

T H E O N E Y E A R[®]



PRAY *for*



LIFE



BIBLE



foreword by
JONI EARECKSON TADA

NLT[®]

The ONE
YEAR®

PRAY *for*
LIFE
BIBLE

*The entire New Living Translation
arranged in 365 daily readings*



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FOREWORD

Before You Begin

I am truly excited that you are joining me in using *The One Year Pray for Life Bible*, especially during this incredible season of opportunity in the Kingdom of Christ. When I look across our broken land and consider the heartbreaking needs around the globe, I am invigorated as never before to pray—to discipline myself to pray for life over the next twelve months and to use the Bible as my prayer guide.

As an aging quadriplegic and a Christ follower for over sixty years, I have witnessed a gradual eroding of the precious safeguards that protect the weak and vulnerable. Whether in America or in the darkest corners of the least-developed nations, a ferocious battle is being waged against all life. Who are the casualties of this war? The baby in Africa left to starve to death because his disability is considered a curse on the family. The clinically depressed teenager in Europe who qualifies for state-sanctioned, doctor-assisted death. The elderly woman in an unlicensed nursing home who suffers from loneliness and abuse. The preborn little girl who is aborted for the simple reason that her mother preferred a son.

I am not being an alarmist, nor am I exaggerating facts. A culture of death is advancing throughout the earth and is threatening lives—young and old. Look across the world and you will find that wherever there exists a famine of God's Word, all life is at risk.

You can see why I am so glad you have chosen to use *The One Year Pray for Life Bible*. We desperately need to pursue earnest worship of the Creator of life and sincere intercession on behalf of those who bear his image—every single human. Yes, works of mercy and justice are necessary, but prayer is the primary work in this battle. As Oswald Chambers wrote, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater works; prayer *is* the greater work."¹

Will You Be an Eleazar?

Let me tell you a Bible story. Eleazar was a great warrior who stood alongside the three mighty men of David. During a fierce battle against the Philistines, Israel's army gave up and fled, but Eleazar "killed Philistines until his hand was too tired to lift his sword, and the LORD gave him a great victory" (2 Samuel 23:10).

The king was impressed that Eleazar kept his heroic grasp on his sword and bravely fought on while others ran away. This exceptional warrior did not cower before the enemy; instead, he put his strength into his sword and rushed into battle with victory on his mind. Because of his noble courage and persistence, God smiled and gave his people a great victory—all because of one brave warrior.

I envision you as a modern-day Eleazar. Our land is teeming with strong and ruthless

¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest: Classic Language Paperback* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2017), October 17 entry.

enemies that war against life. God is calling you to battle on behalf of preborn children in danger of being aborted; families who are breaking apart; depressed teenagers; at-risk children; the homeless; the elderly and medically fragile; and those struggling against addiction, disease, and loneliness.

These people have a target on their backs. Because they are also created in the image of God, they are in the adversary's crosshairs—especially so because they are weak and vulnerable. These people are in need of earnest prayer support. They are being assaulted by overwhelming enemies such as euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence, abortion, and suicide. Pandemic can now be added to the national woes that threaten to overwhelm the vulnerable in our society. Consider how the coronavirus festered and left serious mental health challenges in its wake, not to mention fear and debilitating anxiety.

You are a modern-day Eleazar who will battle against these foes in our land, using prayer as a powerful weapon. You are the mighty warrior who will grasp the Sword of the Spirit—that is, the Word of God—in your hand. And with God's Word, you will not run away from the fray; you will overcome our enemy as you weave Scripture into your prayers by reading and praying through *The One Year Pray for Life Bible*.

This special edition of God's Word is designed for prayer warriors who long to champion the cause for life. It is filled with hundreds of prayer prompts and other resources to help you pray as God would *want* you to pray, whether your prayers are for aging seniors, despairing teens, fractured families, people with disabilities, people with mental health issues, children at risk, or young ones still in the womb. The heart of God is turned toward these precious ones whose lives are at risk because of the dark forces rising against them.

The Bible is the best prayer book you will ever possess. When we pray using the Sword of the Spirit, our praises and intercessions carry weight before God's throne. The Bible is full of language that you can infuse into your prayers, enriching each petition and intercession with an eternal perspective. The Bible is the key to finding God's will when we pray against the enemies in our land. Great themes abound—God's holiness, wisdom, faithfulness, sovereignty, love, and mercy—all of which beautify our praises, adorn our intercessions, embroider our petitions, and give bulk and significance to every supplication as we pray for life throughout our land.

