

THE MESSAGE:
THE BIBLE IN
CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE

*The Message is a contemporary rendering
of the Bible from the original languages,
crafted to present its tone, rhythm, events,
and ideas in everyday language.*

THE DAILY
MESSAGE

THROUGH *the* BIBLE IN ONE YEAR

EUGENE H. PETERSON



NAV PRESS®

BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE

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The Daily Message: Through the Bible in One Year
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CONTENTS

How to Use <i>The Daily Message</i>	vii
How to Start a Group Bible Reading Program	ix
Preface to the Reader	xi
Introduction to <i>The Message</i>	xiii
Daily Readings	1
Appendix A: Daily Reading Schedule	1529
Appendix B: Eugene's Introductions to the Books of the Bible	1539
Appendix C: First Daily Reading for Each Book of the Bible	1580

HOW TO USE *THE DAILY MESSAGE*

The books of the Bible paint an intricate, panoramic picture of God's relationship with the human race. But it's hard to get the big picture from reading little pieces. And yet many Christians have gaps in that picture because they've only read bits and pieces of the greatest story ever told.

Maybe you're one of the myriad Christians who set off from the Garden of Eden in Genesis full of excitement and good intentions — only to find yourself wandering in the wilderness by the time you reached Leviticus. *The Daily Message* helps you grow in disciplined Bible reading by reading through the entire Bible in a year and reflecting on what you've read. You'll develop a “big picture” view of God and a deeper, more meaningful relationship with Him.

Here's how it works.

The Daily Message is the entire *Message Bible* arranged in 312 daily readings. The reading plan (based on the popular *Discipleship Journal Book-at-a-Time Reading Plan*) is comprised of two parts. First, you'll read an extended section (usually 3-4 chapters) of a book of the Bible. That will be followed by a shorter, encouraging reading from Psalms, Proverbs, or Isaiah. And to make sure you get the most out of what you read, each day's reading concludes with two thought-provoking questions — one from each section — to help you reflect on Scripture and apply its truth to daily living.

You'll notice that there are no verse numbers breaking up the text. This allows you to concentrate on complete sections of the text rather than on isolated verses. This “big picture” approach helps keep ideas and concepts in context.

Read. Reflect. Relax.

One of the biggest frustrations with many Bible reading plans is “getting behind.” If you miss a day, you have to read twice as much the next day just to keep up. *The Daily Message* builds in time to accommodate missed readings. You'll only have six readings a week. You can use that seventh day to reflect on what you've read — or to get caught up if you've missed a day.

Read at your own pace.

You don't have to read through the entire Bible in one year. You can use your *Daily Message* over a longer period of time. Simply ignore the dates associated with each daily reading and use the book's ribbon marker to keep track of your place.

Something old. Something new.

Your reading plan lets you focus on one book of the Bible at a time, allowing you to absorb the whole story before moving on to new material. But your extended daily readings will also alternate between an Old Testament book and a New Testament book, so you'll more clearly see the connecting themes between the two testaments of Scripture. By alternating between Old and New, you avoid the feeling of being "stuck" in the Old Testament. And you'll discover the truth in the old adage: "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed."

Bonus material.

The Message was conceived and written as a reading Bible—one that communicates the timeless truths of Scripture in contemporary language. Author Eugene Peterson put prayerful thought into each part of this translation. If you want additional background information about what you're reading, you can check out Eugene's insightful introductory comments in appendix B.

Ten minutes a day. You can do this!

If you've ever been frustrated by plans that feel like a forced march through the Scriptures, take heart. *The Daily Message* will guide you through the entire Bible in one year—with about ten minutes of reading a day! *You can do this!* And when you're finished, you'll have the "big picture" and a new appreciation for what God has done. May He richly bless you as you get caught up in God's great story!

