

THE MESSAGE
//REMIX

the
MESSAGETM
read, think, pray, live.



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Bringing Truth to Life
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EUGENE H. PETERSON
THE MESSAGE//REMIX
THE BIBLE IN
CONTEMPORARY
LANGUAGE

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THE MESSAGE REMIX: The Bible in Contemporary Language
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Editorial Team: Terry Behimer, Stephen Board, Janel Breitenstein, Patricia Miller, Glynes Northam

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INTRODUCTIONTHEMESSAGE

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE REMIX

There are a couple of things you may want to know as you take in these words—reading them, thinking over them, praying them, living them.

Accurate, But Readable.

The Message was paraphrased over a period of ten years, straight from the Bible's original languages (Greek and Hebrew). The idea of The Message isn't to water down the Bible, making it easier to digest. The idea is to make it readable—to put those ancient words that their users spoke and wrote every day into words that *you* speak and write every day.

Introductions.

You will find introductions from Eugene Peterson at the beginning of each book and section of the Bible (the Books of Moses, History, Wisdom, Prophets, New Testament). These aren't watered down either. They're geared to help you understand a little about the books' authors, the context of the books, and some of what God has used them to convey. Some of the words and concepts may be difficult to wrap your mind around, but don't be afraid to talk with someone you respect who's walking this path with you. The intros may peel back more of the layers of the Bible—help you to experience these all-powerful words on a different level or in a different dimension.

Verse Numbers.

One of the key distinctives of The Message is the lack of a verse number next to each verse. In Eugene's words, "I leave out verse numbers to encourage unimpeded reading (no Bibles had verse numbers for the first 1,500 years)." In order to help you read these words—think them, pray them, live them—we have included verse numbers

in the margins for each paragraph. Use this feature to allow God to use his words as he'd like to, rather than reading only the specific verse that you've chosen. Let God take the reins—teaching you, knowing you, and changing you.

LISTENING TO THE REMIX

Why Does A Two Thousand-year-old Book Still Matter?

We could give you the typical answers, answers that might ring true for some of the books that you read in English class, like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *The Catcher in the Rye*. These books stand as testimonies to their time. Some of them were catalysts of change in their day, or even years later. They offer a window into cultures long past, allowing us to understand, to learn. They're entertaining. They reveal perspectives a lot different from our own. And these are good reasons—for the Bible, too—making a case for why we should spend our increasingly scarce time reading old, old stuff. But people have survived without reading Shakespeare, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or Salinger. What if you're not really into classical literature?

With the Bible, the reasons get a lot better. This book isn't like any book that's ever been written. The Bible actually describes itself this way: "Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way" (2 Timothy 3). The bottom line is that the Bible has been radically changing people's lives—not just their habits, or the way they dress, or what they say, or the way they treat people, but their hearts, their hopes, their entire beings—for thousands of years. And that continues to happen, no matter how much the world changes: "True, the grass withers and the wildflowers fade, but our God's Word stands firm and forever" (Isaiah 40).

People have been changed by other books. So how is the Bible different? There's a lot of historical evidence that we could look at regarding the Bible's validity and accuracy. Things like prophecies that actually came true put the Bible in serious con-

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tention for being the word of God. But maybe the most compelling piece of evidence isn't in books or test tubes or decaying scrolls or even events predicted centuries earlier. Maybe the greatest evidence for the relevance of the word of God lies within those who have experienced its power.

A lot of other old religious texts have changed lives too, but the Bible differs even from every other religious document in one particular way: *the gospel*. God says that we've all done things wrong (sin) and that the consequence of those things is death: physical death, spiritual death, emotional death. But the gospel—a word that actually means “good news”—is all about God not leaving us where we are, or even expecting us to earn our way to him. God loved us so much that he provided the way for life—by sending his own Son. Eugene explains it this way: “Jesus is the descent of God to our lives, just as they are, not the ascent of our lives to God, hoping he might approve when he sees how hard we try.”

And that's where the beauty and relevance of the Bible lies—not in our “good”-ness, our personal holiness. The mystery of the gospel finds its greatness in God himself coming to *us*. It's God taking on our flesh and our world—and eventually our sin, our death—out of so much love that it goes beyond our limited minds. Jesus met for us God's otherwise unreachable standards of perfection and then died to pay the price for what we did wrong. And for those of us who accept that gift, the power of sin over us—the power that makes us slaves—died with him. But it gets better: Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, he also freed us from an eternity of the death that we deserved to an eternity of real life. And it's a life starting *now*—far greater than any that we could ever create for ourselves. It's that love, that coming down, that inner-dwelling by God himself that changes us. And it is that gospel that makes the Bible more than relevant. It makes the Bible vital.

WHO IS EUGENE PETERSON?

Most Bibles don't have anyone's name on them. So who is Eugene Peterson and why does he get his name on the front of this particular Bible?

Eugene is a longtime pastor and teacher, and the guy who paraphrased this Bible from Greek and Hebrew (the languages in which the Bible was originally written) into contemporary language that sounds a lot like the language that we use on a daily basis. You won't find "thee" or "thou" or any other heightened language in this Bible. It uses the same language that you might use to talk to a friend on the phone or write an e-mail. It sounds less like Shakespeare and more like television.

A lot of people think that the Bible originally came out sounding like something from the Middle Ages, but in reality it was originally written in the language of the streets. It was the language of fishermen, shopkeepers, and other regular people. Eugene wanted to get the Bible back to that kind of everyday, common language that all of us use when we're not trying to be religious.

So why would someone dedicate so much of his life to paraphrasing the Bible into contemporary language when there are already so many other translations of the Bible available? That's what we asked Eugene.

"I began my work life as a teacher and for several years taught the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek in a theological seminary. I expected to live the rest of my life as a professor and scholar, teaching and writing and studying. But then my life took a sudden turn to pastoring in a congregation.

"I was now plunged into quite a different world. The first noticeable difference was that nobody seemed to care much about the Bible, which so recently people had been paying me to teach them. Many of the people I worked with now knew virtually nothing about it, had never read it, and weren't interested in learning. Many others had spent years reading it but for them it had gone flat through familiarity, reduced to clichés. Bored, they dropped it. And there weren't many people in between. Very

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few were interested in what I considered my primary work, getting the words of the Bible into their heads and hearts, getting the message lived. They found newspapers and magazines, videos and novels more to their taste.

“Meanwhile I had taken on as my life work the responsibility of getting these very people to listen, really listen, to the message in this book. I knew I had my work cut out for me.

“I lived in two language worlds, the world of the Bible and the world of Today. I had always assumed they were the same world. But these people didn’t see it that way. So out of necessity I became a ‘translator’ (although I wouldn’t have called it that then), daily standing on the border between two worlds, getting the language of the Bible that God uses to create and save us, heal and bless us, judge and rule over us, into the language of Today that we use to gossip and tell stories, give directions and do business, sing songs and talk to each other. And all the time those old biblical languages, those powerful and vivid Hebrew and Greek originals, kept working their way underground in my speech, giving energy and sharpness to words and phrases, expanding the imagination of the people with whom I was working to hear the language of the Bible in the language of Today and the language of Today in the language of the Bible.

“I did that for thirty years in one congregation. And then one day (it was April 30, 1990) I got a letter from an editor asking me to work on a new version of the Bible along the lines of what I had been doing as a pastor. I agreed. The next ten years was harvest time. The Message is the result.”

Keep in mind that The Message is a reading Bible. It is not intended to replace study Bibles. Eugene’s goal was to get people reading it who otherwise wouldn’t and to get people who lost interest in the Bible to read it again. It hasn’t been paraphrased to make it easy—there is much in the Bible that is hard to understand. When you come across ideas or words that you don’t understand, don’t hesitate to get some help from someone who may have spent more years reading the Bible than you have. And at some point along the way, you may find it helpful to get a standard study Bible to

facilitate further study. Until then, just pray as you read through the Bible, asking God to have his way with your life.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE MESSAGE?

Most of us have received an e-mail, a letter, or a note from a friend. A lot of times when we receive one, we can't wait to see what the writer has to say. We open it up and see the emotion and thought that the author of the letter has poured into it. It's the same thing with the Bible—it's just that the person behind each note is God. And the notes aren't only about God, they're also about who we are.

Check out what Eugene has to say: "Reading is the first thing, just reading the Bible. As we read we enter a new world of words and find ourselves in on a conversation in which God has the first and last words. We soon realize that we are included in the conversation. We didn't expect this. But this is precisely what generation after generation of Bible readers do find: The Bible is not only written about us but to us. In these pages we become insiders to a conversation in which God uses words to form and bless us, to teach and guide us, to forgive and save us."

We don't usually look at what we read in this way. When we read a favorite magazine, webzine, or book, we're reading things that provide us with information about certain topics or take us away into another world. This book goes beyond that—this book reveals a God who can change life in every way.

Eugene explains, "This [book] is different. This is a world of revelation: God revealing to people just like us—men and women created in God's image—how he works and what is going on in this world in which we find ourselves. At the same time that God reveals all this, God draws us in by invitation and command to par-

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ticipate in his working life. We gradually (or suddenly) realize that we are insiders in the most significant action of our time as God establishes his grand rule of love and justice on this earth (as it is in heaven). ‘Revelation’ means that we are reading something we couldn’t have guessed or figured out on our own. Revelation is what makes the Bible unique.”

READ. THINK. PRAY. LIVE.

So, how can you grab hold of that revelation? If this book can have that kind of transformative power, how can you let it impact your life? There’s an ancient practice called *lectio divina* (or “spiritual reading”) that has been used for centuries to do that very thing. The space here is way too short to cover everything, but here’s a quick intro. If you want to learn more about it, you can find books or go on-line and look into it. Basically there are four components that make up *lectio*: reading, thinking, praying, and living. Sounds easy, but it takes some practice to get into the groove.

Read.

Sounds easy, doesn’t it? But this probably takes the most practice. We live in a culture that places significant value on time and convenience, and this first practice is anything but speedy. To truly read the Bible, you’ve got to soak yourself in it.

Have you ever been to the ocean? Have you ever been *in* the ocean? Not just pulling up in a car, taking your shoes off, and sticking your big toe in the water. Have you ever *immersed* yourself in the ocean? When you do that, it’s almost as if a whole

new world opens up to you. You see and feel and taste and hear things that you never could have just walking along the beach—you experience things hidden from the spectators on the beach. It's the same thing when you come to the Bible. When you *immerse* yourself in it, a whole new world opens up.

As usual, the Bible really says it best:

Place these words on your hearts. Get them deep inside you. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder...Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning until you fall into bed at night. Inscribe them on the doorposts and gates of your cities so that you'll live a long time. (Deuteronomy 11)

How can a young person live a clean life?

By carefully reading the map of your Word.

I'm single-minded in pursuit of you;

don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. (Psalm 119)

Eugene describes it this way: “First, it is important simply to read, leisurely and thoughtfully. We need to get a feel for the way these stories and songs, these prayers and conversations, these sermons and visions, invite us into this large, large world in which the invisible God is behind and involved in everything visible, and illuminates what it means to live here—really live, not just get across the street.

“As we read, and the longer we read, we begin to ‘get it’—we are in conversation with God. We find ourselves listening and answering in matters that most concern us: who we are, where we came from, where we are going, what makes us tick, the texture of the world and the communities we live in, and—most of all—the incredible love of God among us, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

“Through reading the Bible, we see that there is far more to the world, more to us, more to what we see and more to what we don't see—more to everything!—than we had ever dreamed, and that this ‘more’ has to do with God.

“This is new for many of us, a different sort of book—a book that reads us even as we read it. We are used to picking up and reading books for what we can get out of them: information we can use, inspiration to energize us, instructions on how to

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do something or other, entertainment to while away a rainy day, wisdom that will guide us into better living. These things can and do take place when reading the Bible, but the Bible is given to us in the first place simply to invite us to make ourselves at home in the world of God, God's word and world, and become familiar with the way God speaks and the ways in which we answer him with our lives."

What's up with that? "A book that reads us even as we read it?" That's a pretty strange statement at first glance. What other book can you say that about? What magazine has ever read you as you read it? What you hold in your hands, however, contains our collective stories. Each of us can find little glimpses of ourselves in these pages. The people in the Bible are a whole lot like you, and a lot of them were far from perfect. We need to open our eyes and see what God would have each of us understand about ourselves.

So you can see that it's not the same thing as reading the latest issue of your favorite magazine or a Shakespearian sonnet. There's something different here—something that the creator of the universe wants to tell you and wants you to understand about him and yourself. By jumping into the Bible, you open your eyes to God's world and see how he includes you in his story.

Think.

After reading, the next step is to really think about what the Bible is saying. This may seem obvious, but there is a difference between letting your mind wander over a few verses or chapters and trying to figure out what it means.

Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? There are some people who drive up to the edge, jump out of their cars, poke around for a few minutes, maybe take a few pictures, and then head off to the gift shop to buy T-shirts or snow globes to take to their friends back home.

