

Welcome

To a special devotional and Bible reading plan.

If I were to ask Bible believing Christians whether or not they had ever read through the entire New Testament, only one in three would answer yes. You can imagine how few I would find who had read through the entire Old and New Testaments. We know the importance of studying our manual for life, but it often becomes something we put off doing.

By setting aside just 15 minutes each day we can read through the entire bible in a year. Some of us set aside that much time each day to read through the newspaper, or through a favorite magazine or book, or watch our favorite sitcom or news show.

We know there are a variety of options for each of us as to how we can achieve reading through the Bible, yet “this devotional is specifically designed with the purpose of helping you get through this Bible this year”. This reading devotional takes a fresh approach and walks through the Bible chronologically (in the order each event occurred). It also concentrates on a new theme each week and gives much to think about.

The passages are laid out in an easy-to-follow manner and the devotionals themselves maintain a very practical and encouraging approach. Our quotes come from the New Living Translation, a good interpretive work, making each passage fresh and contemporary.

Many have used this devotional and have accomplished their goal of reading through the Bible in a year, many for the first time. More than anything, we just want to encourage each of you to make reading through God’s Word a priority this year. And may you be encouraged as God’s Word touches your life. “For the word of God is living and active.” (Hebrews 4:12)

-Pastor Mike Fast

“I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.” —Psalm 119:47

This Devotional was written by Pastor Mike Fast with some notes and thoughts from Pastor David Curtis at EBC Dallas. My goal was to encourage all of us to set aside 15 minutes each day to read through the Bible this coming year. The short devotional will help keep us on track, as it lists the chronological reading passage for the day, and includes a devotional that will correlate with your day's reading, and each week will have a theme and thought to make it more practical and personal.

You can get a new set each week on our website, but if you or a friend don't have internet access often, then make sure to get a hard copy from the church office, or you could make your own three-ring binder full of devotionals for the year.

Our website:

www.melrosecommunitychurch.org

Our app is on the play store or apple store

Week 1

January 1-7

Week 1 – January 1st – 7th (or whenever you choose to start)

This week you will read Genesis 1-24, along with a little bit of the genealogies from 1 Chronicles. Each day we are going to look at the issue/theme of faith in more detail. We will talk about our need for faith in God, and we will look at examples of faith in the lives of Abel, Noah and Abraham. My prayer is that, by the end of this week, your faith would be strengthened and maybe even challenged a little bit.

Day 1 – January 1st

Read Genesis 1-3. “Paradise Lost”

God’s creation was perfect in every way, shape, and form, “God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was excellent in every way...” (Gen. 1:31)

I have often pondered what life would be like if Adam and Eve had chosen obedience that day in the garden. I would imagine that Satan would have shown up the next day to tempt them again. After all, he is the deceiver and father of lies; he is in the business of tempting mankind.

However, no matter how many times I ponder this thought, the story never changes. On that fateful day, sin and death entered into the entire human race (Rom. 5:12). But, by the grace of God that is not the whole story. In fact, you need not read past today’s reading to find hope for mankind. In God’s judgment upon the serpent is a foreshadowing of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death at the cross. The offspring or seed of the woman that will crush the serpent is the first mention of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. So, reader, take hope. There is more to the story, oh, and please keep reading.

Day 2 – January 2nd

Genesis 4-6; 1 Chronicles 1:1-4. “Without faith it is Impossible to please God” – Hebrews 11:6

So why exactly was Abel’s offering accepted by God and not Cain’s offering? Some have argued that it is because Abel sacrificed an animal while Cain only brought produce of the ground. However, both grains and animals are used in the sacrificial system of the old covenant.

To find out why God accepted one and not the other, we have to go to the New Testament book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 11:4 we see that it was a matter of faith that made Abel’s offering stand out. This issue of faith is one that comes up time and again in the scriptures. God is more concerned with our faith than with the externals of religion and public service. Certainly, Cain brought an offering for the same reason as Abel. However, for Abel, it was an expression of faith, but for Cain it was religious duty.

How do you approach the worship of God? Do you worship God from your heart because you have faith in His promises? Or do you worship out of duty or obligation or because someone is watching? May your worship be like that of Abel.

Day 3 – January 3rd

Genesis 7-10; 1 Chronicles 1:5-23. “Faith is believing without seeing”

Years ago, our family watched the animated movie Chicken Little. In that movie the lead character, Chicken Little, warns everyone in town that the sky is falling. Of course, he is ridiculed for taking a stand on this issue. I think Noah may have felt somewhat like Chicken Little. 2 Peter 2:5 says that, “Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment.” Can you imagine the response Noah would have received from these wicked people?

Noah had faith in God. He was unfazed by the critics. He was undaunted by the challenge of building such a large boat (without the help of Home Depot!). Noah was the only one who heeded God’s warning. Noah acted in faith. He didn’t need God to prove anything. He believed in God’s Word and acted accordingly.