Why This Bible Is Critical in the Battle for Life

We all want greater faith in prayer, but how do we gain greater faith? Romans 10:17 provides the answer: "Faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ." When you employ the Word of God in your prayers, your faith will grow—you will *believe* that God will accomplish great things through your intercessions. You will possess a greater authority in prayer, and your prayers will be large in their scope and importance.

It is wise to keep an open Bible before you as you pray. After all, the Bible underscores two things that God honors above all else: his name and his Word. "I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever" (Psalm 145:1). "Your promises [your words] are backed by all the honor of your name" (Psalm 138:2). When we bring God's Word directly into our prayers, we are bringing God's power into our prayers.

- "The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). God's Word gives our prayers life, infusing vitality into our praises and petitions and the thoughts that frame our petitions. God's Word is active and powerful, interjecting dynamism into our praises.

- “Does not my word burn like fire?” says the LORD. “Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes a rock to pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29). To use God’s Word in prayer is to employ divine power in breaking down spiritual strongholds and demolishing arguments of the enemy.
- “We never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn’t think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). If God’s Word works in our lives, think how much more it works in our prayers.

This Bible is especially powerful in *your* hands because it will lead you through twelve months of praise and intercession. Imagine how forcefully the Kingdom of Christ will be advanced through a year of Bible reading and prayer, all of it geared toward the sacredness of life.

My husband Ken and I have been reading through the Bible together for nearly fifteen years, and we have witnessed an astounding increase of faith in our prayers. As we read through the Bible each year, we have developed a fuller understanding of God’s redemptive plan in history and how much he values the life he has created. Ken and I boast in the Lord when we say that our prayers are rich and weighty as we accompany our Bible reading with prayer. We have invested years of praying for the sacredness of life to be exalted in our land.

For Ken and me, the discipline of reading through the Bible in a year and praying along through Scripture has forced us to meditate on our petitions—to think about what we are praying for. Over the many years of praying alongside our Bible reading, we can picture God and his responses:

- Referencing our Bible when we pray shows God we have thought through our praises and petitions and lined them up against the plumb line of Scripture.
- Using Scripture in our prayers demonstrates to God the importance we are attaching to our requests. It shows the high regard and appreciation we attach to his Word.
- Employing scriptural themes in prayer underscores that we desire to search out God’s heart in a matter and seek to know his will.
- Praying with an open Bible gives our prayer a “divine familiarity,” earmarking us as servants who possess a working knowledge of the most powerful prayer book ever written: the Word of God.

In closing, let me bring you back to the story of Eleazar. I want you to notice a powerful yet poignant insight in 2 Samuel 23:10. The King James Bible tells it this way: “[Eleazar] smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory.” Eleazar was so unyielding in battle, so persistent and confident in the outcome, so tireless—even as others retreated—that his hand and his sword became one. His flesh fused, as it were, with his sword. Pastor J. Saxtell observed that Eleazar did not realize that the hilt of the sword was eating down into the palm of his hand, and that while he was taking hold of the sword, the sword was taking hold of him.²

I believe that as you use *The One Year Pray for Life Bible*, it will take hold of your life. Your hand will fuse with the Sword of the Spirit. You will become one with the Word, and it will be your mark of valor and distinction. Others may cower as the culture of death moves through the earth like a dark, poisonous cloud. Others may retreat from the frontlines. Some may collapse

² “A Heroic Sword-Grasp,” Bible Hub, accessed May 29, 2020, https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/saxtell/a_heroic_sword-grasp.htm.

in fear before the enemy, overcome by anxiety and overwhelmed by battle fatigue. But you will stand firm on the frontlines, holding fast to Scripture and winning victories for the cause of life and for our King.

God has committed himself and his purposes to prayer. And the Word of God gives you great leverage as you pray for life. So be encouraged. Be blessed. Be invigorated. For Jesus Christ will delight to bring every intercession that has to do with life before his Father's throne. After all, he is the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and the Word of Life.

God bless you for taking hold of your sword—*The One Year Pray for Life Bible*—and gaining victories for the Prince of Life and his people!