There are others who spend an entire day seated quietly away from the noisy tourists, simply watching from their own private spot. That may sound boring, but to some, the Grand Canyon is a place of incredible beauty and power—one quick

look isn't enough. They want to soak it in. And those people will often come back year after year, to sit in that same spot—and every time, they see a different show.

You can think about the Bible in the same way. You can read a sentence or two, quickly decide what they mean and make a mental check next to them, and then head off to the gift shop.

Or, you can spend days and weeks (or even months) meditating on what a particular passage is really talking about—turning it over in your mind, reflecting on it, soaking it in. You can consider what those words mean against the changing backdrop of real life—of your life. You can begin to perceive the importance and subtle meanings of each word that's found its way from God to you. You can learn to identify the sound of God's voice as you get to know him better. You can think about them from all sorts of different viewpoints, even putting yourself in the shoes of the characters you're reading about. You can certainly ask the Author to help you soak it all in: "With your very own hands you formed me; now breathe your wisdom over me so I can understand you" (Psalm 119). God and his thoughts are so complex, with so many aspects and perspectives, that you can come back to his words again and again.

This way of thinking about the Bible is talked about in a number of places in the Bible. Perhaps the best example can be found in Psalm 1: "You thrill to God's Word. You chew on it day and night." It's not like a meal that you gulp down before you head out the door to do what you really want to do.

This is the five-star meal that you savor—with your mind, your heart, and your soul. It's the main event, and you have the opportunity to spend hours at the table relishing each bite.

I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you,
I attentively watch how you've done it.
I relish everything you've told me of life,
I won't forget a word of it....
My soul is starved and hungry, ravenous!—
insatiable for your nourishing commands....

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Your words are so choice, so tasty;
I prefer them to the best home cooking. (Psalm 119)

Pray.

You've read the text. You've spent time thinking. Now comes prayer. The kind of prayer we're talking about goes beyond merely asking for things—although there's a time for that, and God even tells us to do that often. But in this process of *lectio divina*, there's a time when you need to acknowledge what God is saying to you. Did God reveal something new about who he is? Did he reveal something about who you are in his eyes? Is he asking you to think about someone in a different light? Talk to God about it. Ask God to show you more about what you've just read: "Help me understand these things inside and out so I can ponder your miracle-wonders" (Psalm 119). Don't just read through the Bible and breeze through the prayer part. Go beyond the usual "thanks for this or that, help me to be a better person" routine. Have a *conversation* with God. He *wants* to do that with you.

These conversational prayers that flow out of what you read may be less about you and more about God. Your focus may shift away from yourself and toward your creator.

Don't be afraid to pray about a passage more than once—in fact, that's a good thing. You may want to pray with a different focus at different times—talking to God about what you're learning, thanking him for the truth in the passage, asking God questions, asking him to show you how to make the words real in your life, asking forgiveness for what you see in yourself after reading, just listening... There are a lot of ways to go about prayer.

As you continue on in this process, trying it several times, you may be thinking, *Praying over the same part of Scripture seems pretty redundant. I'm doing the same thing over and over and over again*—and you'd be right. The point of all of this is not to be doing something new at each step. The point is to focus more intentionally on God and what he's communicating to you through this process.

Think about it this way: If you have a friend who constantly asks you for things but never really wants to listen to you, how deep will your relationship go?

Sometimes we forget that God has a personality and wants to engage us at a deeper level. Let prayer be a time that you come to savor and look forward to. Allow this to be a time in which God speaks to you and you actively seek him. An audible voice may not come booming out of the clouds, but many things will be revealed to you through this process—about God, about reality, and about you.

Live.

This is where these words begin to shape life. Jesus was the first one to *become* God's words in the flesh.

The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.

We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,

Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish. (John 1)

God's word by its very nature changes us to make us like Christ: "God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey" (Hebrews 4). If you read what God has written, think about it, pray through it, but don't allow it to change you, you're missing a big point. James puts it this way:

Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like.

But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action. (James 1)

Imagine going on a dream date—the right person, the right clothes, the right food, the right conversation...perfect! You excuse yourself from the table, take a look at the

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mirror in the restroom, and...uh-oh, not so perfect. *Aaah! How long has that been in my teeth? Did my date notice? How could someone not notice?* Then, having seen yourself clearly, you walk back out and sit down at the table, with a piece of your dinner adorning your teeth in all its glory.

The same kind of thing happens when you read the Bible and do nothing. Not only is the sin that you leave in place ugly and damaging, but it stands in the way of your relationship with God—in a much bigger way than something hanging off your face. For God to share his mind and his heart with you, only to have you do nothing about it, implies more than a self-destructive choice. Instead of doing what God says, you have chosen yourself as master, as god.

The great part is that God doesn't leave you alone. He doesn't show you how lost you are and then leave you high and dry. God helps you live the way he wants. Like Paul told the Philippians, "Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure" (Philippians 2).

The amazing thing about reading the Bible is that as you spend time with God, this reading becomes part of you. Like the way relationships with other humans change us and shape our lives, our relationship with God changes us on a much larger scale. In *lectio divina*, reading, thinking, and praying come together within us, become part of us, and are lived out even beyond our awareness—like the way a baseball player swings a bat or catches a ball or the way a violinist performs a concerto. Over time, soaking in God's word leads to our living out those words without even thinking about them.

This offers us a tremendous sense of freedom—from our futile and determined attempts to save ourselves by being "good enough," from the captivity of sin that makes us slaves. In Matthew 11, Jesus says, "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

The Bible and its message help you leave behind things that seem to offer pleasure (like living for ourselves) but fail and leave us empty. God's Word does more than

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that. You find true life. Jesus says in John, “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of” (John 10). Jesus himself *is* life (John 14). So don’t miss this: When you live the Word, you truly *live*.

—*The Message Team*

INTRODUCTION GENESIS

First, God. God is the subject of life. God is foundational for living. If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get our lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God.

Genesis gets us off on the right foot. Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives, where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

Genesis uses words to make a foundation that is solid and true. Everything we think and do and feel is material in a building operation in which we are engaged all our life long. There is immense significance in everything that we do. Our speech and our actions and our prayers are all, every detail of them, involved in this vast building operation comprehensively known as the Kingdom of God. But we don't build the foundation. The foundation is given. The foundation is firmly in place.

Jesus concluded his most famous teaching by telling us that there are two ways to go about our lives, we can build on sand or we can build on rock. No matter how wonderfully we build, if we build on sand it will all fall to pieces like a house of cards. We build on what is already there, on the rock. Genesis is a verbal witness to that rock: God's creative acts, God's intervening and gracious judgments, God's call to a life of faith, God's making covenant with us.

But Genesis presents none of this to us as an abstract, bloodless "truth" or "principle." We are given a succession of stories with named people, people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention, we find that we ourselves are

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living variations on these very stories: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers. The stories show clearly that we are never outsiders or spectators to anything in “heaven and earth.” God doesn’t work impersonally from space; he works with us where we are, as he finds us. No matter what we do, whether good or bad, we continue to be part of everything that God is doing. Nobody can drop out—there’s no place to drop out to. So we may as well get started and take our place in the story—at the beginning.

GENESIS

Heaven and Earth

001 First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss. 1.1-2

1.3-5

God spoke: "Light!"
And light appeared.
God saw that light was good
and separated light from dark.
God named the light Day,
he named the dark Night.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day One.

1.6-7

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;
separate water from water!"
God made sky.

- 1.7-8 He separated the water under sky
from the water above sky.
And there it was:
he named sky the Heavens;
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Two.
- 1.9-10 God spoke: "Separate!
Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;
Land, appear!"
And there it was.
God named the land Earth.
He named the pooled water Ocean.
God saw that it was good.
- 1.11-13 God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties
of seed-bearing plants,
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."
And there it was.
Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,
all varieties,
And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Three.
- 1.14-15 God spoke: "Lights! Come out!
Shine in Heaven's sky!
Separate Day from Night.
Mark seasons and days and years,
Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth."
And there it was.
- 1.16 God made two big lights, the larger
to take charge of Day,
The smaller to be in charge of Night;
and he made the stars.

- God placed them in the heavenly sky
to light up Earth
And oversee Day and Night,
to separate light and dark.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Four. 1.17-19
- God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" 1.20-23
God created the huge whales,
all the swarm of life in the waters,
And every kind and species of flying birds.
God saw that it was good.
God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!
Birds, reproduce on Earth!"
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Five.
- God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds." 1.24-25
And there it was:
wild animals of every kind,
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.
God saw that it was good.
- God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them
reflecting our nature 1.26-28
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."
God created human beings;
he created them godlike,
Reflecting God's nature.
He created them male and female.
God blessed them:
"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

- 1.29-30 Then God said, "I've given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.
To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves and breathes,
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."
And there it was.
- 1.31 God looked over everything he had made,
it was so good, so very good!
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Six.

2.1 **002** Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

- 2.2-4 By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day he rested from his work,
all the creating God had done.

This is the story of how it all started,
of Heaven and Earth when they were created.

2.5-7 **Adam and Eve**

- At the time GOD made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—GOD hadn't yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)—GOD formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!
- 2.8-9 Then GOD planted a garden in Eden, in the east. He put the Man he had just

made in it. GOD made all kinds of trees grow from the ground, trees beautiful to look at and good to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden and from there divides into four rivers. 2:10-14
The first is named Pishon; it flows through Havilah where there is gold. The gold of this land is good. The land is also known for a sweet-scented resin and the onyx stone. The second river is named Gihon; it flows through the land of Cush. The third river is named Hiddekel and flows east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

GOD took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden to work the ground and keep it in order. 2:15

GOD commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you're dead." 2:16-17

GOD said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him a helper, a companion." So GOD formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the Man to see what he would name them. Whatever the Man called each living creature, that was its name. The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, named the wild animals; but he didn't find a suitable companion. 2:18-20

GOD put the Man into a deep sleep. As he slept he removed one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh. GOD then used the rib that he had taken from the Man to make Woman and presented her to the Man. 2:21-22

The Man said, 2:23-25
"Finally! Bone of my bone,
flesh of my flesh!
Name her Woman
for she was made from Man."
Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh.
The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame.

003 The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal GOD had made. He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?" 3:1

The Woman said to the serpent, "Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'" 3:2-3

3.4-5 The serpent told the Woman, "You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."

3.6 When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate.

3.7 Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

3.8 When they heard the sound of GOD strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from GOD.

3.9 GOD called to the Man: "Where are you?"

3.10 He said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid."

3.11 GOD said, "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?"

3.12 The Man said, "The Woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it."

GOD said to the Woman, "What is this that you've done?"

3.13 "The serpent seduced me," she said, "and I ate."

3.14-15 GOD told the serpent:

"Because you've done this, you're cursed,
cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals,

Cursed to slink on your belly
and eat dirt all your life.

I'm declaring war between you and the Woman,
between your offspring and hers.

He'll wound your head,
you'll wound his heel."

3.16 He told the Woman:

"I'll multiply your pains in childbirth,
you'll give birth to your babies in pain.

You'll want to please your husband,
but he'll lord it over you."

3.17-19 He told the Man:

"Because you listened to your wife
and ate from the tree

That I commanded you not to eat from,
 'Don't eat from this tree,'
 The very ground is cursed because of you;
 getting food from the ground
 Will be as painful as having babies is for your wife;
 you'll be working in pain all your life long.
 The ground will sprout thorns and weeds,
 you'll get your food the hard way,
 Planting and tilling and harvesting,
 sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk,
 Until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried;
 you started out as dirt, you'll end up dirt."

The Man, known as Adam, named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. 3.20

GOD made leather clothing for Adam and his wife and dressed them. 3.21

GOD said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. What if he now should reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life and eat, and live forever? Never—this cannot happen!" 3.22

So GOD expelled them from the Garden of Eden and sent them to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they'd been made. He threw them out of the garden and stationed angel-cherubim and a revolving sword of fire east of it, guarding the path to the Tree-of-Life. 3.23-24

004 Adam slept with Eve his wife. She conceived and had Cain. She said, "I've gotten a man, with GOD's help!" 4.1

Then she had another baby, Abel. Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer. 4.2

Time passed. Cain brought an offering to GOD from the produce of his farm. Abel also brought an offering, but from the firstborn animals of his herd, choice cuts of meat. GOD liked Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering didn't get his approval. Cain lost his temper and went into a sulk. 4.3-5

GOD spoke to Cain: "Why this tantrum? Why the sulking? If you do well, won't you be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin is lying in wait for you, ready to pounce; it's out to get you, you've got to master it." 4.6-7

Cain had words with his brother. They were out in the field; Cain came at Abel his brother and killed him. 4.8

GOD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" 4.9

He said, "How should I know? Am I his babysitter?"