Are you willing to listen to God’s Word and act accordingly? Or are you still waiting for God to prove himself? Exercising faith means to take God at His Word and act appropriately. May you be doers of the Word and not merely hearers of it.

Day 4 – January 4th

Genesis 11-14; 1 Chronicles 1:24-27. “If you say go, we will go”

In church, we sing a song with the line; “If you say go, we will go.” As I think about what God asked Abram to do, I thought about that song. Like many of you, I am prone to sometimes sing worship music without allowing the meaning of the words to sink in. Abram, as he was known at this point, embodied what this song is all about. God gave Abram a directive to go to a foreign land. He didn’t ask Abram to go or if he even wanted to go. God commanded Abram to go.

Amazingly enough, Abram responded in faith and obeyed God’s command. Genesis 12:1 reveals some of the magnitude of this move, “leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s house...” Basically, God told Abram to abandon all that he knew – every source of security and comfort and to stake his whole life on God.

It is hard to imagine a greater example of faith. If God were to tell you to go, would you go? Are you willing to step out in faith and stake your life on God and his promises? May you have faith like Abram to do just that.

Day 5 – January 5th

Genesis 15-17. "A crisis of faith"

Have you ever found yourself really struggling in your faith?

If so, you have something in common with Abram. In spite of God's powerful promises and constant provision for his needs, Abram was struggling to believe that God's promises would materialize. God had already promised that Abram would "become the father of a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). However, after ten years (16:3), Abram was growing impatient (15:2-3).

Even though the Lord reassured Abram of his promises, Abram decided to take matters into his own hands. This led to Abram fathering a child with Hagar. Clearly, in the chapters we have read today, Abram was struggling with the Lord's timing.

Are you struggling like Abram? Trust in the Lord's timing. Exercise patience and remember what the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Day 6 – January 6th

Genesis 18:1-21:7. "The Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials" – 2 Peter 2:9

You wouldn't know by today's reading that Lot "was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day" (2 Peter 2:8). Peter gives us that insight to Lot's heart. Have you ever felt like Lot? Are you worn down and beyond frustration with the world around you? Well, if you are, then fear not. As the verse that serves as our title for today says, the Lord knows how to rescue people. All hope is not lost because God will have the final say.

God provided a way of escape for Lot from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. God has also provided a way of escape for you from the wickedness of this world. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have the confidence in knowing that we will be with the Father when we die, or even better, when Jesus returns. So, reader, do not despair, if you have trusted in Christ, your day of escape is coming. You will only have to endure the wickedness of this world for a short season before you can enjoy eternity with God.

Day 7 – January 7th

Genesis 21-24. "Extreme Faith"

"I couldn't do it, I just couldn't do it," Abraham said to Sarah. "Whatever do you mean, Abraham?" she asked. "Well, God asked me to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering and I just couldn't do it," he said.

Aren't you glad your Bible doesn't read that way? I have often wondered if it were my faith being tested, how the story would have turned out. Abraham had an extreme faith in God. It wasn't that Abraham was calling God's bluff or knew it was only a test. No, he was ready to do exactly what God asked of Him. Hebrews 11:19 says, "Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again..."

Abraham had to trust God with Isaac's life. Are you willing to do the same? Now, God isn't asking you to physically sacrifice your life or the life of a loved one, but he is asking you to die to yourself and trust Him with your life.



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General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

Week 1—January 1st-7th

Genesis 1-24

This week's readings will cover the first 24 chapters of Genesis along with a small portion of the genealogies from 1 Chronicles. Each day we are going to look at the issue of faith in more detail. We will talk about our need for faith in God and we will look at examples of faith in the lives of Abel, Noah, and Abraham. My prayer is that, by the end of this week, your faith will be strengthened and maybe even challenged a little bit.

Bible Discussion Guide:

How do you define faith?

What examples of faith do we see in this week's readings?

Are there any of these examples that you particularly relate with?

Have you ever known someone who has what you would call extreme faith like Abraham?

What was it about their faith that would cause you to refer to it as extreme?

Read Genesis 22 as a group.

How was Abraham's faith tested?

How has your faith been tested?

How did you respond to the test?

What did you learn about God through that experience?

How has your faith been deepened as a result of the testing?

Are you having difficulty trusting God with a particular area in your life right now? Are you willing to share that struggle with your small group?

Why are you struggling with trusting God in this area?

How has God shown Himself to be trustworthy in similar areas in the past?

Personal application: You can express your renewed faith and trust in God for this area of your life right now.

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your faithfulness in all areas of my life. Please forgive me for not fully trusting you with _____. I truly desire to trust you in all areas of my life, please help my faith grow by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.