Joni Eareckson Tada

Joni and Friends International Disability Center



THE BEYOND SUFFERING BIBLE:

Where Struggles Seem Endless, God's Hope Is Infinite

When the pain and hardships seem overwhelming, we can be blinded to the beautiful realities often hidden in the passages of the Bible. The *Beyond Suffering Bible* was created by Joni Eareckson Tada and her team to highlight the goodness of God during life's harshest times. It's jam-packed with resources to answer the tough questions, take you deeper into God's Word, and propel you to action.

- *A Word from Joni* devotionals offer encouragement and point to the hope found through out Scripture
- *Profiles* of Bible characters and contemporary Christians illustrate how to discover God's goodness during painful circumstances
- *Connection Points* offer thousands of study notes that specifically address suffering
- *Devotionals* dig deep and tackle some of the toughest questions about suffering
- *Book Introductions* orient readers to vital information and focus on key suffering and disability themes



Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105

The One Year Bible is divided into daily readings designed to guide you through the entire Bible in a year. But the arrangement doesn't take you straight through from Genesis to Revelation. Instead, each day you will find a portion of the Old Testament and the New Testament, plus short readings from Psalms and Proverbs. These four daily readings are grouped on consecutive pages, giving freshness and diversity to each day's reading experience. Many people have tried to read through the entire Bible in a year, but they quickly become frustrated when they get stuck in harder passages. This reading plan has helped millions of readers, including those who tried before but became frustrated, to successfully complete their reading of the entire Bible. And reading through the Bible will ensure that you will spend significant time engaged with God's Word.

Time spent genuinely engaged with God's Word has the potential to change your life. "The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible isn't just a book of human wisdom. It comes from God himself, and in it he gives us the wisdom and knowledge needed to live a life of faith. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Time spent in the Scriptures, in a very real sense, is time spent with God. There is no better place in this world for us to hear from God. The Bible is a special gift, but a gift we often leave on the shelf—unopened and unread. And as we open it and read its pages, we are opening a door to a relationship with the Author. He's waiting there to speak to us, with the help of his ever-present Spirit. He gave us the Scriptures because he wants us to hear from and know him. Approach your reading each day with this knowledge and expectation.

Engaging More Deeply with Scripture

In *The One Year Bible*, you are encouraged to read through the entire Bible in a year, and its structure provides a systematic daily plan for this. Most readers do their daily reading silently, often in a single sitting. However, since many of the readings are fairly long, it is easy to get distracted and to start "reading just to finish." If this is the case for you, you may find it helpful to slow down to engage more fully in the listening process.

Following is a list of concrete practices or tools that should help you engage more deeply

with Scripture. (Since everyone is different, not all of these practices may work for you. And some of the practices work better for longer passages, as opposed to single verses, and vice versa.) Use these tools to help you engage with God's Word more deeply.

Practice 1—Read It Aloud: This practice will slow you down and allow you to focus. Reading aloud takes about twice as long as silent reading. It also allows you to encounter God's Word twice—through both your eyes and ears—leading you to a more nuanced interaction with the text. (This is especially useful as you approach a longer passage.) As you read aloud, you could try to read the text interpretively—add color to your expression to help you more completely take in and express the message. You could even dramatize a scene. And if others are around, don't be afraid to share the experience with them!

Practice 2—Copy It: Take out a pen and paper and copy a verse or passage of particular interest. If you are a visual learner, this should help you focus on the text more intensely. It will also force you to slow down even more and approach it phrase by phrase, helping you savor the text as you would a meal of many courses. If you have some talent with your pen, express the meaning of the text with different kinds of scripts and ink colors. This will help you focus on the meaning in greater detail. Typing the text into your computer and formatting the text creatively could accomplish the same sort of thing. If your rendering turns out really well, frame it or send it to friends to encourage their reflection.

Practice 3—Summarize It: Take a journal or computer and write a summary for each reading in this Bible with just a single sentence. This could be a simple content summary, or perhaps a summary of what God said to you through the passage. Reading with this practice can help you stay focused and also help you create a personal tool for Bible review. As you finish reading a Bible book, summarize the entire book's core message in a sentence or paragraph. Then at the end of the year, try to summarize the message of the whole Bible. From your perspective, what is the Bible's unified message?

Practice 4—Paraphrase It: Take out a pen and paper, or start up your computer, and put some verses into your own words. Try to capture all the important parts of the passage without leaving anything out. This will help you pay attention to the details and to the rich meanings of the words. Drink in the text, digest its meaning, and write it again from the unique perspective God has given you. Don't worry about the word order; focus on the message. You will likely find that this leaves you with nuggets of wisdom to take away and to continue to think about.