4.10-12 GOD said, "What have you done! The voice of your brother's blood is calling to me from the ground. From now on you'll get nothing but curses from this ground; you'll be driven from this ground that has opened its arms to receive the blood of your murdered brother. You'll farm this ground, but it will no longer give you its best. You'll be a homeless wanderer on Earth."

4.13-14 Cain said to GOD, "My punishment is too much. I can't take it! You've thrown me off the land and I can never again face you. I'm a homeless wanderer on Earth and whoever finds me will kill me."

4.15 GOD told him, "No. Anyone who kills Cain will pay for it seven times over." GOD put a mark on Cain to protect him so that no one who met him would kill him.

4.16 Cain left the presence of God and lived in No-Man's-Land, east of Eden.

4.17-18 Cain slept with his wife. She conceived and had Enoch. He then built a city and named it after his son, Enoch.

Enoch had Irad,
Irad had Mehujael,
Mehujael had Methushael,
Methushael had Lamech.

4.19-22 Lamech married two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal, the ancestor of all who live in tents and herd cattle. His brother's name was Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the lyre and flute. Zillah gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who worked at the forge making bronze and iron tools. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

4.23-24 Lamech said to his wives,
Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
you wives of Lamech, hear me out:
I killed a man for wounding me,
a young man who attacked me.
If Cain is avenged seven times,
for Lamech it's seventy-seven!

4.25-26 Adam slept with his wife again. She had a son whom she named Seth. She said, "God has given me another child in place of Abel whom Cain killed." And then Seth had a son whom he named Enosh.

4.26 That's when men and women began praying and worshipping in the name of GOD.

So his gifts went before him while he settled down for the night in the camp. 32.21

But during the night he got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He got them safely across the brook along with all his possessions. 32.22-23

But Jacob stayed behind by himself, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he couldn't get the best of Jacob as they wrestled, he deliberately threw Jacob's hip out of joint. 32.24-25

The man said, "Let me go; it's daybreak." 32.26

Jacob said, "I'm not letting you go 'til you bless me."

The man said, "What's your name?"

He answered, "Jacob." 32.27

The man said, "But no longer. Your name is no longer Jacob. From now on it's Israel (God-Wrestler); you've wrestled with God and you've come through." 32.28

Jacob asked, "And what's your name?" 32.29

The man said, "Why do you want to know my name?" And then, right then and there, he blessed him.

Jacob named the place Peniel (God's Face) because, he said, "I saw God face-to-face and lived to tell the story!" 32.30

The sun came up as he left Peniel, limping because of his hip. (This is why Israelites to this day don't eat the hip muscle; because Jacob's hip was thrown out of joint.) 32.31-32

033 Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. He divided the children between Leah and Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants out in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. He led the way and, as he approached his brother, bowed seven times, honoring his brother. But Esau ran up and embraced him, held him tight and kissed him. And they both wept. 33.1-4

Then Esau looked around and saw the women and children: "And who are these with you?" 33.5

Jacob said, "The children that God saw fit to bless me with."

Then the maidservants came up with their children and bowed; then Leah and her children, also bowing; and finally, Joseph and Rachel came up and bowed to Esau. 33.6-7

Esau then asked, "And what was the meaning of all those herds that I met?" 33.8

"I was hoping that they would pave the way for my master to welcome me."

Esau said, "Oh, brother. I have plenty of everything—keep what is yours for yourself." 33.9

Jacob said, "Please. If you can find it in your heart to welcome me, accept these gifts. When I saw your face, it was as the face of God smiling on me. Accept the 33.10-11

gifts I have brought for you. God has been good to me and I have more than enough." Jacob urged the gifts on him and Esau accepted.

33.12 Then Esau said, "Let's start out on our way; I'll take the lead."

33.13-14 But Jacob said, "My master can see that the children are frail. And the flocks and herds are nursing, making for slow going. If I push them too hard, even for a day, I'd lose them all. So, master, you go on ahead of your servant, while I take it easy at the pace of my flocks and children. I'll catch up with you in Seir."

33.15 Esau said, "Let me at least lend you some of my men."

"There's no need," said Jacob. "Your generous welcome is all I need or want."

33.16 So Esau set out that day and made his way back to Seir.

33.17 And Jacob left for Succoth. He built a shelter for himself and sheds for his livestock. That's how the place came to be called Succoth (Sheds).

33.18-20 And that's how it happened that Jacob arrived all in one piece in Shechem in the land of Canaan—all the way from Paddan Aram. He camped near the city. He bought the land where he pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. He paid a hundred silver coins for it. Then he built an altar there and named it El-Elohe-Israel (Mighty Is the God of Israel).



34.1-4 **034** One day Dinah, the daughter Leah had given Jacob, went to visit some of the women in that country. Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite who was chieftain there, saw her and raped her. Then he felt a strong attraction to Dinah, Jacob's daughter, fell in love with her and wooed her. Shechem went to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl for my wife."

34.5-7 Jacob heard that Shechem had raped his daughter Dinah, but his sons were out in the fields with the livestock so he didn't say anything until they got home. Hamor, Shechem's father, went to Jacob to work out marriage arrangements. Meanwhile Jacob's sons on their way back from the fields heard what had happened. They were outraged, explosive with anger. Shechem's rape of Jacob's daughter was intolerable in Israel and not to be put up with.

34.8-10 Hamor spoke with Jacob and his sons, "My son Shechem is head over heels in love with your daughter—give her to him as his wife. Intermarry with us. Give your daughters to us and we'll give our daughters to you. Live together with us as one family. Settle down among us and make yourselves at home. Prosper among us."

34.11-12 Shechem then spoke for himself, addressing Dinah's father and brothers: "Please, say yes. I'll pay anything. Set the bridal price as high as you will—the sky's the limit! Only give me this girl for my wife."

Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father with cunning. Their sister, after all, had been raped. They said, "This is impossible. We could never give our sister to a man who was uncircumcised. Why, we'd be disgraced. The only condition on which we can talk business is if all your men become circumcised like us. Then we will freely exchange daughters in marriage and make ourselves at home among you and become one big, happy family. But if this is not an acceptable condition, we will take our sister and leave." 34.13-17

That seemed fair enough to Hamor and his son Shechem. 34.18

The young man was so smitten with Jacob's daughter that he proceeded to do what had been asked. He was also the most admired son in his father's family. 34.19

So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the public square and spoke to the town council: "These men like us; they are our friends. Let them settle down here and make themselves at home; there's plenty of room in the country for them. And, just think, we can even exchange our daughters in marriage. But these men will only accept our invitation to live with us and become one big family on one condition, that all our males become circumcised just as they themselves are. This is a very good deal for us—these people are very wealthy with great herds of livestock and we're going to get our hands on it. So let's do what they ask and have them settle down with us." 34.20-23

Everyone who was anyone in the city agreed with Hamor and his son, Shechem; every male was circumcised. 34.24

Three days after the circumcision, while all the men were still very sore, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each with his sword in hand, walked into the city as if they owned the place and murdered every man there. They also killed Hamor and his son Shechem, rescued Dinah from Shechem's house, and left. When the rest of Jacob's sons came on the scene of slaughter, they looted the entire city in retaliation for Dinah's rape. Flocks, herds, donkeys, belongings—everything, whether in the city or the fields—they took. And then they took all the wives and children captive and ransacked their homes for anything valuable. 34.25-29

Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You've made my name stink to high heaven among the people here, these Canaanites and Perizzites. If they decided to gang up on us and attack, as few as we are we wouldn't stand a chance; they'd wipe me and my people right off the map." 34.30

They said, "Nobody is going to treat our sister like a whore and get by with it." 34.31



035 God spoke to Jacob: "Go back to Bethel. Stay there and build an altar to the God who revealed himself to you when you were running for your life from your brother Esau." 35.1

35.2-3 Jacob told his family and all those who lived with him, "Throw out all the alien gods which you have, take a good bath and put on clean clothes, we're going to Bethel. I'm going to build an altar there to the God who answered me when I was in trouble and has stuck with me everywhere I've gone since."

35.4-5 They turned over to Jacob all the alien gods they'd been holding on to, along with their lucky-charm earrings. Jacob buried them under the oak tree in Shechem. Then they set out. A paralyzing fear descended on all the surrounding villages so that they were unable to pursue the sons of Jacob.

35.6-7 Jacob and his company arrived at Luz, that is, Bethel, in the land of Canaan. He built an altar there and named it El-Bethel (God-of-Bethel) because that's where God revealed himself to him when he was running from his brother.

35.8 And that's when Rebekah's nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried just below Bethel under the oak tree. It was named Allon-Bacuth (Weeping-Oak).

35.9-10 God revealed himself once again to Jacob, after he had come back from Paddan Aram and blessed him: "Your name is Jacob (Heel); but that's your name no longer. From now on your name is Israel (God-Wrestler)."

35.11-12 God continued,

I am The Strong God.

Have children! Flourish!

A nation—a whole company of nations!—
will come from you.

Kings will come from your loins;
the land I gave Abraham and Isaac

I now give to you,
and pass it on to your descendants.

35.13 And then God was gone, ascended from the place where he had spoken with him.

35.14-15 Jacob set up a stone pillar on the spot where God had spoken with him. He poured a drink offering on it and anointed it with oil. Jacob dedicated the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel (God's-House).



35.16-17 They left Bethel. They were still quite a ways from Ephrath when Rachel went into labor—hard, hard labor. When her labor pains were at their worst, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid—you have another boy."

With her last breath, for she was now dying, she named him Ben-oni (Son-of-My-Pain), but his father named him Ben-jamin (Son-of-Good-Fortune). 35.18

Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. Jacob set up a pillar to mark her grave. It is still there today, "Rachel's Grave Stone." 35.19-20



Israel kept on his way and set up camp at Migdal Eder. While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went and slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah. And Israel heard of what he did. 35.21-22



There were twelve sons of Jacob. 35.22-26

The sons by Leah:

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn

Simeon

Levi

Judah

Issachar

Zebulun.

The sons by Rachel:

Joseph

Benjamin.

The sons by Bilhah, Rachel's maid:

Dan

Naphtali.

The sons by Zilpah, Leah's maid:

Gad

Asher.

These were Jacob's sons, born to him in Paddan Aram.



Finally, Jacob made it back home to his father Isaac at Mamre in Kiriath Arba, present-day Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had lived. Isaac was now 180 years old. Isaac breathed his last and died—an old man full of years. He was buried with his family by his sons Esau and Jacob. 35.27-29



- 36.1 **036** This is the family tree of Esau, who is also called Edom.
- 36.2-3 Esau married women of Canaan: Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite; Oholibamah, daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite; and Basemath, daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.
- 36.4 Adah gave Esau Eliphaz;
Basemath had Reuel;
- 36.5 Oholibamah had Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.
These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.
- 36.8-8 Esau gathered up his wives, sons and daughters, and everybody in his household, along with all his livestock—all the animals and possessions he had gotten in Canaan—and moved a considerable distance away from his brother Jacob. The brothers had too many possessions to live together in the same place; the land couldn't support their combined herds of livestock. So Esau ended up settling in the hill country of Seir (Esau and Edom are the same).
- 36.9-10 So this is the family tree of Esau, ancestor of the people of Edom, in the hill country of Seir. The names of Esau's sons:
Eliphaz, son of Esau's wife Adah;
Reuel, son of Esau's wife Basemath.
- 36.11-12 The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. (Eliphaz also had a concubine Timna, who had Amalek.) These are the grandsons of Esau's wife Adah.
- 36.13 And these are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah—grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.
- 36.14 These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon. She gave Esau his sons Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.
- 36.15-16 These are the chieftains in Esau's family tree. From the sons of Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn, came the chieftains Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek—the chieftains of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; all of them sons of Adah.
- 36.17 From the sons of Esau's son Reuel, came the chieftains Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the chieftains of Reuel in the land of Edom; all these were sons of Esau's wife Basemath.
- 36.18 These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: the chieftains Jeush, Jalam, and Korah—chieftains born of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah.
- 36.19 These are the sons of Esau, that is, Edom, and these are their chieftains.

This is the family tree of Seir the Horite, who were native to that land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the chieftains of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. 36.20-21

The sons of Lotan were Hori and Homam; Lotan's sister was Timna. 36.22

The sons of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. 36.23

The sons of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah—this is the same Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness while herding his father Zibeon's donkeys. 36.24

The children of Anah were Dishon and his daughter Oholibamah. 36.25

The sons of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran. 36.26

The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. 36.27

The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. 36.28

And these were the Horite chieftains: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan—the Horite chieftains clan by clan in the land of Seir. 36.29-30

And these are the kings who ruled in Edom before there was a king in Israel: Bela son of Beor was the king of Edom; the name of his city was Dinhabah. When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became the next king. When Jobab died, he was followed by Hushan from the land of the Temanites. When Hushan died, he was followed by Hadad son of Bedad, he was the king who defeated the Midianites in Moab; the name of his city was Avith. When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah became the next king. When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth-on-the-River became king. When Shaul died, he was followed by Baal-Hanan son of Acbor. When Baal-Hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad became king; the name of his city was Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-Zahab. 36.31-39

And these are the chieftains from the line of Esau, clan by clan, region by region: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram—the chieftains of Edom as they occupied their various regions. 36.40-43

This accounts for the family tree of Esau, ancestor of all Edomites. 36.43

037 Meanwhile Jacob had settled down where his father had lived, the land of Canaan. 37.1

Joseph and His Brothers

This is the story of Jacob. The story continues with Joseph, seventeen years old at the time, helping out his brothers in herding the flocks. These were his half brothers actually, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought his father bad reports on them. 37.2

Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was the child of 37.3-4

his old age. And he made him an elaborately embroidered coat. When his brothers realized that their father loved him more than them, they grew to hate him — they wouldn't even speak to him.