HOW TO START A GROUP BIBLE READING PROGRAM

Why have a daily reading Bible like *The Daily Message*? Maybe to learn the discipline of daily time in God's Word or to finally get through the entire Bible or just to read Scripture for the joy of it. No matter what your reason, staying motivated month after month can be a big challenge. We start out with great intentions, but interruptions, busyness, and even the discouraging work of Satan all fight against us as we try to read the Word consistently.

That's where the benefit of a group Bible-reading program comes in. "One friend sharpens another," according to Proverbs 27:17. Ecclesiastes 4:9 and 12 encourage us that "it's better to have a partner than go it alone" and "with a friend you can face the worst." We need to "speak encouraging words to one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11), especially about spending time in God's Word. We need encouragement when we fall behind or lose heart.

Many who have completed a Bible-reading plan will tell you that encouragement from others was one of the most important factors in their making it all the way through. It's so helpful knowing there is someone else you can talk to about the Word, someone who is reading the very same passage at the very same time.

Starting a Bible-reading group is easy if you follow a few simple steps:

1. Start by praying that God will bring to mind others who will benefit from reading the Bible through with you.
2. Speak to them about your idea the next time you see them, encouraging them with the benefits of daily time in the Word, reading through the entire Bible, or just enjoying Scripture.
3. Don't be discouraged if only one other person expresses interest. Your Bible-reading group does not have to be large to be effective.
4. Everyone should use the same Bible-reading guide (such as *The Daily Message*) or daily plan, starting at the same time and in the same book of the Bible.
5. If members of your group want to use different translations, just follow the same daily plan. You can download a selection of Bible-reading plans at www.navpress.com/Magazines/DJ/BibleReadingPlans.asp.

6. Discuss with the other participants when you will start the program, how you will encourage one another, and how often you will meet together or contact one another.
7. Now just get going! You can always figure out other details along the way.

As you read through the Bible together, try various ways of encouraging one another, being accountable to one another, and making Bible reading fun. Here are a few practical suggestions from successful Bible-reading groups:

- A Bible-reading plan that gives you one day off a week is more effective than a plan that requires seven-days-a-week reading. You can use the day off to catch up if you are falling behind or to meditate on passages from the previous week.
- Pair everyone in the group with an accountability partner. Have partners call each other once a week or make a point to talk at church or wherever they regularly fellowship together. This can be as simple as asking each other, “So, how did you do in your Bible reading this week?”
- Encourage participants to plan meetings with their accountability partner to pray for God’s guidance, for discipline, and for fresh insights into his Word.
- Print a list of everyone in the Bible-reading group so they can pray for one another and hold each other accountable.
- Every quarter or so, celebrate the accomplishment of having reached that milestone with a meal together or a special reward.
- Write out your impressions from the Scriptures you are reading. When you meet with your accountability partner, talk about some of the things you wrote.
- If any participants fall behind in their reading, encourage them to skip ahead to the current reading and keep going from there.
- Have the facilitator of the group send a weekly e-mail reminder to all the participants.
- If the participants are also a part of a Sunday school class or Bible study, begin each class with a time of sharing about what they are learning from Scripture.
- If a large percentage of your church or fellowship group is participating in the Bible-reading program, coordinate worship service or preaching with readings for that week.

Ideas on how to read through Scripture with a group are endless, so be creative. Don’t forget to praise and thank God for the privilege of having his eternal Word with you every day.

TO THE READER

If there is anything distinctive about *The Message*, perhaps it is because the text is shaped by the hand of a working pastor. For most of my adult life I have been given a primary responsibility for getting the message of the Bible into the lives of the men and women with whom I worked. I did it from pulpit and lectern, in home Bible studies and at mountain retreats, through conversations in hospitals and nursing homes, over coffee in kitchens and while strolling on an ocean beach. *The Message* grew from the soil of forty years of pastoral work.

As I worked at this task, this Word of God, which forms and transforms human lives, did form and transform human lives. Planted in the soil of my congregation and community the seed words of the Bible germinated and grew and matured. When it came time to do the work that is now *The Message*, I often felt that I was walking through an orchard at harvest time, plucking fully formed apples and peaches and plums from laden branches. There's hardly a page in the Bible I did not see lived in some way or other by the men and women, saints and sinners, to whom I was pastor—and then verified in my nation and culture.

