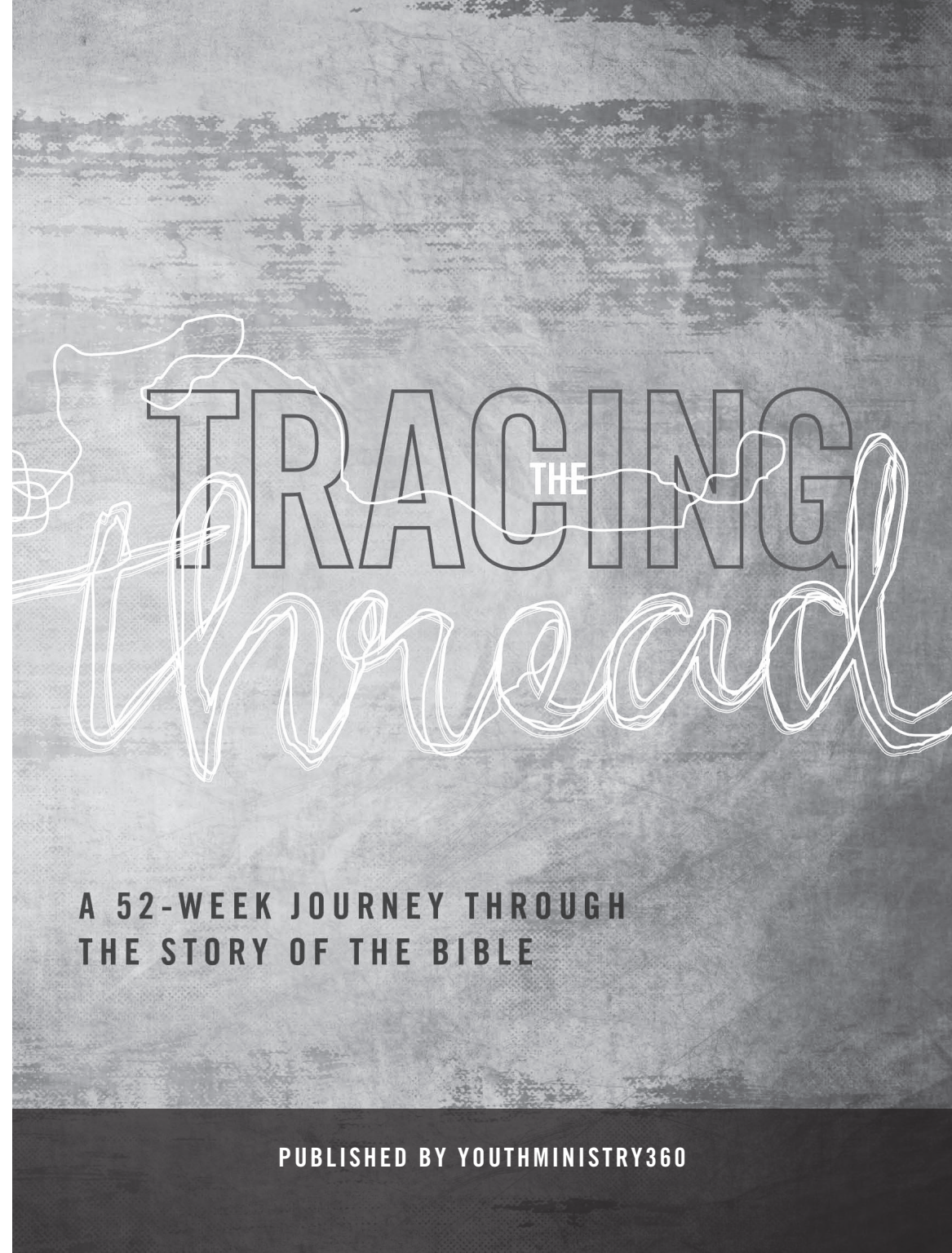
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**A 52-WEEK JOURNEY THROUGH  
THE STORY OF THE BIBLE**

**PUBLISHED BY YOUTHMINISTRY360**



## 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 characters. Maybe you knew that already.

### BUT MAYBE YOU DIDN'T.

The truth is that many teenagers 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 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, it's OK. You're not alone. A lot of teenagers (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, don't worry. 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 the stories 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  
TEENAGERS

### 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 teenagers 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, use one Online, 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 New International Version (NIV) of the Bible. You can use the NIV, 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 teenagers 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 teenagers 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 one-year 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 a youth group 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.