37.5-7 Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said, "Listen to this dream I had. We were all out in the field gathering bundles of wheat. All of a sudden my bundle stood straight up and your bundles circled around it and bowed down to mine."

37.8 His brothers said, "So! You're going to rule us? You're going to boss us around?" And they hated him more than ever because of his dreams and the way he talked.

37.9 He had another dream and told this one also to his brothers: "I dreamed another dream — the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to me!"

37.10-11 When he told it to his father and brothers, his father reprimanded him: "What's with all this dreaming? Am I and your mother and your brothers all supposed to bow down to you?" Now his brothers were really jealous, but his father brooded over the whole business.

37.12-13 His brothers had gone off to Shechem where they were pasturing their father's flocks. Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are with flocks in Shechem. Come, I want to send you to them."

Joseph said, "I'm ready."

37.14 He said, "Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing and bring me back a report." He sent him off from the valley of Hebron to Shechem.

37.15 A man met him as he was wandering through the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

37.16 "I'm trying to find my brothers. Do you have any idea where they are grazing their flocks?"

37.17 The man said, "They've left here, but I overheard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph took off, tracked his brothers down, and found them in Dothan.

37.18-20 They spotted him off in the distance. By the time he got to them they had cooked up a plot to kill him. The brothers were saying, "Here comes that dreamer. Let's kill him and throw him into one of these old cisterns; we can say that a vicious animal ate him up. We'll see what his dreams amount to."

37.21-22 Reuben heard the brothers talking and intervened to save him, "We're not going to kill him. No murder. Go ahead and throw him in this cistern out here in the wild, but don't hurt him." Reuben planned to go back later and get him out and take him back to his father.

37.23-24 When Joseph reached his brothers, they ripped off the fancy coat he was wearing, grabbed him, and threw him into a cistern. The cistern was dry; there wasn't any water in it.

Then they sat down to eat their supper. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way from Gilead, their camels loaded with spices, ointments, and perfumes to sell in Egypt. Judah said, "Brothers, what are we going to get out of killing our brother and concealing the evidence? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let's not kill him—he is, after all, our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. 37:25-27

By that time the Midianite traders were passing by. His brothers pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites who took Joseph with them down to Egypt. 37:28

Later Reuben came back and went to the cistern—no Joseph! He ripped his clothes in despair. Beside himself, he went to his brothers. "The boy's gone! What am I going to do!" 37:29-30

They took Joseph's coat, butchered a goat, and dipped the coat in the blood. They took the fancy coat back to their father and said, "We found this. Look it over—do you think this is your son's coat?" 37:31-32

He recognized it at once. "My son's coat—a wild animal has eaten him. Joseph torn limb from limb!" 37:33

Jacob tore his clothes in grief, dressed in rough burlap, and mourned his son a long, long time. His sons and daughters tried to comfort him but he refused their comfort. "I'll go to the grave mourning my son." Oh, how his father wept for him. 37:34-35

In Egypt the Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, manager of his household affairs. 37:36



038 About that time, Judah separated from his brothers and hooked up with a man in Adullam named Hirah. While there, Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua. He married her, they went to bed, she became pregnant and had a son named Er. She got pregnant again and had a son named Onan. She had still another son; she named this one Shelah. They were living at Kezib when she had him. 38:1-5

Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn. Her name was Tamar. But Judah's firstborn, Er, grievously offended GOD and GOD took his life. 38:6-7

So Judah told Onan, "Go and sleep with your brother's widow; it's the duty of a brother-in-law to keep your brother's line alive." But Onan knew that the child wouldn't be his, so whenever he slept with his brother's widow he spilled his semen on the ground so he wouldn't produce a child for his brother. GOD was much offended by what he did and also took his life. 38:8-10

- 38.11 So Judah stepped in and told his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow at home with your father until my son Shelah grows up." He was worried that Shelah would also end up dead, just like his brothers. So Tamar went to live with her father.
- 38.12 Time passed. Judah's wife, Shua's daughter, died. When the time of mourning was over, Judah with his friend Hirah of Adullam went to Timnah for the sheep shearing.
- 38.13-14 Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law has gone to Timnah to shear his sheep." She took off her widow's clothes, put on a veil to disguise herself, and sat at the entrance to Enaim which is on the road to Timnah. She realized by now that even though Shelah was grown up, she wasn't going to be married to him.
- 38.15 Judah saw her and assumed she was a prostitute since she had veiled her face. He left the road and went over to her. He said, "Let me sleep with you." He had no idea that she was his daughter-in-law.
- 38.16 She said, "What will you pay me?"
- 38.17 "I'll send you," he said, "a kid goat from the flock."
- She said, "Not unless you give me a pledge until you send it."
- 38.18 "So what would you want in the way of a pledge?"
- She said, "Your personal seal-and-cord and the staff you carry."
- He handed them over to her and slept with her. And she got pregnant.
- 38.19 She then left and went home. She removed her veil and put her widow's clothes back on.
- 38.20-21 Judah sent the kid goat by his friend from Adullam to recover the pledge from the woman. But he couldn't find her. He asked the men of that place, "Where's the prostitute that used to sit by the road here near Enaim?"
- 38.21 They said, "There's never been a prostitute here."
- 38.22 He went back to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her. The men there said there never has been a prostitute there."
- 38.23 Judah said, "Let her have it then. If we keep looking, everyone will be poking fun at us. I kept my part of the bargain—I sent the kid goat but you couldn't find her."
- 38.24 Three months or so later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law has been playing the whore—and now she's a pregnant whore."
- Judah yelled, "Get her out here. Burn her up!"
- 38.25 As they brought her out, she sent a message to her father-in-law, "I'm pregnant by the man who owns these things. Identify them, please. Who's the owner of the seal-and-cord and the staff?"
- 38.26 Judah saw they were his. He said, "She's in the right; I'm in the wrong—I wouldn't let her marry my son Shelah." He never slept with her again.
- 38.27-30 When her time came to give birth, it turned out that there were twins in her

womb. As she was giving birth, one put his hand out; the midwife tied a red thread on his hand, saying, "This one came first." But then he pulled it back and his brother came out. She said, "Oh! A breakout!" So she named him Perez (Breakout). Then his brother came out with the red thread on his hand. They named him Zerah (Bright). 38.27-30



039 After Joseph had been taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelites, Potiphar an Egyptian, one of Pharaoh's officials and the manager of his household, bought him from them. 39.1

As it turned out, GOD was with Joseph and things went very well with him. He ended up living in the home of his Egyptian master. His master recognized that GOD was with him, saw that GOD was working for good in everything he did. He became very fond of Joseph and made him his personal aide. He put him in charge of all his personal affairs, turning everything over to him. From that moment on, GOD blessed the home of the Egyptian—all because of Joseph. The blessing of GOD spread over everything he owned, at home and in the fields, and all Potiphar had to concern himself with was eating three meals a day. 39.2-6

Joseph was a strikingly handsome man. As time went on, his master's wife became infatuated with Joseph and one day said, "Sleep with me." 39.6-7

He wouldn't do it. He said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master doesn't give a second thought to anything that goes on here—he's put me in charge of everything he owns. He treats me as an equal. The only thing he hasn't turned over to me is you. You're his wife, after all! How could I violate his trust and sin against God?" 39.8-9

She pestered him day after day after day, but he stood his ground. He refused to go to bed with her. 39.10

On one of these days he came to the house to do his work and none of the household servants happened to be there. She grabbed him by his cloak, saying, "Sleep with me!" He left his coat in her hand and ran out of the house. When she realized that he had left his coat in her hand and run outside, she called to her house servants: "Look—this Hebrew shows up and before you know it he's trying to seduce us. He tried to make love to me but I yelled as loud as I could. With all my yelling and screaming, he left his coat beside me here and ran outside." 39.11-15

She kept his coat right there until his master came home. She told him the same story. She said, "The Hebrew slave, the one you brought to us, came after me and 39.16-18

tried to use me for his plaything. When I yelled and screamed, he left his coat with me and ran outside."

39.19-23 When his master heard his wife's story, telling him, "These are the things your slave did to me," he was furious. Joseph's master took him and threw him into the jail where the king's prisoners were locked up. But there in jail GOD was still with Joseph: He reached out in kindness to him; he put him on good terms with the head jailer. The head jailer put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners—he ended up managing the whole operation. The head jailer gave Joseph free rein, never even checked on him, because GOD was with him; whatever he did GOD made sure it worked out for the best.



40.1-4 **040** As time went on, it happened that the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt crossed their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the head cupbearer and the head baker, and put them in custody under the captain of the guard; it was the same jail where Joseph was held. The captain of the guard assigned Joseph to see to their needs.

40.4-7 After they had been in custody for a while, the king's cupbearer and baker, while being held in the jail, both had a dream on the same night, each dream having its own meaning. When Joseph arrived in the morning, he noticed that they were feeling low. So he asked them, the two officials of Pharaoh who had been thrown into jail with him, "What's wrong? Why the long faces?"

They said, "We dreamed dreams and there's no one to interpret them."

40.8 Joseph said, "Don't interpretations come from God? Tell me the dreams."

40.9-11 First the head cupbearer told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream there was a vine in front of me with three branches on it: It budded, blossomed, and the clusters ripened into grapes. I was holding Pharaoh's cup; I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and gave the cup to Pharaoh."

40.12-15 Joseph said, "Here's the meaning. The three branches are three days. Within three days, Pharaoh will get you out of here and put you back to your old work—you'll be giving Pharaoh his cup just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. Only remember me when things are going well with you again—tell Pharaoh about me and get me out of this place. I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews. And since I've been here, I've done nothing to deserve being put in this hole."

40.16-17 When the head baker saw how well Joseph's interpretation turned out, he spoke up: "My dream went like this: I saw three wicker baskets on my head; the

top basket had assorted pastries from the bakery and birds were picking at them from the basket on my head."

Joseph said, "This is the interpretation: The three baskets are three days; within three days Pharaoh will take off your head, impale you on a post, and the birds will pick your bones clean." 40.18-19

And sure enough, on the third day it was Pharaoh's birthday and he threw a feast for all his servants. He set the head cupbearer and the head baker in places of honor in the presence of all the guests. Then he restored the head cupbearer to his cup-bearing post; he handed Pharaoh his cup just as before. And then he impaled the head baker on a post, following Joseph's interpretations exactly. 40.20-22

But the head cupbearer never gave Joseph another thought; he forgot all about him. 40.23

041 Two years passed and Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile River. Seven cows came up out of the Nile, all shimmering with health, and grazed on the marsh grass. Then seven other cows, all skin and bones, came up out of the river after them and stood by them on the bank of the Nile. The skinny cows ate the seven healthy cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. 41.1-4

He went back to sleep and dreamed a second time: Seven ears of grain, full-bodied and lush, grew out of a single stalk. Then seven more ears grew up, but these were thin and dried out by the east wind. The thin ears swallowed up the full, healthy ears. Then Pharaoh woke up—another dream. 41.5-7

When morning came, he was upset. He sent for all the magicians and sages of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but they couldn't interpret them to him. 41.8

The head cupbearer then spoke up and said to Pharaoh, "I just now remembered something—I'm sorry, I should have told you this long ago. Once when Pharaoh got angry with his servants, he locked me and the head baker in the house of the captain of the guard. We both had dreams on the same night, each dream with its own meaning. It so happened that there was a young Hebrew slave there with us; he belonged to the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams and he interpreted them for us, each dream separately. Things turned out just as he interpreted. I was returned to my position and the head baker was impaled." 41.9-13

Pharaoh at once sent for Joseph. They brought him on the run from the jail cell. He cut his hair, put on clean clothes, and came to Pharaoh. 41.14

"I dreamed a dream," Pharaoh told Joseph. "Nobody can interpret it. But I've heard that just by hearing a dream you can interpret it." 41.15

Joseph answered, "Not I, but God. God will set Pharaoh's mind at ease." 41.16

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile." 41.17-21

Seven cows, shimmering with health, came up out of the river and grazed on the marsh grass. On their heels seven more cows, all skin and bones, came up. I've never seen uglier cows anywhere in Egypt. Then the seven skinny, ugly cows ate up the first seven healthy cows. But you couldn't tell by looking—after eating them up they were just as skinny and ugly as before. Then I woke up.