I didn't start out as a pastor. I began my vocational 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 vocational 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 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 pulp fiction 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 our children.

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.

The Message is a reading Bible. It is not intended to replace the excellent study Bibles that are available. My intent here (as it was earlier in my congregation and community) is simply to get people reading it who don't know that the Bible is read-able at all, at least by them, and to get people who long ago lost interest in the Bible to read it again. But I haven't tried to make it easy—there is much in the Bible that is hard to understand. So at some point along the way, soon or late, it will be important to get a standard study Bible to facilitate further study. Meanwhile, read in order to live, praying as you read, "God, let it be with me just as you say."

— EUGENE H. PETERSON

THE MESSAGE

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 aren't used to this. We are used to reading books that explain things, or tell us what to do, or inspire or entertain us. But this is different. This is a world of revelation: God revealing to people just like us — men and women created in God's image — how God 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 participate in God's 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.

And so just reading this Bible, *The Message*, and listening to what we read, is the first thing. There will be time enough for study later on. But 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 do something or other, entertainment to while away a rainy day, wisdom that will guide us into living better. 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.



Our reading turns up some surprises. The biggest surprise for many is how accessible this book is to those who simply open it up and read it. Virtually anyone can read this Bible with understanding. The reason that new translations are made every couple of generations or so is to keep the language of the Bible current with the common speech we use, the very language in which it was first written. We don't have to be smart or well-educated to understand it, for it is written in the words and sentences we hear in the marketplace, on school playgrounds, and around the dinner table. Because the Bible is so famous and revered, many assume that we need experts to explain and interpret it for us—and, of course, there are some things that need to be explained. But the first men and women who listened to these words now written in our Bibles were ordinary, everyday, working-class people. One of the greatest of the early translators of the Bible into English, William Tyndale, said that he was translating so that “the boy that driveth the plough” would be able to read the Scriptures.

One well-educated African man, who later became one of the most influential Bible teachers in our history (Augustine), was greatly offended when he first read the Bible. Instead of a book cultivated and polished in the literary style he admired so much, he found it full of homespun, earthy stories of plain, unimportant people. He read it in a Latin translation full of slang and jargon. He took one look at what he considered the “unspiritual” quality of so many of its characters and the everydayness of Jesus, and contemptuously abandoned it. It was years before he realized that God had not taken the form of a sophisticated intellectual to teach us about highbrow heavenly culture so we could appreciate the finer things of God. When he saw that God entered our lives as a Jewish servant in order to save us from our sins, he started reading the Book gratefully and believably.

Some are also surprised that Bible reading does not introduce us to a “nicer” world. This biblical world is decidedly not an ideal world, the kind we see advertised in travel posters. Suffering and injustice and ugliness are not purged from the world in which God works and loves and

DAY 1 **January 1****Genesis 1–2**

HEAVEN AND EARTH

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"
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."
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
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."

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.

God looked over everything he had made;
 it was so good, so very good!
 It was evening, it was morning —
 Day Six.

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

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.

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!

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. 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.

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.”

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.

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.

The Man said,
 “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.

Psalm 1

How well God must like you —
 you don't hang out at Sin Saloon,
 you don't slink along Dead-End Road,
 you don't go to Smart-Mouth College.

Instead you thrill to GOD's Word,
 you chew on Scripture day and night.
 You're a tree replanted in Eden,
 bearing fresh fruit every month,
 Never dropping a leaf,
 always in blossom.

You're not at all like the wicked,
 who are mere windblown dust —
 Without defense in court,
 unfit company for innocent people.

GOD charts the road you take.
 The road *they* take is Skid Row.

1. What feelings does the rhythm of creation evoke in you?
2. Do you believe everything you just read? Why or why not?

January 2 DAY 2

Genesis 3-5

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?”