# DISCOVERING GOD AS YOU GO

The cool thing about God is that He makes Himself known to us through the Bible. In the Bible, we see that God has various characteristics. Just like you have different characteristics that make you who you are, so does God. The difference? God is perfect in all His ways. He is perfectly loving, perfectly just, and so on.

We want you to know more about God and His character. As you read this journal, these icons will let you know that the story you're reading is a great example of one of God's characteristics. (This isn't a complete list of God's characteristics, but it's a good start.) When you see an icon in one of your devotions, flip back over to this page and read the paragraph that corresponds with the icon.



## GOD IS LOVING

God's love is awesome. The Bible says that God very literally IS love (1 John 4:8)! God sent His Son to save us from our sins all because He loves us (John 3:16). God's love is unconditional and unfailing. His love is the foundation of our relationship with Him.



## GOD IS HOLY

There is no one like God. He is holy. To be holy is to be perfect. It is to be set apart as different from everything else. God and His ways are far beyond anything we can imagine (Is. 55:9). And yet, He still loves us and wants a relationship.



## GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

There is nothing God can't do. He created all things out of nothing simply by speaking (Gen. 1), and the world around you is evidence of His awesome power (Ps. 19:1). No one is His equal (Jer. 10:6).



## GOD IS SOVEREIGN

This means God is King. He rules over all people everywhere (Ps. 22:28). Nothing can keep His desires from being accomplished (Ps. 115:3). His rule also covers events and circumstances. In other words, nothing happens without God's will allowing it (Pr. 16:33).



## GOD IS FAITHFUL

God never gives up on us. He is always true to His promises (Ps. 33:4). He will never leave us alone (Ps. 9:10). His faithfulness doesn't depend on our actions.



## GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

There is nothing that's beyond God's knowledge. God knows everything that's being done, and everything that has been done, by all people, everywhere, throughout all time (Prov. 15:3). But God knows us as individuals, too. God knows all His children (1 Cor. 8:3) and cares about the details of our lives (Matt. 6:32).



## GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

To be righteous is to be good. Perfectly good (Ps. 25:8). And God is righteous! All His actions are born out of His goodness (Jer. 9:24). There is no wrongdoing in Him. And God is incapable of leading us to wrongdoing, as well (James 1:13).



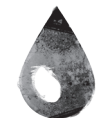
## GOD IS JUST

God is a god of justice (Ps. 33:5). All sin is rebellion against God, and His punishment is perfect (Ps. 51:1-4). God's holiness means that He must punish our sin with death. Thankfully, in His grace, God allowed Jesus to pay the penalty our sin earned for us.