Practice 5—Divide It: This practice is somewhat the opposite of summarizing the broad strokes of a passage. To divide a text, choose a particular sentence that is especially meaningful to you, like "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). Highlight each word of the sentence successively, and read it over and over again. This will allow you to see the verse from varied angles.

THE LORD is my shepherd.

As you do this, you will likely see truths in the text that you were blind to before.

Practice 6—Personalize It: Embrace or claim Scripture personally by taking a verse or passage that clearly applies to you and replacing the nouns or pronouns with your own name. This will drive home the truth that God is speaking about you and to you. The verse that

includes the text we just divided in Practice 5 might read, "The LORD is Susan's shepherd. Susan has all that she needs." You might also personalize it this way for a friend, your spouse, or your children.

Practice 7—Pray It: Many passages are helpful for guiding our prayers. They remind us of what is true and what is important to God. We can use these reminders as prayer prompts. Again, take the verse we looked at from Psalm 23. It might inspire a prayer like this: "Lord, you have reminded me that you are my Shepherd and that you can provide all that I need. As one of your sheep, I confess that I often don't follow you very closely. I'm often one of the lost sheep—one of those you need to search for in stormy weather and carry home. I can see that if I followed you more closely, I'd also be much closer to all that you have to offer me. The unmet needs I'm always complaining about would be better met if I just stayed near to my Shepherd. And I suppose sometimes I wander away looking to satisfy my wants rather than my real needs. Dear Shepherd, help me to stay close to your loving care and protection. Forgive my tendency to wander. Amen."

Practice 8—Memorize It: Putting Scripture to memory is the likely result of many of these other practices. For many of us, if we copy or read a verse again and again, we will soon know it by heart. To begin memorizing a text, repeating it is the best place to start. Read or copy a text three times a day for an entire month and then begin to recite it aloud for yourself on a regular basis. Then, if the appropriate opportunity arises, recite it for others. (Remember to learn the reference, too, so you can more easily locate it.) The psalm writer reminds us of why Scripture memorization is so important: "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

Practice 9—Share It: God's Word is good news, whether it comes in a story or parable, an account of one of Jesus' miracles, a psalm of praise, a promise of hope, or a wise proverb. When you've read something helpful, thought provoking, or inspiring, share it. As you do, you'll find that the message becomes more real for you too. If it's a story, retell it to someone in your own words. Try to capture all the details. If it's a short promise or proverb, email it to a friend, post it on an announcement board or refrigerator, carve it into a piece of wood to hang on a wall, bring it up for discussion with friends over coffee, or tweet it for anyone who might be watching. If you've heard from God and it means something to you, take the time to share it.

Practice 10—Live It: It's not just important to read and listen to God's Word. We also need to find ways to put it into practice. (Keeping this in mind as you read will also help you to focus.) We are reminded of this in the book of James: "Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves" (James 1:22). As you reflect on God's Word, conclude your time by thinking up ways to live it out. What can you put into action today?

Other Ways to Use the One-Year Reading Plan

Though *The One Year Bible* has led millions of readers through the Bible in one year, its arrangement is equally useful for guiding you through the Bible in two years, or even longer. If you feel too rushed or want to spend more time on each day's selections, here are a few other suggestions:

The Split One-Year Plan. Schedule time in both the morning and evening. Read the New Testament and Psalms selections in the morning and the Old Testament and Proverbs selections in the evening.

The Two-Year Plan. During the first year, read the Old Testament and Proverbs selections. Then during the second year, read the selections from the New Testament and Psalms.

The Three-Year Plan. Read the Old Testament selection the first year, the New Testament selection the second year, and the Psalms and Proverbs selections during the third year.

The Words of Praise and Wisdom Plan. Read the Psalms and Proverbs selections for each day. This will take you through the Psalms twice and Proverbs once during the year, giving you words of praise and wisdom to live by each day.

You need not limit yourself to these suggested plans. The arrangement of *The One Year Bible* makes it easy to devise any number of Bible reading plans to meet your particular needs.



The One Year Pray for Life Bible has been prepared especially for Bible readers who wish to read through the entire Bible in one year and to lift up in daily prayer the needs of the vulnerable and precious image bearers of God all around us. Millions of readers have enjoyed the convenient daily reading format featuring a passage from the Old Testament, the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs. In 365 daily readings, you will journey through the entire Bible and read through Psalms twice!