41.22-24 "In my second dream I saw seven ears of grain, full-bodied and lush, growing out of a single stalk, and right behind them, seven other ears, shriveled, thin, and dried out by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the full ears. I've told all this to the magicians but they can't figure it out."

41.25-27 Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's two dreams both mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh what he is going to do. The seven healthy cows are seven years and the seven healthy ears of grain are seven years—they're the same dream. The seven sick and ugly cows that followed them up are seven years and the seven scrawny ears of grain dried out by the east wind are the same—seven years of famine.

41.28-32 "The meaning is what I said earlier: God is letting Pharaoh in on what he is going to do. Seven years of plenty are on their way throughout Egypt. But on their heels will come seven years of famine, leaving no trace of the Egyptian plenty. As the country is emptied by famine, there won't be even a scrap left of the previous plenty—the famine will be total. The fact that Pharaoh dreamed the same dream twice emphasizes God's determination to do this and do it soon.

41.33-36 "So: Pharaoh needs to look for a wise and experienced man and put him in charge of the country. Then Pharaoh needs to appoint managers throughout the country of Egypt to organize it during the years of plenty. Their job will be to collect all the food produced in the good years ahead and stockpile the grain under Pharaoh's authority, storing it in the towns for food. This grain will be held back to be used later during the seven years of famine that are coming on Egypt. This way the country won't be devastated by the famine."

41.37 This seemed like a good idea to Pharaoh and his officials.

41.38 Then Pharaoh said to his officials, "Isn't this the man we need? Are we going to find anyone else who has God's spirit in him like this?"

41.39-40 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "You're the man for us. God has given you the inside story—no one is as qualified as you in experience and wisdom. From now on, you're in charge of my affairs; all my people will report to you. Only as king will I be over you."

41.41-43 So Pharaoh commissioned Joseph: "I'm putting you in charge of the entire country of Egypt." Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his finger and slipped it on Joseph's hand. He outfitted him in robes of the best linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He put the second-in-command chariot at his

disposal, and as he rode people shouted “Bravo!”

Joseph was in charge of the entire country of Egypt.

41.43

Pharaoh told Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but no one in Egypt will make a single move without your stamp of approval.”

41.44

Then Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-Paneah (God Speaks and He Lives). He also gave him an Egyptian wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, the priest of On (Heliopolis).

41.45

And Joseph took up his duties over the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he went to work for Pharaoh the king of Egypt.

41.46

As soon as Joseph left Pharaoh’s presence, he began his work in Egypt.



During the next seven years of plenty the land produced bumper crops. Joseph gathered up the food of the seven good years in Egypt and stored the food in cities. In each city he stockpiled surplus from the surrounding fields. Joseph collected so much grain—it was like the sand of the ocean!—that he finally quit keeping track.

41.47-49

Joseph had two sons born to him before the years of famine came. Asenath, daughter of Potiphara the priest of On, was their mother. Joseph named the first-born Manasseh (Forget), saying, “God made me forget all my hardships and my parental home.” He named his second son Ephraim (Double Prosperity), saying, “God has prospered me in the land of my sorrow.”

41.50-52

Then Egypt’s seven good years came to an end and the seven years of famine arrived, just as Joseph had said. All countries experienced famine; Egypt was the only country that had bread.

41.53-54

When the famine spread throughout Egypt, the people called out in distress to Pharaoh, calling for bread. He told the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. Do what he tells you.”

41.55

As the famine got worse all over the country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold emergency supplies to the Egyptians. The famine was very bad. Soon the whole world was coming to buy supplies from Joseph. The famine was bad all over.

41.56-57



042 When Jacob learned that there was food in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you sit around here and look at one another? I’ve heard that there is food in Egypt. Go down there and buy some so that we can survive and not starve to death.”

42.1-2

42.3-5 Ten of Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt to get food. Jacob didn't send Joseph's brother Benjamin with them; he was afraid that something bad might happen to him. So Israel's sons joined everyone else that was going to Egypt to buy food, for Canaan, too, was hit hard by the famine.

42.6-7 Joseph was running the country; he was the one who gave out rations to all the people. When Joseph's brothers arrived, they treated him with honor, bowing to him. Joseph recognized them immediately, but treated them as strangers and spoke roughly to them.

He said, "Where do you come from?"

"From Canaan," they said. "We've come to buy food."

42.8 Joseph knew who they were, but they didn't know who he was.

42.9 Joseph, remembering the dreams he had dreamed of them, said, "You're spies. You've come to look for our weak spots."

42.10-11 "No, master," they said. "We've only come to buy food. We're all the sons of the same man; we're honest men; we'd never think of spying."

42.12 He said, "No. You're spies. You've come to look for our weak spots."

42.13 They said, "There were twelve of us brothers—sons of the same father in the country of Canaan. The youngest is with our father, and one is no more."

42.14-16 But Joseph said, "It's just as I said, you're spies. This is how I'll test you. As Pharaoh lives, you're not going to leave this place until your younger brother comes here. Send one of you to get your brother while the rest of you stay here in jail. We'll see if you're telling the truth or not. As Pharaoh lives, I say you're spies."

42.17 Then he threw them into jail for three days.

42.18-20 On the third day, Joseph spoke to them. "Do this and you'll live. I'm a God-fearing man. If you're as honest as you say you are, one of your brothers will stay here in jail while the rest of you take the food back to your hungry families. But you have to bring your youngest brother back to me, confirming the truth of your speech—and not one of you will die." They agreed.

42.21 Then they started talking among themselves. "Now we're paying for what we did to our brother—we saw how terrified he was when he was begging us for mercy. We wouldn't listen to him and now we're the ones in trouble."

42.22 Reuben broke in. "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't hurt the boy'? But no, you wouldn't listen. And now we're paying for his murder."

42.23-24 Joseph had been using an interpreter, so they didn't know that Joseph was understanding every word. Joseph turned away from them and cried. When he was able to speak again, he took Simeon and had him tied up, making a prisoner of him while they all watched.

42.25 Then Joseph ordered that their sacks be filled with grain, that their money be

put back in each sack, and that they be given rations for the road. That was all done for them.

They loaded their food supplies on their donkeys and set off. 42.26

When they stopped for the night, one of them opened his sack to get food for his donkey; there at the mouth of his bag was his money. He called out to his brothers, "My money has been returned; it's right here in my bag!" They were puzzled—and frightened. "What's God doing to us?" 42.27-28

When they got back to their father Jacob, back in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened, saying, "The man who runs the country spoke to us roughly and accused us of being spies. We told him, 'We are honest men and in no way spies. There were twelve of us brothers, sons of one father; one is gone and the youngest is with our father in Canaan.'" 42.29-32

"But the master of the country said, 'Leave one of your brothers with me, take food for your starving families, and go. Bring your youngest brother back to me, proving that you're honest men and not spies. And then I'll give your brother back to you and you'll be free to come and go in this country.'" 42.33-34

As they were emptying their food sacks, each man came on his purse of money. On seeing their money, they and their father were upset. 42.35

Their father said to them, "You're taking everything I've got! Joseph's gone, Simeon's gone, and now you want to take Benjamin. If you have your way, I'll be left with nothing." 42.36

Reuben spoke up: "I'll put my two sons in your hands as hostages. If I don't bring Benjamin back, you can kill them. Trust me with Benjamin; I'll bring him back." 42.37

But Jacob refused. "My son will not go down with you. His brother is dead and he is all I have left. If something bad happens to him on the road, you'll put my gray, sorrowing head in the grave." 42.38

043 The famine got worse. When they had eaten all the food they had brought back from Egypt, their father said, "Go back and get some more food." 43.1-2

But Judah said, "The man warned us most emphatically, 'You won't so much as see my face if you don't have your brother with you.' If you're ready to release our brother to go with us, we'll go down and get you food. But if you're not ready, we aren't going. What would be the use? The man told us, 'You won't so much as see my face if you don't have your brother with you.'" 43.3-5

Israel said, "Why are you making my life so difficult! Why did you ever tell the man you had another brother?" 43.6

They said, "The man pressed us hard, asking pointed questions about our family: 'Is your father alive? Do you have another brother?' So we answered his questions." 43.7

How did we know that he'd say, 'Bring your brother here?'

43.8-10 Judah pushed his father Israel. "Let the boy go; I'll take charge of him. Let us go and be on our way—if we don't get going, we're all going to starve to death—we and you and our children too! I'll take full responsibility for his safety; it's my life on the line for his. If I don't bring him back safe and sound, I'm the guilty one; I'll take all the blame. If we had gone ahead in the first place instead of procrastinating like this, we could have been there and back twice over."

43.11-14 Their father Israel gave in. "If it has to be, it has to be. But do this: stuff your packs with the finest products from the land you can find and take them to the man as gifts—some balm and honey, some spices and perfumes, some pistachios and almonds. And take plenty of money—pay back double what was returned to your sacks; that might have been a mistake. Take your brother and get going. Go back to the man. And may The Strong God give you grace in that man's eyes so that he'll send back your other brother along with Benjamin. For me, nothing's left; I've lost everything."

43.15-16 The men took the gifts, double the money, and Benjamin. They lost no time in getting to Egypt and meeting Joseph. When Joseph saw that they had Benjamin with them, he told his house steward, "Take these men into the house and make them at home. Butcher an animal and prepare a meal; these men are going to eat with me at noon."

43.17-18 The steward did what Joseph had said and took them inside. But they became anxious when they were brought into Joseph's home, thinking, "It's the money; he thinks we ran off with the money on our first trip down here. And now he's got us where he wants us—he's going to turn us into slaves and confiscate our donkeys."

43.19-22 So they went up to Joseph's house steward and talked to him in the doorway. They said, "Listen, master. We came down here one other time to buy food. On our way home, the first night out we opened our bags and found our money at the mouth of the bag—the exact amount we'd paid. We've brought it all back and have plenty more to buy more food with. We have no idea who put the money in our bags."

43.23 The steward said, "Everything's in order. Don't worry. Your God and the God of your father must have given you a bonus. I was paid in full." And with that, he presented Simeon to them.

43.24-25 He then took them inside Joseph's house and made them comfortable—gave them water to wash their feet and saw to the feeding of their donkeys. The brothers spread out their gifts as they waited for Joseph to show up at noon—they had been told that they were to have dinner with him.

43.26 When Joseph got home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought and bowed respectfully before him.

Joseph welcomed them and said, "And your old father whom you mentioned to me, how is he? Is he still alive?" 43:27

They said, "Yes—your servant our father is quite well, very much alive." And they again bowed respectfully before him. 43:28

Then Joseph picked out his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son. He asked, "And is this your youngest brother that you told me about?" Then he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." 43:29

Deeply moved on seeing his brother and about to burst into tears, Joseph hurried out into another room and had a good cry. Then he washed his face, got a grip on himself, and said, "Let's eat." 43:30-31

Joseph was served at his private table, the brothers off by themselves and the Egyptians off by themselves (Egyptians won't eat at the same table with Hebrews; it's repulsive to them). The brothers were seated facing Joseph, arranged in order of their age, from the oldest to the youngest. They looked at one another wide-eyed, wondering what would happen next. When the brothers' plates were served from Joseph's table, Benjamin's plate came piled high, far more so than his brothers. And so the brothers feasted with Joseph, drinking freely. 43:32-34

044 Joseph ordered his house steward: "Fill the men's bags with food—all they can carry—and replace each one's money at the top of the bag. Then put my chalice, my silver chalice, in the top of the bag of the youngest, along with the money for his food." He did as Joseph ordered. 44:1-2

At break of day the men were sent off with their donkeys. They were barely out of the city when Joseph said to his house steward, "Run after them. When you catch up with them, say, 'Why did you pay me back evil for good? This is the chalice my master drinks from; he also uses it for divination. This is outrageous!'" 44:3-5

He caught up with them and repeated all this word for word. 44:6

They said, "What is my master talking about? We would never do anything like that! Why, the money we found in our bags earlier, we brought back all the way from Canaan—do you think we'd turn right around and steal it back from your master? If that chalice is found on any of us, he'll die, and the rest of us will be your master's slaves." 44:7-9

The steward said, "Very well then, but we won't go that far. Whoever is found with the chalice will be my slave; the rest of you can go free." 44:10

They outdid each other in putting their bags on the ground and opening them up for inspection. The steward searched their bags, going from oldest to youngest. The chalice showed up in Benjamin's bag. 44:11-12

They ripped their clothes in despair, loaded up their donkeys, and went back to the city. 44:13

44.14 Joseph was still at home when Judah and his brothers got back. They threw themselves down on the ground in front of him.

44.15 Joseph accused them: "How can you have done this? You have to know that a man in my position would have discovered this."

44.16 Judah as spokesman for the brothers said, "What can we say, master? What is there to say? How can we prove our innocence? God is behind this, exposing how bad we are. We stand guilty before you and ready to be your slaves—we're all in this together, the rest of us as guilty as the one with the chalice."