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.’”

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.”

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.

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.

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.

GOD called to the Man: “Where are you?”

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

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

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?”

“The serpent seduced me,” she said, “and I ate.”

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.”

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.”

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.

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

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!”

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.

Adam slept with Eve his wife. She conceived and had Cain. She said, “I’ve gotten a man, with GOD’s help!”

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

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.

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.”

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

GOD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?”

He said, “How should I know? Am I his babysitter?”

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.”

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.”

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.

Cain left the presence of GOD and lived in No-Man’s-Land, east of Eden.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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

THE FAMILY TREE OF THE HUMAN RACE

This is the family tree of the human race: When God created the human race, he made it godlike, with a nature akin to God. He created both male and female and blessed them, the whole human race.

When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son who was just like him, his very spirit and image, and named him Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Adam lived a total of 930 years. And he died.

When Seth was 105 years old, he had Enosh. After Seth had Enosh, he lived another 807 years, having more sons and daughters. Seth lived a total of 912 years. And he died.

When Enosh was ninety years old, he had Kenan. After he had Kenan, he lived another 815 years, having more sons and daughters. Enosh lived a total of 905 years. And he died.

When Kenan was seventy years old, he had Mahalalel. After he had Mahalalel, he lived another 840 years, having more sons and daughters. Kenan lived a total of 910 years. And he died.

When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he had Jared. After he had Jared, he lived another 830 years, having more sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years. And he died.

When Jared was 162 years old, he had Enoch. After he had Enoch, he lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Jared lived a total of 962 years. And he died.

When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he had Methuselah. Enoch walked steadily with God. After he had Methuselah, he lived another 300 years, having more sons and daughters. Enoch lived a total of 365 years.

Enoch walked steadily with God. And then one day he was simply gone: God took him.

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he had Lamech. After he had Lamech, he lived another 782 years. Methuselah lived a total of 969 years. And he died.

When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son. He named him Noah, saying, "This one will give us a break from the hard work of farming the ground that GOD cursed." After Lamech had Noah, he lived another 595 years, having more sons and daughters. Lamech lived a total of 777 years. And he died.

When Noah was 500 years old, he had Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Psalm 2

Why the big noise, nations?
 Why the mean plots, peoples?
 Earth-leaders push for position,
 Demagogues and delegates meet for summit talks,
 The God-deniers, the Messiah-defiers:
 "Let's get free of God!
 Cast loose from Messiah!"
 Heaven-throned God breaks out laughing.
 At first he's amused at their presumption;
 Then he gets good and angry.

Furiously, he shuts them up:
 “Don’t you know there’s a King in Zion? A coronation banquet
 Is spread for him on the holy summit.”

Let me tell you what GOD said next.
 He said, “You’re my son,
 And today is your birthday.
 What do you want? Name it:
 Nations as a present? continents as a prize?
 You can command them all to dance for you,
 Or throw them out with tomorrow’s trash.”

So, rebel-kings, use your heads;
 Upstart-judges, learn your lesson:
 Worship GOD in adoring embrace,
 Celebrate in trembling awe. Kiss Messiah!
 Your very lives are in danger, you know;
 His anger is about to explode,
 But if you make a run for God — you won’t regret it!

1. *What here reminds you of your own life? In what ways?*
2. *What is your response to these phrases: “adoring embrace,” “trembling awe,” and “Kiss Messiah”?*

January 3 DAY 3

Genesis 6-7

GIANTS IN THE LAND

When the human race began to increase, with more and more daughters being born, the sons of God noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful. They looked them over and picked out wives for themselves.

Then GOD said, “I’m not going to breathe life into men and women endlessly. Eventually they’re going to die; from now on they can expect a life span of 120 years.”

This was back in the days (and also later) when there were giants in the land. The giants came from the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. These were the mighty men of ancient lore, the famous ones.