This special edition of *The One Year Bible* includes a daily prayer prompt and thoughtful reflections from the leaders of many ministries that work to protect the vulnerable. It opens with a clarion call to prayer from Joni Eareckson Tada, the Founder and CEO of Joni and Friends. We have prepared a user's guide to help you explore a variety of ways to engage with God's Word using *The One Year Pray for Life Bible*. You can find the User's Guide on page A9.

This edition of *The One Year Bible* contains the entire text of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation. Each revision of the New Living Translation has increased the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015. To see a complete list of the scholars involved in the New Living Translation Bible Translation Committee, please visit Tyndale.com/NLT/Scholars.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for these translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services. To read more about the translation process, please visit Tyndale.com/NLT/process.

We believe the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way. May this year and every year be enriched as you enjoy daily portions from God's Word, and may you see God at work as you join the prayer warriors around the world that are true champions of life.



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JANUARY 1

JANUARY FOCUS • Abortion has been called the greatest human-rights cause of our time, and it is estimated that more than 60 *million* unborn children have lost their lives. On the third weekend of this month we observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, remembering the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion. Join us in prayer for repentance, healing, and hope for our nation.

LORD, STARTING OUT WITH a new year and a new focus on prayer, I want to celebrate you as our Creator. You speak and life—*life!*—leaps into existence! How great you are! Let me not take this precious gift of life for granted or devalue any person made in your image. I come to you in repentance on behalf of my own complacency and of the callousness of our culture. Renew my zeal for your Word, and strengthen me as an advocate for life! Help me see life as you see it—the work of your hands and a reflection of your heart. Amen.

GENESIS 1:1–2:25

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens.

⁸God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that

grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing

offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened.

²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁹Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life." And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

^{2:1}So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains

were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³"At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

1:1 Or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .* 1:26a Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. 1:26b As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*. 1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. 2:6 Or *mist*. 2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of the man's side*.

MATTHEW 1:1–2:12

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham*:

- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac.
Isaac was the father of Jacob.
Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
- 3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).
Perez was the father of Hezron.
Hezron was the father of Ram.*
- 4 Ram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- 5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.
- 6 Jesse was the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
- 7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asa.*
- 8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.*
Jehoram was the father* of Uzziah.
- 9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
- 10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.
Manasseh was the father of Amon.*
Amon was the father of Josiah.
- 11 Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin* and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
- 12 After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
- 13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
- 14 Azor was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Akim.
Akim was the father of Eliud.
- 15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar.

Eleazar was the father of Matthan.
Matthan was the father of Jacob.

- 16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

¹⁸This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement* quietly.

²⁰As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,* for he will save his people from their sins."

²²All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

- 23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,*
which means 'God is with us.'"

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,* and we have come to worship him."

³King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

- 6 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities* of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

⁹After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*.
 1:3 Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9-10. 1:7 Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10. 1:8a Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram; also in 1:8b. See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note at 1 Chr 3:11. 1:8b Or *ancestor*; also in 1:11. 1:10 Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon; also in 1:10b. See 1 Chr 3:14. 1:11 Greek *Jecooniah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16. 1:19 Greek *to divorce her*. 1:21 *Jesus* means "The LORD saves." 1:23 Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10 (Greek version). 2:1 Or *royal astrologers*; Greek reads *magi*; also in 2:7, 16. 2:2 Or *star in the east*. 2:6a Greek *the rulers*. 2:6b Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2.

PSALM 1:1-6

- ¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
- ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.
- ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank,

bearing fruit each season.
 Their leaves never wither,
 and they prosper in all they do.

- ⁴ But not the wicked!
 They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.
- ⁵ They will be condemned at the time of judgment.
 Sinners will have no place among the godly.
- ⁶ For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,
 but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

PROVERBS 1:1-6

These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

- ² Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline,
 to help them understand the insights of the wise.
- ³ Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives,
 to help them do what is right, just, and fair.
- ⁴ These proverbs will give insight to the simple,
 knowledge and discernment to the young.
- ⁵ Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser.
 Let those with understanding receive guidance
- ⁶ by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables,
 the words of the wise and their riddles.

LORD, EVEN THOUGH ADAM AND EVE disobeyed, you continued to show them unimaginable grace and mercy. Help those who have believed the enemy's modern-day lies to turn back to Truth, and may your unfailing love redeem those who have made life-ending choices. Thank you for second chances. Help me to be as gracious with others as you are with me. Amen.