44.17 "I'd never do that to you," said Joseph. "Only the one involved with the chalice will be my slave. The rest of you are free to go back to your father."

44.18-20 Judah came forward. He said, "Please, master, can I say just one thing to you? Don't get angry. Don't think I'm presumptuous—you're the same as Pharaoh as far as I'm concerned. You, master, asked us, 'Do you have a father and a brother?' And we answered honestly, 'We have a father who is old and a younger brother who was born to him in his old age. His brother is dead and he is the only son left from that mother. And his father loves him more than anything.'

44.21-22 "Then you told us, 'Bring him down here so I can see him.' We told you, master, that it was impossible: 'The boy can't leave his father; if he leaves, his father will die.'

44.23 "And then you said, 'If your youngest brother doesn't come with you, you won't be allowed to see me.'

44.24-26 "When we returned to our father, we told him everything you said to us. So when our father said, 'Go back and buy some more food,' we told him flatly, 'We can't. The only way we can go back is if our youngest brother is with us. We aren't allowed to even see the man if our youngest brother doesn't come with us.'

44.27-29 "Your servant, my father, told us, 'You know very well that my wife gave me two sons. One turned up missing. I concluded that he'd been ripped to pieces. I've never seen him since. If you now go and take this one and something bad happens to him, you'll put my old gray, grieving head in the grave for sure.'

44.30-32 "And now, can't you see that if I show up before your servant, my father, without the boy, this son with whom his life is so bound up, the moment he realizes the boy is gone, he'll die on the spot. He'll die of grief and we, your servants who are standing here before you, will have killed him. And that's not all. I got my father to release the boy to show him to you by promising, 'If I don't bring him back, I'll stand condemned before you, Father, all my life.'

44.33-34 "So let me stay here as your slave, not this boy. Let the boy go back with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? Oh, don't make me go back and watch my father die in grief!"

045 Joseph couldn't hold himself in any longer, keeping up a front before all his attendants. He cried out, "Leave! Clear out—everyone leave!" So there was no one with Joseph when he identified himself to his brothers. But his sobbing was so violent that the Egyptians couldn't help but hear him. The news was soon reported to Pharaoh's palace. 45:1-2

Joseph spoke to his brothers: "I am Joseph. Is my father really still alive?" But his brothers couldn't say a word. They were speechless—they couldn't believe what they were hearing and seeing. 45:3

"Come closer to me," Joseph said to his brothers. They came closer. "I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don't feel badly, don't blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives. There has been a famine in the land now for two years; the famine will continue for five more years—neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me on ahead to pave the way and make sure there was a remnant in the land, to save your lives in an amazing act of deliverance. So you see, it wasn't you who sent me here but God. He set me in place as a father to Pharaoh, put me in charge of his personal affairs, and made me ruler of all Egypt. 45:4-8

"Hurry back to my father. Tell him, 'Your son Joseph says: I'm master of all of Egypt. Come as fast as you can and join me here. I'll give you a place to live in Goshen where you'll be close to me—you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and anything else you can think of. I'll take care of you there completely. There are still five more years of famine ahead; I'll make sure all your needs are taken care of, you and everyone connected with you—you won't want for a thing.' 45:9-11

"Look at me. You can see for yourselves, and my brother Benjamin can see for himself, that it's me, my own mouth, telling you all this. Tell my father all about the high position I hold in Egypt, tell him everything you've seen here, but don't take all day—hurry up and get my father down here." 45:12-13

Then Joseph threw himself on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He then kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Only then were his brothers able to talk with him. 45:14-15

The story was reported in Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have come." It was good news to Pharaoh and all who worked with him. 45:16

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'This is the plan: Load up your pack animals; go to Canaan, get your father and your families and bring them back here. I'll settle you on the best land in Egypt—you'll live off the fat of the land.' 45:17-18

"Also tell them this: 'Here's what I want you to do: Take wagons from Egypt to carry your little ones and your wives and load up your father and come back. Don't worry about having to leave things behind; the best in all of Egypt will be yours.'" 45:19-20

45.21-23 And they did just that, the sons of Israel. Joseph gave them the wagons that Pharaoh had promised and food for the trip. He outfitted all the brothers in brand-new clothes, but he gave Benjamin three hundred pieces of silver and several suits of clothes. He sent his father these gifts: ten donkeys loaded with Egypt's best products and another ten donkeys loaded with grain and bread, provisions for his father's journey back.

45.24 Then he sent his brothers off. As they left he told them, "Take it easy on the journey; try to get along with each other."

45.25-28 They left Egypt and went back to their father Jacob in Canaan. When they told him, "Joseph is still alive—and he's the ruler over the whole land of Egypt!" he went numb; he couldn't believe his ears. But the more they talked, telling him everything that Joseph had told them and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him back, the blood started to flow again—their father Jacob's spirit revived. Israel said, "I've heard enough—my son Joseph is still alive. I've got to go and see him before I die."



46.1 **046** So Israel set out on the journey with everything he owned. He arrived at Beersheba and worshiped, offering sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

46.2 God spoke to Israel in a vision that night: "Jacob! Jacob!"

46.3-4 "Yes?" he said. "I'm listening."

God said, "I am the God of your father. Don't be afraid of going down to Egypt. I'm going to make you a great nation there. I'll go with you down to Egypt; I'll also bring you back here. And when you die, Joseph will be with you; with his own hand he'll close your eyes."

46.5-7 Then Jacob left Beersheba. Israel's sons loaded their father and their little ones and their wives on the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They arrived in Egypt with the livestock and the wealth they had accumulated in Canaan. Jacob brought everyone in his family with him—sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters. Everyone.

46.8 These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his descendants, who went to Egypt:

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

46.9 Reuben's sons: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

46.10 Simeon's sons: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

46.11 Levi's sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Judah's sons: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (Er and Onan had already died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 46.12

Issachar's sons: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron. 46.13

Zebulun's sons: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. 46.14

These are the sons that Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram. There was also his daughter Dinah. Altogether, sons and daughters, they numbered thirty-three. 46.15

Gad's sons: Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. 46.16

Asher's sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Also their sister Serah, and Beriah's sons, Heber and Malkiel. 46.17

These are the children that Zilpah, the maid that Laban gave to his daughter Leah, bore to Jacob—sixteen of them. 46.18

The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph was the father of two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, from his marriage to Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. They were born to him in Egypt. Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. 46.19-21

These are the children born to Jacob through Rachel—fourteen. 46.22

Dan's son: Hushim. 46.23

Naphtali's sons: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. 46.24

These are the children born to Jacob through Bilhah, the maid Laban had given to his daughter Rachel—seven. 46.25

Summing up, all those who went down to Egypt with Jacob—his own children, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six. Counting in the two sons born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family who ended up in Egypt numbered seventy. 46.26-27



Jacob sent Judah on ahead to get directions to Goshen from Joseph. When they got to Goshen, Joseph gave orders for his chariot and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. The moment Joseph saw him, he threw himself on his neck and wept. He wept a long time. 46.28-29

Israel said to Joseph, "I'm ready to die. I've looked into your face—you are indeed alive." 46.30

Joseph then spoke to his brothers and his father's family. "I'll go and tell Pharaoh, 'My brothers and my father's family, all of whom lived in Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they've always made their living by raising livestock. And they've brought their flocks and herds with them, along with everything else they own.' When Pharaoh calls you in and asks what kind of work you do, tell him, 'Your 46.31-34

servants have always kept livestock for as long as we can remember—we and our parents also.' That way he'll let you stay apart in the area of Goshen—for Egyptians look down on anyone who is a shepherd."

47.1 **047** Joseph went to Pharaoh and told him, "My father and brothers with their flocks and herds and everything they own have come from Canaan. Right now they are in Goshen."

47.2-3 He had taken five of his brothers with him and introduced them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked them, "What kind of work do you do?"

47.3-4 "Your servants are shepherds, the same as our fathers were. We have come to this country to find a new place to live. There is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine has been very bad there. Please, would you let your servants settle in the region of Goshen?"

47.5-6 Pharaoh looked at Joseph. "So, your father and brothers have arrived—a reunion! Egypt welcomes them. Settle your father and brothers on the choicest land—yes, give them Goshen. And if you know any among them that are especially good at their work, put them in charge of my own livestock."

47.7-8 Next Joseph brought his father Jacob in and introduced him to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked Jacob, "How old are you?"

47.9-10 Jacob answered Pharaoh, "The years of my sojourning are 130—a short and hard life and not nearly as long as my ancestors were given." Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left.

47.11-12 Joseph settled his father and brothers in Egypt, made them proud owners of choice land—it was the region of Rameses (that is, Goshen)—just as Pharaoh had ordered. Joseph took good care of them—his father and brothers and all his father's family, right down to the smallest baby. He made sure they had plenty of everything.



47.13-15 The time eventually came when there was no food anywhere. The famine was very bad. Egypt and Canaan alike were devastated by the famine. Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan to pay for the distribution of food. He banked the money in Pharaoh's palace. When the money from Egypt and Canaan had run out, the Egyptians came to Joseph. "Food! Give us food! Are you going to watch us die right in front of you? The money is all gone."

47.16-17 Joseph said, "Bring your livestock. I'll trade you food for livestock since your money's run out." So they brought Joseph their livestock. He traded them food for

their horses, sheep, cattle, and donkeys. He got them through that year in exchange for all their livestock.

When that year was over, the next year rolled around and they were back, saying, "Master, it's no secret to you that we're broke: our money's gone and we've traded you all our livestock. We've nothing left to barter with but our bodies and our farms. What use are our bodies and our land if we stand here and starve to death right in front of you? Trade us food for our bodies and our land. We'll be slaves to Pharaoh and give up our land—all we ask is seed for survival, just enough to live on and keep the farms alive." 47:18-19

So Joseph bought up all the farms in Egypt for Pharaoh. Every Egyptian sold his land—the famine was that bad. That's how Pharaoh ended up owning all the land and the people ended up slaves; Joseph reduced the people to slavery from one end of Egypt to the other. 47:20-21

Joseph made an exception for the priests. He didn't buy their land because they received a fixed salary from Pharaoh and were able to live off of that salary. So they didn't need to sell their land. 47:22

Joseph then announced to the people: "Here's how things stand: I've bought you and your land for Pharaoh. In exchange I'm giving you seed so you can plant the ground. When the crops are harvested, you must give a fifth to Pharaoh and keep four-fifths for yourselves, for seed for yourselves and your families—you're going to be able to feed your children!" 47:23-24

They said, "You've saved our lives! Master, we're grateful and glad to be slaves to Pharaoh." 47:25

Joseph decreed a land law in Egypt that is still in effect, *A Fifth Goes to Pharaoh*. Only the priests' lands were not owned by Pharaoh. 47:26



And so Israel settled down in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property and flourished. They became a large company of people. Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years. In all, he lived 147 years. 47:27-28

When the time came for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said, "Do me this favor. Put your hand under my thigh, a sign that you're loyal and true to me to the end. Don't bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me alongside them." 47:29

"I will," he said. "I'll do what you've asked." 47:30

Israel said, "Promise me." Joseph promised. 47:31

Israel bowed his head in submission and gratitude from his bed.

48.1-2 **048** Some time after this conversation, Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." He took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went to Jacob. When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come," he roused himself and sat up in bed.

48.3-7 Jacob said to Joseph, "The Strong God appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. He said, 'I'm going to make you prosperous and numerous, turn you into a congregation of tribes; and I'll turn this land over to your children coming after you as a permanent inheritance.' I'm adopting your two sons who were born to you here in Egypt before I joined you; they have equal status with Reuben and Simeon. But any children born after them are yours; they will come after their brothers in matters of inheritance. I want it this way because, as I was returning from Paddan, your mother Rachel, to my deep sorrow, died as we were on our way through Canaan when we were only a short distance from Ephrath, now called Bethlehem."

48.8 Just then Jacob noticed Joseph's sons and said, "Who are these?"

48.9 Joseph told his father, "They are my sons whom God gave to me in this place."

48.9-11 "Bring them to me," he said, "so I can bless them." Israel's eyesight was poor from old age; he was nearly blind. So Joseph brought them up close. Old Israel kissed and embraced them and then said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has let me see your children as well!"

48.12-16 Joseph took them from Israel's knees and bowed respectfully, his face to the ground. Then Joseph took the two boys, Ephraim with his right hand setting him to Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand setting him to Israel's right, and stood them before him. But Israel crossed his arms and put his right hand on the head of Ephraim who was the younger and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the first-born. Then he blessed them:

The God before whom walked
 my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
 The God who has been my shepherd
 all my lifelong to this very day,
 The Angel who delivered me from every evil,
 Bless the boys.
 May my name be echoed in their lives,
 and the names of Abraham and Isaac, my fathers,
 And may they grow
 covering the Earth with their children.