## GOD IS FORGIVING

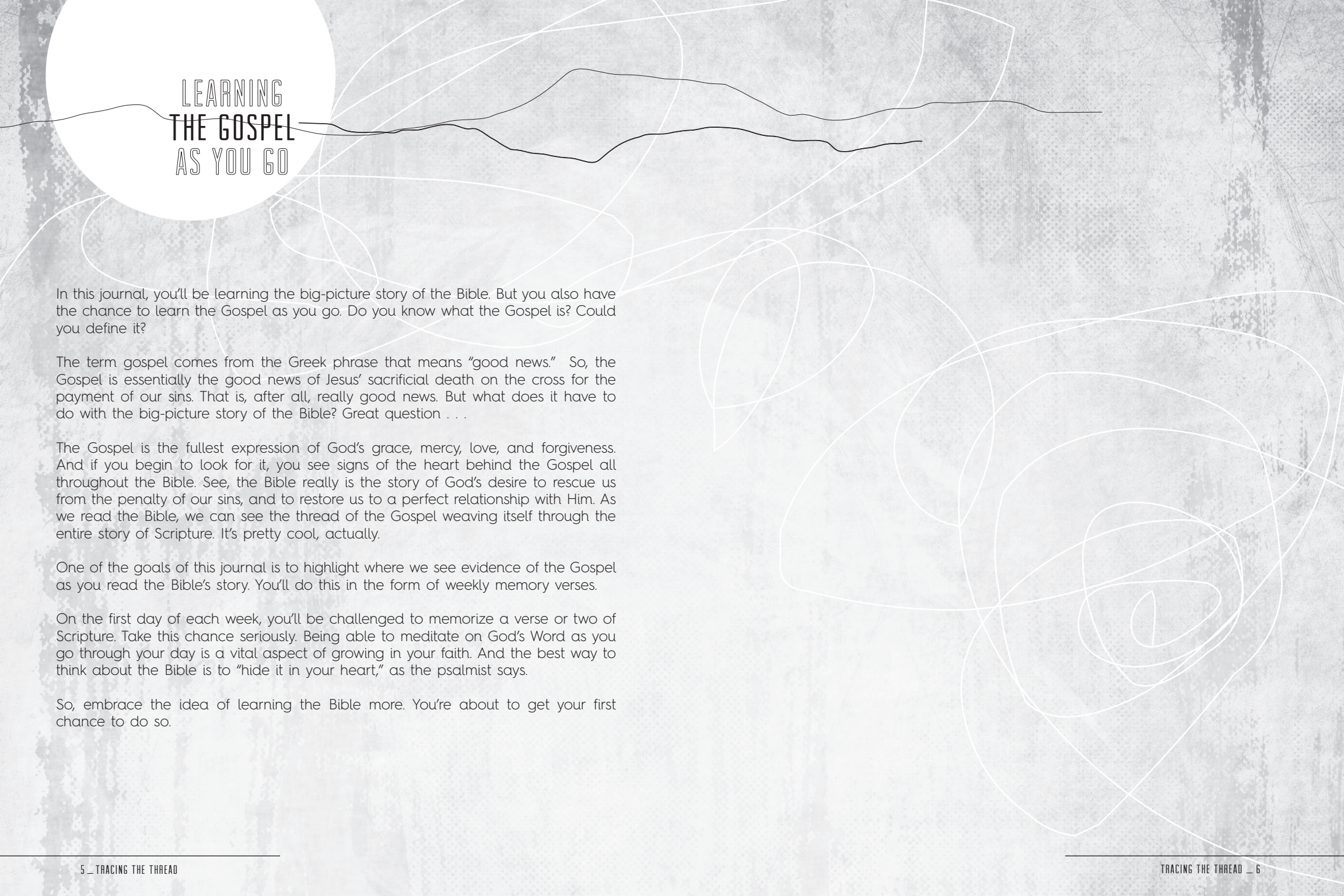
God doesn't have to forgive our sins. He would be within His rights to punish us any way He saw fit. But in His great love, God chose to provide a way to satisfy His judgment while providing life for us (Eph. 2:1-10). Through faith in Christ, God offers forgiveness from sin.



## GOD IS COMPASSIONATE

Scripture is clear: God is compassionate (Ps. 103:8-14). He hears the cries of the sad, the poor, and the needy. His heart breaks for the lost (Mt. 9:36). And He loves to see us, His children, show compassion to others (Mt. 25:31-46).





## 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 1

### WEEK 1, DAY 1

**“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD,  
AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND  
THE WORD WAS GOD.” – JOHN 1:1**

So, this is your first chance in this book to memorize a verse of Scripture. If you read page 5, this is not a surprise. (If you didn't read page 5, go read it now. It will make more sense if you do.) This is your first chance to trace the Gospel thread through a specific part of Scripture.

This week you'll be looking at parts of the creation account. The cool thing about John 1:1 is that it puts Jesus present when God spoke the world into being. Our understanding of the trinity teaches us that Jesus is literally God. Jesus was with God the Father and the Holy Spirit at creation (more on the Holy Spirit on Day 3). Jesus loved you enough to create you, and then later, loved you enough to die for you. That's a lot of love!