GENESIS 3:1-4:26

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you

must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only

the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, "You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die."

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, you are
cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.
You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike* your head,
and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.*"

¹⁷And to the man he said,

"Since you listened to your wife and ate
from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,

the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will struggle to scratch
a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return."

²⁰Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, "Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!" ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

^{4:1}Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced* a man!" ²Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields."* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

¹⁰But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me

from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. ¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment* is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!"

¹⁵The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

¹⁷Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²²Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubalcain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubalcain had a sister named Naamah. ²³One day Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴ If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,
then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!"

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,* for she said, "God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed." ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

3:8 Or Adam, and so throughout the chapter. 3:15 Or bruise; also in 3:15b. 3:16 Or And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you. 3:20 Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." 3:22 Or the man; Hebrew reads ha-adam. 4:1a Or the man; also in 4:25. 4:1b Or I have acquired. Cain sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "produce" or "acquire." 4:8 As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks

"Let's go out into the fields." 4:13 Or My sin. 4:16 Nod means "wandering." 4:18 Or the ancestor of, and so throughout the verse. 4:25 Seth probably means "granted"; the name may also mean "appointed."

MATTHEW 2:13–3:6

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."*

¹⁶Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. ¹⁷Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ "A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead."*

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰"Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

²¹So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²²But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. ²³So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

^{3:1}In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ²"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*" ³The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!
Clear the road for him!'"**

⁴John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild

honey. ⁵People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. ⁶And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

2:15 Hos 11:1. 2:18 Jer 31:15. 3:2 Or *has come, or is coming soon*. 3:3 Isa 40:3 (Greek version).

PSALM 2:1-12

- ¹ Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
- ² The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together
against the LORD
and against his anointed one.
- ³ "Let us break their chains," they cry,
"and free ourselves from slavery to God."
- ⁴ But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.
- ⁵ Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.
- ⁶ For the Lord declares, "I have placed my
chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem,* on my holy mountain."
- ⁷ The king proclaims the LORD's decree:
"The LORD said to me, 'You are my son.*
Today I have become your Father.*"
- ⁸ Only ask, and I will give you the nations as
your inheritance,

- the whole earth as your possession.
- ⁹ You will break* them with an iron rod
and smash them like clay pots."
- ¹⁰ Now then, you kings, act wisely!
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with reverent fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² Submit to God's royal son,* or he will
become angry,
and you will be destroyed in the midst
of all your activities—
for his anger flares up in an instant.
But what joy for all who take refuge
in him!

2:6 Hebrew *on Zion*. 2:7a Or *Son*; also in 2:12. 2:7b Or *Today I reveal you as my son*. 2:9 Greek version reads *rule*. Compare Rev 2:27. 2:12 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

PROVERBS 1:7-9

- ⁷ Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true
knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.
- ⁸ My child,* listen when your father
corrects you.
Don't neglect your mother's instruction.
- ⁹ What you learn from them will crown you
with grace
and be a chain of honor around your
neck.

1:8 Hebrew *My son*; also in 1:10, 15.

LORD, THANK YOU FOR CRAFTING HUMANITY to reflect your character. What an honor! Each person, from the moment of conception, is a unique creation made in your image. Help me to remember that this includes me! But I'll admit it: I don't always reflect you well. Forgive my stumbles, and help me walk closer to you so that I may shine for your glory. Amen.



JANUARY

3

GENESIS 5:1–7:24

This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings,* he made them to be like himself. ²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them "human."

- ³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. ⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

- ⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh. ⁷After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.
- ⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.
- ¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years,

and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died. ¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died. ¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died. ²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him. ²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died. ²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. ²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, "May he bring us relief* from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed." ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ³¹Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died. ³²After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ^{6:1}Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ²The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives. ³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with* humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years." ⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times. ⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD

said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." ⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. ¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. ¹³So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!"

¹⁴"Build a large boat* from cypress wood* and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.* ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening* below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷"Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals."

²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

^{7:1}When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice,* and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I

will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet* above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

5:1 Or man; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2. 5:6 Or the ancestor of; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:7 Or the birth of this ancestor of; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26. 5:29 Noah sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.” 6:2 Hebrew daughters of men; also in 6:4. 6:3 Greek version reads will

not remain in. 6:14a Traditionally rendered an ark. 6:14b Or gopher wood. 6:15 Hebrew 300 cubits [138 meters] long, 50 cubits [23 meters] wide, and 30 cubits [13.8 meters] high. 6:16 Hebrew an opening of 1 cubit [46 centimeters]. 7:2 Hebrew of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8. 7:20 Hebrew 15 cubits [6.9 meters].