When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought he had made a mistake, so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's, saying, "That's the wrong head, Father; the other one is the firstborn; place your right hand on his head." 48.17-18

But his father wouldn't do it. He said, "I know, my son, but I know what I'm doing. He also will develop into a people, and he also will be great. But his younger brother will be even greater and his descendants will enrich nations." Then he blessed them both. 48.19-20

Israel will use your names to give blessings:
May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.

In that he made it explicit: he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. 48.20

Israel then said to Joseph, "I'm about to die. God be with you and give you safe passage back to the land of your fathers. As for me, I'm presenting you, as the first among your brothers, the ridge of land I took from Amorites with my sword and bow." 48.21-22



049 Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather around. I want to tell you what you can expect in the days to come." 49.1

Come together, listen sons of Jacob,
listen to Israel your father. 49.2

Reuben, you're my firstborn,
my strength, first proof of my manhood,
at the top in honor and at the top in power,
But like a bucket of water spilled,
you'll be at the top no more,
Because you climbed into your father's marriage bed,
mounting that couch, and you defiled it. 49.3-4

Simeon and Levi are two of a kind,
ready to fight at the drop of a hat.
I don't want anything to do with their vendettas,
want no part in their bitter feuds;
They kill men in fits of temper,
slash oxen on a whim. 49.5-6

- 49.7 A curse on their uncontrolled anger,
on their indiscriminate wrath.
I'll throw them out with the trash;
I'll shred and scatter them like confetti throughout Israel.
- 49.8-12 You, Judah, your brothers will praise you:
Your fingers on your enemies' throat,
while your brothers honor you.
You're a lion's cub, Judah,
home fresh from the kill, my son.
Look at him, crouched like a lion, king of beasts;
who dares mess with him?
The scepter shall not leave Judah;
he'll keep a firm grip on the command staff
Until the ultimate ruler comes
and the nations obey him.
He'll tie up his donkey to the grapevine,
his purebred prize to a sturdy branch.
He will wash his shirt in wine
and his cloak in the blood of grapes,
His eyes will be darker than wine,
his teeth whiter than milk.
- 49.13 Zebulun settles down on the seashore;
he's a safe harbor for ships,
right alongside Sidon.
- 49.14-15 Issachar is one tough donkey
crouching between the corrals;
When he saw how good the place was,
how pleasant the country,
He gave up his freedom
and went to work as a slave.
- 49.16-17 Dan will handle matters of justice for his people;
he will hold his own just fine among the tribes of Israel.
Dan is only a small snake in the grass,
a lethal serpent in ambush by the road

When he strikes a horse in the heel,
and brings its huge rider crashing down.

I wait in hope 49.18
for your salvation, God.

Gad will be attacked by bandits, 49.19
but he will trip them up.

Asher will become famous for rich foods, 49.20
candies and sweets fit for kings.

Naphtali is a deer running free 49.21-26
that gives birth to lovely fawns.

Joseph is a wild donkey,
a wild donkey by a spring,
spirited donkeys on a hill.

The archers with malice attacked,
shooting their hate-tipped arrows;

But he held steady under fire,
his bow firm, his arms limber,

With the backing of the Champion of Jacob,
the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

The God of your father—may he help you!

And may The Strong God—may he give you his blessings,

Blessings tumbling out of the skies,
blessings bursting up from the Earth—
blessings of breasts and womb.

May the blessings of your father
exceed the blessings of the ancient mountains,
surpass the delights of the eternal hills;

May they rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the one consecrated among his brothers.

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; 49.27
all morning he gorges on his kill,
at evening divides up what's left over.

49.28 All these are the tribes of Israel, the twelve tribes. And this is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each one with his own special farewell blessing.



49.29-32 Then he instructed them: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah facing Mamre in the land of Canaan, the field Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial plot. Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried there; Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried there; I also buried Leah there. The field and the cave were bought from the Hittites."

49.33 Jacob finished instructing his sons, pulled his feet into bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50.1 **050** Joseph threw himself on his father, wept over him, and kissed him.



50.2-3 Joseph then instructed the physicians in his employ to embalm his father. The physicians embalmed Israel. The embalming took forty days, the period required for embalming. There was public mourning by the Egyptians for seventy days.

50.4-5 When the period of mourning was completed, Joseph petitioned Pharaoh's court: "If you have reason to think kindly of me, present Pharaoh with my request: My father made me swear, saying, 'I am ready to die. Bury me in the grave plot that I prepared for myself in the land of Canaan.' Please give me leave to go up and bury my father. Then I'll come back."

50.6 Pharaoh said, "Certainly. Go and bury your father as he made you promise under oath."

50.7-9 So Joseph left to bury his father. And all the high-ranking officials from Pharaoh's court went with him, all the dignitaries of Egypt, joining Joseph's family—his brothers and his father's family. Their children and flocks and herds were left in Goshen. Chariots and horsemen accompanied them. It was a huge funeral procession.

50.10 Arriving at the Atad Threshing Floor just across the Jordan River, they stopped for a period of mourning, letting their grief out in loud and lengthy lament. For seven days, Joseph engaged in these funeral rites for his father.

When the Canaanites who lived in that area saw the grief being poured out at the Atad Threshing Floor, they said, "Look how deeply the Egyptians are mourning." That is how the site at the Jordan got the name Abel Mizraim (Egyptian Lament). 50.11

Jacob's sons continued to carry out his instructions to the letter. They took him on into Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah facing Mamre, the field that Abraham had bought as a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite. 50.12-13



After burying his father, Joseph went back to Egypt. All his brothers who had come with him to bury his father returned with him. After the funeral, Joseph's brothers talked among themselves: "What if Joseph is carrying a grudge and decides to pay us back for all the wrong we did him?" 50.14-15

So they sent Joseph a message, "Before his death, your father gave this command: Tell Joseph, 'Forgive your brothers' sin—all that wrongdoing. They did treat you very badly.' Will you do it? Will you forgive the sins of the servants of your father's God?" 50.16-17

When Joseph received their message, he wept.

Then the brothers went in person to him, threw themselves on the ground before him and said, "We'll be your slaves." 50.18

Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid. Do I act for God? Don't you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now—life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I'll take care of you and your children." He reassured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart. 50.19-21

Joseph continued to live in Egypt with his father's family. Joseph lived 110 years. He lived to see Ephraim's sons into the third generation. The sons of Makir, Manasse's son, were also recognized as Joseph's. 50.22-23

At the end, Joseph said to his brothers, "I am ready to die. God will most certainly pay you a visit and take you out of this land and back to the land he so solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." 50.24

Then Joseph made the sons of Israel promise under oath, "When God makes his visitation, make sure you take my bones with you as you leave here." 50.25

Joseph died at the age of 110 years. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt. 50.26

NEWTESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION NEW TESTAMENT

(INTRO) NEW TESTAMENT

The arrival of Jesus signaled the beginning of a new era. God entered history in a personal way, and made it unmistakably clear that he is on our side, doing everything possible to save us. It was all presented and worked out in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It was, and is, hard to believe—seemingly too good to be true.

But one by one, men and women did believe it, believed Jesus was God alive among them and for them. Soon they would realize that he also lived in them. To their great surprise they found themselves living in a world where God called all the shots—had the first word on everything; had the last word on everything. That meant that everything, quite literally every thing, had to be re-centered, re-imagined, and re-thought.

They went at it with immense gusto. They told stories of Jesus and arranged his teachings in memorable form. They wrote letters. They sang songs. They prayed. One of them wrote an extraordinary poem based on holy visions. There was no apparent organization to any of this; it was all more or less spontaneous and, to the eye of the casual observer, haphazard. Over the course of about fifty years, these writings added up to what would later be compiled by the followers of Jesus and designated “The New Testament.”

Three kinds of writing—eyewitness stories, personal letters, and a visionary poem—make up the book. Five stories, twenty-one letters, one poem.

In the course of this writing and reading, collecting and arranging, with no one apparently in charge, the early Christians, whose lives were being changed and shaped by what they were reading, arrived at the conviction that there was, in fact, someone in charge—God’s Holy Spirit was behind and in it all. In retrospect, they could see that it was not at all random or haphazard, that every word worked with every other word, and that all the separate documents worked in intricate harmony. There was nothing accidental in any of this, nothing merely circumstantial. They were bold to call

what had been written “God’s Word,” and trusted their lives to it. They accepted its authority over their lives. Most of its readers since have been similarly convinced.

A striking feature in all this writing is that it was done in the street language of the day, the idiom of the playground and marketplace. In the Greek-speaking world of that day, there were two levels of language: formal and informal. Formal language was used to write philosophy and history, government decrees and epic poetry. If someone were to sit down and consciously write for posterity, it would of course be written in this formal language with its learned vocabulary and precise diction. But if the writing was routine—shopping lists, family letters, bills, and receipts—it was written in the common, informal idiom of everyday speech, street language.

And this is the language used throughout the New Testament. Some people are taken aback by this, supposing that language dealing with a holy God and holy things should be elevated—stately and ceremonial. But one good look at Jesus—his preference for down-to-earth stories and easy association with common people—gets rid of that supposition. For Jesus is the descent of God to our lives, just as they are, not the ascent of our lives to God, hoping he might approve when he sees how hard we try.

And that is why the followers of Jesus in their witness and preaching, translating and teaching, have always done their best to get the Message—the “good news”—into the language of whatever streets they happen to be living on. In order to understand the Message right, the language must be right—not a refined language that appeals to our aspirations after the best but a rough and earthy language that reveals God’s presence and action where we least expect it, catching us when we are up to our elbows in the soiled ordinariness of our lives and God is the furthest thing from our minds.

This version of the New Testament in a contemporary idiom keeps the language of the Message current and fresh and understandable in the same language in which we do our shopping, talk with our friends, worry about world affairs, and teach our children their table manners. The goal is not to render a word-for-word conversion of Greek into English, but rather to

(INTRO) NEW TESTAMENT

convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak.

In the midst of doing this work, I realized that this is exactly what I have been doing all my vocational life. For thirty-five years as a pastor I stood at the border between two languages, biblical Greek and everyday English, acting as a translator, providing the right phrases, getting the right words so that the men and women to whom I was pastor could find their way around and get along in this world where God has spoken so decisively and clearly in Jesus. I did it from the pulpit and in the kitchen, in hospitals and restaurants, on parking lots and at picnics, always looking for an English way to make the biblical text relevant to the conditions of the people.

INTRODUCTION **MATTHEW**

(INTRO)MATTHEW

The story of Jesus doesn't begin with Jesus. God had been at work for a long time. Salvation, which is the main business of Jesus, is an old business. Jesus is the coming together in final form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world.

Matthew opens the New Testament by setting the local story of Jesus in its world historical context. He makes sure that as we read his account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the connections with everything that has gone before. "Fulfilled" is one of Matthew's characteristic verbs: such and such happened "that it might be *fulfilled*." Jesus is unique, but he is not odd.

Better yet, Matthew tells the story in such a way that not only is everything previous to us completed in Jesus, *we* are completed in Jesus. Every day we wake up in the middle of something that is already going on, that has been going on for a long time: genealogy and geology, history and culture, the cosmos—God. We are neither accidental nor incidental to the story. We get orientation, briefing, background, reassurance.

Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all the parts of our lives—work, family, friends, memories, dreams—also completed in Jesus. Lacking such a context, we are in danger of seeing Jesus as a mere diversion from the concerns announced in the newspapers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

MATTHEW

001 The family tree of Jesus Christ, David's son, Abraham's son:

1:1
12:6

Abraham had Isaac,
Isaac had Jacob,
Jacob had Judah and his brothers,
Judah had Perez and Zerah (the mother was Tamar),
Perez had Hezron,
Hezron had Aram,
Aram had Amminadab,
Amminadab had Nahshon,
Nahshon had Salmon,
Salmon had Boaz (his mother was Rahab),
Boaz had Obed (Ruth was the mother),
Obed had Jesse,
Jesse had David,
and David became king.

David had Solomon (Uriah's wife was the mother),
Solomon had Rehoboam,

1:6-11

Rehoboam had Abijah,
Abijah had Asa,
Asa had Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat had Joram,
Joram had Uzziah,
Uzziah had Jotham,
Jotham had Ahaz,
Ahaz had Hezekiah,
Hezekiah had Manasseh,
Manasseh had Amon,
Amon had Josiah,
Josiah had Jehoiachin and his brothers,
and then the people were taken into the Babylonian exile.

1.12-16 When the Babylonian exile ended,
Jehoiachin had Shealtiel,
Shealtiel had Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel had Abiud,
Abiud had Eliakim,
Eliakim had Azor,
Azor had Zadok,
Zadok had Achim,
Achim had Eliud,
Eliud had Eleazar,
Eleazar had Matthan,
Matthan had Jacob,
Jacob had Joseph, Mary's husband,
the Mary who gave birth to Jesus,
the Jesus who was called Christ.