NOAH AND HIS SONS

GOD saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil — evil, evil, evil from morning to night. GOD was sorry that he had made the human race in the first place; it broke his heart. GOD said, “I’ll get rid of my ruined creation, make a clean sweep: people, animals, snakes and bugs, birds — the works. I’m sorry I made them.”

But Noah was different. GOD liked what he saw in Noah.

This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, a man of integrity in his community. Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

As far as God was concerned, the Earth had become a sewer; there was violence everywhere. God took one look and saw how bad it was, everyone corrupt and corrupting — life itself corrupt to the core.

God said to Noah, “It’s all over. It’s the end of the human race. The violence is everywhere; I’m making a clean sweep.

“Build yourself a ship from teakwood. Make rooms in it. Coat it with pitch inside and out. Make it 450 feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. Build a roof for it and put in a window eighteen inches from the top; put in a door on the side of the ship; and make three decks, lower, middle, and upper.

“I’m going to bring a flood on the Earth that will destroy everything alive under Heaven. Total destruction.

“But I’m going to establish a covenant with you: You’ll board the ship, and your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives will come on board with you. You are also to take two of each living creature, a male and a female, on board the ship, to preserve their lives with you: two of every species of bird, mammal, and reptile — two of everything so as to preserve their lives along with yours. Also get all the food you’ll need and store it up for you and them.”

Noah did everything God commanded him to do.

Next God said to Noah, “Now board the ship, you and all your family — out of everyone in this generation, you’re the righteous one.

“Take on board with you seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and a female; one pair of every unclean animal, a male and a female; and seven pairs of every kind of bird, a male and a female, to insure their survival on Earth. In just seven days I will dump rain on Earth for forty days and forty nights. I’ll make a clean sweep of everything that I’ve made.”

Noah did everything God commanded him.

Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters covered the Earth. Noah and his wife and sons and their wives boarded the ship to escape the flood. Clean and unclean animals, birds, and all the crawling creatures came in pairs to Noah and to the ship, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. In seven days the floodwaters came.

It was the six-hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month that it happened: all the underground springs erupted and all the windows of Heaven were thrown open. Rain poured for forty days and forty nights.

That’s the day Noah and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, accompanied by his wife and his sons’ wives, boarded the ship. And with them every kind of wild and domestic animal, right down to all the kinds of creatures that crawl and all kinds of birds and anything that flies. They came to Noah and to the ship in pairs — everything and anything that had the breath of life in it, male and female of every creature came just as God had commanded Noah. Then God shut the door behind him.

The flood continued forty days and the waters rose and lifted the ship high over the Earth. The waters kept rising, the flood deepened on the Earth, the ship floated on the surface. The flood got worse until all the highest mountains were covered — the high-water mark reached twenty feet above the crest of the mountains. Everything died. Anything that moved — dead. Birds, farm animals, wild animals, the entire teeming exuberance of life — dead. And all people — dead. Every living, breathing creature that lived on dry land died; he wiped out the whole works — people and animals, crawling creatures and flying birds, every last one of them, gone. Only Noah and his company on the ship lived.

The floodwaters took over for 150 days.

Psalm 3

A DAVID PSALM, WHEN HE ESCAPED
FOR HIS LIFE FROM ABSALOM, HIS SON

GOD! Look! Enemies past counting!
Enemies sprouting like mushrooms,
Mobs of them all around me, roaring their mockery:
“Hah! No help for *him* from God!”

But you, GOD, shield me on all sides;
You ground my feet, you lift my head high;
With all my might I shout up to GOD,
His answers thunder from the holy mountain.

I stretch myself out. I sleep.
Then I'm up again — rested, tall and steady,
Fearless before the enemy mobs
Coming at me from all sides.

Up, GOD! My God, help me!
Slap their faces,
First this cheek, then the other,
Your fist hard in their teeth!

Real help comes from GOD.
Your blessing clothes your people!