So, let's memorize John 1:1. You can do this! One of the best ways to memorize a verse is the 5-5-5 method. Read the verse five times slowly and, if you can, out loud. Listen to yourself read it. Now, write the verse five times. See if you can do parts of it from memory. Then, finally, see if you can say it five times out loud without looking. You'll be surprised how easy it is to learn a verse this way.

Hiding God's Word in your heart is an awesome way to draw closer to God. Give it your best effort today. You won't be sorry!



## WEEK 1, DAY 2

**"IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED  
THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH."  
- GENESIS 1:1**

Is it possible to pack more wonder into fewer words?

Read Genesis 1:1 again. With these verses, the Bible comes to life, starting 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 look who we see in the middle of the action . . .

God.

Look at the first four words of the Bible. "In the beginning God . . ." In the beginning, God. In the beginning, God was. And there was only God. Before anything else existed, God did. Nothing created Him. He wasn't born. He just was. And He just is.

The same God that pre-existed time and creation exists today. But He doesn't merely exist. He is active. He is active in world affairs, in natural events, and in all circumstances. Most importantly for you, He is active in your life. The God who spoke everything into being knows you and loves you. He wants you to know and love Him more, too.

So, today, just sit back and reflect on the awesomeness of God. Look around you. Those trees? That sunset? Your life? His handiwork. Today, think about what it means that God created all things and that He chose to include you in His creation.



**THIS DEVOTION SPEAKS TO GOD'S POWER. GO TO  
PAGE 4 FOR A DESCRIPTION OF THIS ATTRIBUTE.**

## WEEK 1, 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 that we read the Bible and we struggle to wrap our brains around what we've read. Sometimes this is due to the fact that the Bible was written thousands of years ago in a cultural context different from ours. We have to work to find the central truth of what we're reading and apply it to our lives. But sometimes, we can be blown away by what we read simply because God is overwhelmingly awesome to our human brains. Genesis 1:2-3 is one of those times.

Read Genesis 1:2-3. Can you imagine what this is describing? A time before light? What do you think the "surface of the deep" means? Sounds a little scary. 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. Amazing.

It's human nature to want to understand things. We aren't comfortable with the unknown. We also like to be in charge. 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'll never be in charge of Him. He'll always be above us. And that's OK.

When we read verses like these, it's perfectly OK to be blown away by them. We don't have to have all the answers. It's part of what makes God majestic and wonderful. In these moments, it's OK to sit back and just marvel at who God is and how amazing His ways are. It's actually a healthy part of knowing and loving God. So today, do that. Just be amazed by God. Go to Him in prayer and tell Him how awesome He is.



## WEEK 1, 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 let's you borrow or use something they value, what is your attitude toward it? You're pretty careful with it, right? For instance, if your friend lets you see their new phone, you're not likely to toss it back to her in the air, are you? No. Because she values it, you value it. You respect the fact that this is a new, good thing.

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's work 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. God looked at the order of things created and said, “Nice work.” Here's a random question you might not have ever considered: how do you view God's handiwork? What is your attitude toward the world God has made? Interesting question, isn't it?

God values His creation. That includes the earth, the animals, and other people. As we said at the beginning of this devotion, you most likely try to value the things that people you care about value. The way you treat God's creation 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 environment? If it's God's creation, shouldn't this be something you are intentional about?
- Do you look at other people and see the goodness that God sees in them? If not, what keeps you from doing so?

## WEEK 1, 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? Maybe it's a gift given to you by someone you love. Whatever it is, visualize it. Think about it. What feelings does it evoke in you? Why is it so valued? What would you feel like if you were suddenly without it?

Now read Genesis 1:26-27. We're nearing the end of the creation account in Genesis 1. And before He was finished, God made Adam and Eve. There are a couple of things to note here. First, as verse 27 states, we were made in God's image. No other part of God's creation was 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.

We can be guilty of having a low opinion of ourselves. When we make mistakes, do dumb things, blow opportunities, or just act like dorks, we can be our own worst critics. We don't like the way we look, or feel, and we get down on ourselves. The fact of the matter is this: God loves you immensely. You were made in His image. He created you with Himself in mind. That should make you smile.

### **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 that God created you and loves you with an unending love?