1.17 There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David,
another fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile,
and yet another fourteen from the Babylonian exile to Christ.

The Birth of Jesus

1.18-19 The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they came to the marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined

but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." This would bring the prophet's embryonic sermon to full term: 1:20-23

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;
They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us").

Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus. 1:24-25

Scholars from the East

002 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him." 2:1-2

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" 2:3-4

They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly: 2:5-6

It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land,
no longer bringing up the rear.
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel."

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship." 2:7-8

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star 2:9-10

they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

2.11 They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

2.12 In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.



2.13 After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him."

2.14-15 Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: "I called my son out of Egypt."

2.16-18 Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he'd gotten from the scholars.) That's when Jeremiah's sermon was fulfilled:

A sound was heard in Ramah,
weeping and much lament.
Rachel weeping for her children,
Rachel refusing all solace,
Her children gone,
dead and buried.

2.19-20 Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

2.21-23 Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of

Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Thunder in the Desert!

003 While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called “the Baptizer,” was preaching in the desert country of Judea. His message was simple and austere, like his desert surroundings: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.” 3:1-2

John and his message were authorized by Isaiah’s prophecy: 3:3

Thunder in the desert!
Prepare for God’s arrival!
Make the road smooth and straight!

John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life. 3:4-6

When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and blossoming? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.” 3:7-10

“I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.” 3:11-12



Jesus then appeared, arriving at the Jordan River from Galilee. He wanted John to baptize him. John objected, “I’m the one who needs to be baptized, not *you!*” 3:13-14

But Jesus insisted. “Do it. God’s work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism.” So John did it. 3:15

3.16-17 The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God's Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."

The Test

4.1-3 **004** Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: "Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread."

4.4 Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

4.5-6 For the second test the Devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple and said, "Since you are God's Son, jump." The Devil goaded him by quoting Psalm 91: "He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so that you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone."

4.7 Jesus countered with another citation from Deuteronomy: "Don't you dare test the Lord your God."

4.8-9 For the third test, the Devil took him on the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, "They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours."

4.10 Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

4.11 The Test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs.

Teaching and Healing

4.12-17 When Jesus got word that John had been arrested, he returned to Galilee. He moved from his hometown, Nazareth, to the lakeside village Capernaum, nestled at the base of the Zebulun and Naphtali hills. This move completed Isaiah's sermon:

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
road to the sea, over Jordan,
Galilee, crossroads for the nations.

People sitting out their lives in the dark
 saw a huge light,
 Sitting in that dark, dark country of death,
 they watched the sun come up.

This Isaiah-prophesied sermon came to life in Galilee the moment Jesus started preaching. He picked up where John left off: "Change your life. God's kingdom is here."

Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass." They didn't ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed. 4.18-20

A short distance down the beach they came upon another pair of brothers, James and John, Zebedee's sons. These two were sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishnets. Jesus made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father. 4.21-22

From there he went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God's kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God's government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with an ailment, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from Galilee, crowds came from the "Ten Towns" across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan. 4.23-25

You're Blessed

005 When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said: 5.1-2

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. 5.3

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. 5.4

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. 5.5

That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

5.6 "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

5.7 "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

5.8 "You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

5.9 "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

5.10 "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

5.11-12 "Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

Salt and Light

5.13 "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

5.14-16 "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

Completing God's Law

5.17-18 "Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God's Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law will be alive and working.

"Trivialize even the smallest item in God's Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won't know the first thing about entering the kingdom. 5:19-20

Murder

"You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill. 5:21-22

"This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God. 5:23-24

"Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you're likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won't get out without a stiff fine. 5:25-26

Adultery and Divorce

"You know the next commandment pretty well, too: 'Don't go to bed with another's spouse.' But don't think you've preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your *heart* can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your *body*. Those leering looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt. 5:27-28

"Let's not pretend this is easier than it really is. If you want to live a morally pure life, here's what you have to do: You have to blind your right eye the moment you catch it in a lustful leer. You have to choose to live one-eyed or else be dumped on a moral trash pile. And you have to chop off your right hand the moment you notice it raised threateningly. Better a bloody stump than your entire being discarded for good in the dump. 5:29-30

"Remember the Scripture that says, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights?' Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are 'legal.' Please, no more pretending. If you divorce your wife, you're responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, 5:31-32

you're automatically an adulterer yourself. You can't use legal cover to mask a moral failure.

Empty Promises

5.33-37 "And don't say anything you don't mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, 'I'll pray for you,' and never doing it, or saying, 'God be with you,' and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say 'yes' and 'no.' When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.

Love Your Enemies

5.38-42 "Here's another old saying that deserves a second look: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Is that going to get us anywhere? Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

5.43-47 "You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

5.48 "In a word, what I'm saying is, *Grow up*. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

The World Is Not a Stage

6.1 **006** "Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding.

6.2-4 "When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—'playactors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as

someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

Pray with Simplicity

"And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? 6.5

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. 6.6

"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: 6.7-13

Our Father in heaven,
 Reveal who you are.
 Set the world right;
 Do what's best—
 as above, so below.
 Keep us alive with three square meals.
 Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
 Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
 You're in charge!
 You can do anything you want!
 You're ablaze in beauty!
 Yes. Yes. Yes.

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part. 6.14-15

"When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. 6.16-18

God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

A Life of God-Worship

6.19-21 "Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or — worse! — stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

6.22-23 "Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

6.24 "You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both.

6.25-26 "If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

6.27-29 "Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

6.30-33 "If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

6.34 "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

A Simple Guide for Behavior

007 "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults— 7:1-5
unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt? It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.

"Don't be flip with the sacred. Banter and silliness give no honor to God. Don't 7:6
reduce holy mysteries to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you're only being cute and inviting sacrilege.

"Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and- 7:7-11
mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?

"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want 7:12
people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

Being and Doing

"Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing 7:13-14
formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.

"Be wary of false preachers who smile a lot, dripping with practiced sincerity. 7:15-20
Chances are they are out to rip you off some way or other. Don't be impressed with charisma; look for character. Who preachers *are* is the main thing, not what they say. A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook. These diseased trees with their bad apples are going to be chopped down and burned.

"Knowing the correct password—saying 'Master, Master,' for instance—isn't 7:21-23
going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.'

7.24-25 “These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

7.26-27 “But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don’t work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.”

7.28-29 When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard.

He Carried Our Diseases

8.1-2 **008** Jesus came down the mountain with the cheers of the crowd still ringing in his ears. Then a leper appeared and went to his knees before Jesus, praying, “Master, if you want to, you can heal my body.”

8.3-4 Jesus reached out and touched him, saying, “I want to. Be clean.” Then and there, all signs of the leprosy were gone. Jesus said, “Don’t talk about this all over town. Just quietly present your healed body to the priest, along with the appropriate expressions of thanks to God. Your cleansed and grateful life, not your words, will bear witness to what I have done.”

8.5-6 As Jesus entered the village of Capernaum, a Roman captain came up in a panic and said, “Master, my servant is sick. He can’t walk. He’s in terrible pain.”

8.7 Jesus said, “I’ll come and heal him.”

8.8-9 “Oh, no,” said the captain. “I don’t want to put you to all that trouble. Just give the order and my servant will be fine. I’m a man who takes orders and gives orders. I tell one soldier, ‘Go,’ and he goes; to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

8.10-12 Taken aback, Jesus said, “I’ve yet to come across this kind of simple trust in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how he works. This man is the vanguard of many outsiders who will soon be coming from all directions—streaming in from the east, pouring in from the west, sitting down at God’s kingdom banquet alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then those who grew up ‘in the faith’ but had no faith will find themselves out in the cold, outsiders to grace and wondering what happened.”

8.13 Then Jesus turned to the captain and said, “Go. What you believed could happen has happened.” At that moment his servant became well.

By this time they were in front of Peter's house. On entering, Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed, burning up with fever. He touched her hand and the fever was gone. No sooner was she up on her feet than she was fixing dinner for him. 8.14-15

That evening a lot of demon-afflicted people were brought to him. He relieved the inwardly tormented. He cured the bodily ill. He fulfilled Isaiah's well-known sermon: 8.16-17

He took our illnesses,
He carried our diseases.

Your Business Is Life, Not Death

When Jesus saw that a curious crowd was growing by the minute, he told his disciples to get him out of there to the other side of the lake. As they left, a religion scholar asked if he could go along. "I'll go with you, wherever," he said. 8.18-19

Jesus was curt: "Are you ready to rough it? We're not staying in the best inns, you know." 8.20

Another follower said, "Master, excuse me for a couple of days, please. I have my father's funeral to take care of." 8.21

Jesus refused. "First things first. Your business is life, not death. Follow me. Pursue life." 8.22



Then he got in the boat, his disciples with him. The next thing they knew, they were in a severe storm. Waves were crashing into the boat—and he was sound asleep! They roused him, pleading, "Master, save us! We're going down!" 8.23-25

Jesus reprimanded them. "Why are you such cowards, such faint-hearts?" Then he stood up and told the wind to be silent, the sea to quiet down: "Silence!" The sea became smooth as glass. 8.26

The men rubbed their eyes, astonished. "What's going on here? Wind and sea come to heel at his command!" 8.27

The Madmen and the Pigs

They landed in the country of the Gadarenes and were met by two madmen, victims of demons, coming out of the cemetery. The men had terrorized the region for so long that no one considered it safe to walk down that stretch of road anymore. Seeing Jesus, the madmen screamed out, "What business do you have giving us a hard time? You're the Son of God! You weren't supposed to show up here yet!" Off in the distance a herd of pigs was browsing and rooting. The evil spirits begged 8.28-31

Jesus, "If you kick us out of these men, let us live in the pigs."

8.32-34 Jesus said, "Go ahead, but get out of here!" Crazed, the pigs stampeded over a cliff into the sea and drowned. Scared to death, the swineherds bolted. They told everyone back in town what had happened to the madmen and the pigs. Those who heard about it were angry about the drowned pigs. A mob formed and demanded that Jesus get out and not come back.

Who Needs a Doctor?

9.1-3 **009** Back in the boat, Jesus and the disciples recrossed the sea to Jesus' hometown. They were hardly out of the boat when some men carried a paraplegic on a stretcher and set him down in front of them. Jesus, impressed by their bold belief, said to the paraplegic, "Cheer up, son. I forgive your sins." Some religion scholars whispered, "Why, that's blasphemy!"

9.4-8 Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why this gossipy whispering? Which do you think is simpler: to say, 'I forgive your sins,' or, 'Get up and walk? Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both. . . ." At this he turned to the paraplegic and said, "Get up. Take your bed and go home." And the man did it. The crowd was awestruck, amazed and pleased that God had authorized Jesus to work among them this way.

9.9 Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him.

9.10-11 Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus' followers. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and riff-raff?"

9.12-13 Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."

Kingdom Come

9.14 A little later John's followers approached, asking, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees rigorously discipline body and spirit by fasting, but your followers don't?"

9.15 Jesus told them, "When you're celebrating a wedding, you don't skimp on the cake and wine. You feast. Later you may need to pull in your belt, but not now. No one throws cold water on a friendly bonfire. This is Kingdom Come!"

9.16-17 He went on, "No one cuts up a fine silk scarf to patch old work clothes; you want fabrics that match. And you don't put your wine in cracked bottles."

Just a Touch

As he finished saying this, a local official appeared, bowed politely, and said, "My daughter has just now died. If you come and touch her, she will live." Jesus got up and went with him, his disciples following along. 9.18-19

Just then a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years slipped in from behind and lightly touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, "If I can just put a finger on his robe, I'll get well." Jesus turned—caught her at it. Then he reassured her: "Courage, daughter. You took a risk of faith, and now you're well." The woman was well from then on. 9.20-22

By now they had arrived at the house of the town official, and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and the neighbors bringing in casseroles. Jesus was abrupt: "Clear out! This girl isn't dead. She's sleeping." They told him he didn't know what he was talking about. But when Jesus had gotten rid of the crowd, he went in, took the girl's hand, and pulled her to her feet—alive. The news was soon out, and traveled throughout the region. 9.23-26

Become What You Believe

As Jesus left the house, he was followed by two blind men crying out, "Mercy, Son of David! Mercy on us!" When Jesus got home, the blind men went in with him. Jesus said to them, "Do you really believe I can do this?" They said, "Why, yes, Master!" 9.27-28

He touched their eyes and said, "Become what you believe." It happened. They saw. Then Jesus became very stern. "Don't let a soul know how this happened." But they were hardly out the door before they started blabbing it to everyone they met. 9.29-31

Right after that, as the blind men were leaving, a man who had been struck speechless by an evil spirit was brought to Jesus. As soon as Jesus threw the evil tormenting spirit out, the man talked away just as if he'd been talking all his life. The people were up on their feet applauding: "There's never been anything like this in Israel!" 9.32-33

The Pharisees were left sputtering, "Hocus pocus. It's nothing but hocus pocus. He's probably made a pact with the Devil." 9.34

Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!" 9.35-38