1. Describe God's character in this passage.
2. What difference does it make whether God is truly the God you find here?

January 4 DAY 4

Genesis 8-9

Then God turned his attention to Noah and all the wild animals and farm animals with him on the ship. God caused the wind to blow and the floodwaters began to go down. The underground springs were shut off, the windows of Heaven closed and the rain quit. Inch by inch the water lowered. After 150 days the worst was over.

On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ship landed on the Ararat mountain range. The water kept going down until the tenth month. On the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains came into view. After forty days Noah opened the window that he had built into the ship.

He sent out a raven; it flew back and forth waiting for the floodwaters to dry up. Then he sent a dove to check on the flood conditions, but it couldn't even find a place to perch — water still covered the Earth. Noah reached out and caught it, brought it back into the ship.

He waited seven more days and sent out the dove again. It came back in the evening with a freshly picked olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew that the flood was about finished.

He waited another seven days and sent the dove out a third time. This time it didn't come back.

In the six-hundred-first year of Noah's life, on the first day of the first month, the flood had dried up. Noah opened the hatch of the ship and saw dry ground. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the Earth was completely dry.

God spoke to Noah: "Leave the ship, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives. And take all the animals with you, the whole menagerie of birds and mammals and crawling creatures, all that brimming prodigality of life, so they can reproduce and flourish on the Earth."

Noah disembarked with his sons and wife and his sons' wives. Then all the animals, crawling creatures, birds — every creature on the face of the Earth — left the ship family by family.

Noah built an altar to God. He selected clean animals and birds from every species and offered them as burnt offerings on the altar. God smelled the sweet fragrance and thought to himself, "I'll never again curse the ground because of people. I know they have this bent toward evil from an early age, but I'll never again kill off everything living as I've just done.

For as long as Earth lasts,
planting and harvest, cold and heat,
Summer and winter, day and night
will never stop."

God blessed Noah and his sons: He said, "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Every living creature — birds, animals, fish — will fall under your spell and be afraid of you. You're responsible for them. All living creatures are yours for food; just as I gave you the plants, now I give you everything else. Except for meat with its lifeblood still in it — don't eat that.

"But your own lifeblood I will avenge; I will avenge it against both animals and other humans.

Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans let his blood be shed,
Because God made humans in his image
reflecting God's very nature.
You're here to bear fruit, reproduce,
lavish life on the Earth, live bountifully!"

Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: "I'm setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you — birds, farm animals, wild animals — that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth."

God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I've set up between me and everything living on the Earth."

The sons of Noah who came out of the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah; from these three the whole Earth was populated.

Noah, a farmer, was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank from its wine, got drunk and passed out, naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and told his two brothers who were outside the tent. Shem and Japheth took a cloak, held it between them from their shoulders, walked backward and covered their father's nakedness, keeping their faces turned away so they did not see their father's exposed body.

When Noah woke up with his hangover, he learned what his youngest son had done. He said,

Cursed be Canaan! A slave of slaves,
 a slave to his brothers!
 Blessed be GOD, the God of Shem,
 but Canaan shall be his slave.
 God prosper Japheth,
 living spaciously in the tents of Shem.
 But Canaan shall be his slave.

Noah lived another 350 years following the flood. He lived a total of 950 years. And he died.

Psalm 4

A DAVID PSALM

When I call, give me answers. God, take my side!
 Once, in a tight place, you gave me room;
 Now I'm in trouble again: grace me! hear me!

You rabble—how long do I put up with your scorn?
 How long will you lust after lies?
 How long will you live crazed by illusion?

Look at this: look
 Who got picked by GOD!
 He listens the split second I call to him.

Complain if you must, but don't lash out.
 Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking.
 Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.

Why is everyone hungry for *more*? “More, more,” they say.
 “More, more.”
 I have God's more-than-enough,
 More joy in one ordinary day
 Than they get in all their shopping sprees.
 At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep,
 For you, GOD, have put my life back together.

1. *Imagine yourself on the ship—taking a moment with the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the textures, and the sights.*
2. *Do you relate to the psalmist? In what ways?*