MATTHEW 3:7–4:11

But when he [John the Baptist] saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,* he denounced them. “You brood of snakes!” he exclaimed. “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? ⁸Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. ⁹Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. ¹⁰Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize with* water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* ¹²He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

¹³Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”

¹⁵But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.*” So John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened* and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

^{4:1}Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil* came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,

‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’**”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'**"

⁷Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'**"

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹"I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

¹⁰"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'**"

¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

3:7 Or coming to be baptized. 3:11a Or in. 3:11b Or in the Holy Spirit and in fire. 3:15 Or for we must fulfill all righteousness. 3:16 Some manuscripts read opened to him. 4:3 Greek the tempter. 4:4 Deut 8:3. 4:6 Ps 91:11-12. 4:7 Deut 6:16. 4:10 Deut 6:13.

PSALM 3:1-8

A psalm of David, regarding the time David fled from his son Absalom.

¹ O LORD, I have so many enemies;
so many are against me.
² So many are saying,
"God will never rescue him!" *Interlude**
³ But you, O LORD, are a shield around me;
you are my glory, the one who holds
my head high.
⁴ I cried out to the LORD,
and he answered me from his
holy mountain. *Interlude*

⁵ I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the LORD was watching over me.
⁶ I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.
⁷ Arise, O LORD!
Rescue me, my God!
Slap all my enemies in the face!
Shatter the teeth of the wicked!
⁸ Victory comes from you, O LORD.
May you bless your people. *Interlude*

3:2 Hebrew *Selah*. The meaning of this word is uncertain, though it is probably a musical or literary term. It is rendered *Interlude* throughout the Psalms.

PROVERBS 1:10-19

¹⁰ My child, if sinners entice you,
turn your back on them!
¹¹ They may say, "Come and join us.
Let's hide and kill someone!
Just for fun, let's ambush the innocent!"
¹² Let's swallow them alive, like the grave*;
let's swallow them whole, like those
who go down to the pit of death.
¹³ Think of the great things we'll get!
We'll fill our houses with all the stuff
we take.
¹⁴ Come, throw in your lot with us;
we'll all share the loot."
¹⁵ My child, don't go along with them!
Stay far away from their paths.
¹⁶ They rush to commit evil deeds.
They hurry to commit murder.
¹⁷ If a bird sees a trap being set,
it knows to stay away.
¹⁸ But these people set an ambush for
themselves;
they are trying to get themselves killed.
¹⁹ Such is the fate of all who are greedy for
money;
it robs them of life.
1:12 Hebrew like *Sheol*.

LORD, THE RAINBOW in all its splendor honors Noah's obedience to you and is your promise to us—your people. How faithful you are! When I face life's storms and feel alone and helpless, may I continue to believe that dry ground awaits. Let me proclaim the words of King David, trusting that you hear my prayers and will keep me safe. May I be as faithful to you as you are to me. Amen.



GENESIS 8:1–10:32

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began,* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later,* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began,* the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by,* and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth."

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.* ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night."

^{9:1}Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵"And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings* in his own image. ⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth."

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹"I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth."

¹²Then God said, "I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth." ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, "Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth."

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done.

²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

"May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to
his relatives."

²⁶Then Noah said,

"May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!

²⁷ May God expand the territory of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity of
Shem,*
and may Canaan be his servant."

²⁸Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

^{10:1}This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.* ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth.

⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world,* his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world."

¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia,* with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. ¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria,* building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).

¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Capthorites, from whom the Philistines came.*

¹⁵Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,* ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,* and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means "division"), for during

his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother's name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

³²These are the clans that descended from Noah's sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

8:4 Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11.
8:5 Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. 8:13 Hebrew On the first day of the first month; see 7:11. 8:14 Hebrew The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived; see note on 8:13. 8:20 Hebrew every clean animal and every clean bird. 9:6 Or man; Hebrew reads ha-adam.
9:27 Hebrew May he live in the tents of Shem. 10:4 As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read Dodanim. 10:9 Hebrew a great hunter before the LORD; also in 10:9b. 10:10 Hebrew Shinar.
10:11 Or From that land Assyria went out. 10:14 Hebrew Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Capthorites. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. 10:15 Hebrew ancestor of Heth.
10:21 Or Shem, whose older brother was Japheth. 10:24 Greek version reads Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah. Compare Luke 3:36.

MATTHEW 4:12-25

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ¹³He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.
And for those who lived in the land where
death casts its shadow,
a light has shined."^{*}

¹⁷From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."^{*}

¹⁸One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰And they left their nets at once and followed him.

²¹A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

²³Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ²⁴News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns,* Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

4:15-16 Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version). 4:17 Or has come, or is coming soon. 4:25 Greek Decapolis.

PSALM 4:1-8

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- 1 Answer me when I call to you,
O God who declares me innocent.
Free me from my troubles.
Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long will you people ruin my
reputation?
How long will you make groundless
accusations?
How long will you continue
your lies? *Interlude*
- 3 You can be sure of this:
The LORD set apart the godly for himself.
The LORD will answer when I call to him.
- 4 Don't sin by letting anger control you.
Think about it overnight and
remain silent. *Interlude*
- 5 Offer sacrifices in the right spirit,
and trust the LORD.
- 6 Many people say, "Who will show us better
times?"
Let your face smile on us, LORD.
- 7 You have given me greater joy
than those who have abundant harvests
of grain and new wine.
- 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, O LORD, will keep
me safe.

PROVERBS 1:20-23

²⁰ Wisdom shouts in the streets.
She cries out in the public square.

- 21 She calls to the crowds along the main street,
to those gathered in front of the city gate:
- 22 "How long, you simpletons,
will you insist on being simpleminded?"

- How long will you mockers relish your mocking?
How long will you fools hate knowledge?
- 23 Come and listen to my counsel.
I'll share my heart with you
and make you wise."

LORD, JESUS MADE ROOM for everyone—the rich, the poor, the hurting, the helpless. How wonderfully inclusive you are! How wonderfully loving! You promise that *all* who take refuge in you will rejoice, and you call me to hunger and thirst for justice. Make me deeply aware of the need to include others—especially those who are sometimes overlooked or excluded. Amen.



GENESIS 11:1–13:4

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. 2As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia* and settled there.

3They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) 4Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

5But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. 6"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! 7Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

8In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. 9That is why the city was called Babel,* because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

10This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of* Arphaxad. 11After the birth of* Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

12When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. 13After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another

403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

14When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. 15After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

16When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. 17After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

18When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. 19After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

20When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. 21After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

22When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. 23After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

24When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. 25After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

26After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

27This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. 28But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. 29Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were

daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)³⁰ But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³²Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

^{12:1}The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants.*" And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai's beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai

was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. "What have you done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!" ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

^{13:1}So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ²(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) ³From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

11:2 Hebrew *Shinar*. 11:9 Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." 11:10 Or *the ancestor of*; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. 11:11 Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25. 11:12-13 Greek version reads ¹²When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan. ¹³After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Compare Luke 3:35-36. 11:32 Some ancient versions read 145 years; compare 11:26 and 12:4. 12:7 Hebrew *seed*.

MATTHEW 5:1-26

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ²and he began to teach them.

- ³ "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,*
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- ⁴ God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.
- ⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,*
for they will be satisfied.
- ⁷ God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.
- ⁹ God blesses those who work for peace,

for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

¹⁷“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

²¹“You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’* ²²But I say, if you are even angry with someone,* you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot,* you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone,* you are in danger of the fires of hell.*

²³“So if you are presenting a sacrifice* at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

²⁵“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to

the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*”

5:3 Greek *poor in spirit*. 5:6 Or *for righteousness*. 5:21 Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17. 5:22a Some manuscripts add *without cause*. 5:22b Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, ‘Raca.’* 5:22c Greek *if you say, ‘You fool!’* 5:22a Greek *Gehenna*, also in 5:29, 30. 5:23 Greek *gift*; also in 5:24. 5:26 Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans].

PSALM 5:1-12

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by the flute.

- 1 O LORD, hear me as I pray;
pay attention to my groaning.
- 2 Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God,
for I pray to no one but you.
- 3 Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD.
Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.
- 4 O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness;
you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.
- 5 Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence,
for you hate all who do evil.
- 6 You will destroy those who tell lies.
The LORD detests murderers and deceivers.
- 7 Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.
- 8 Lead me in the right path, O LORD,
or my enemies will conquer me.
Make your way plain for me to follow.
- 9 My enemies cannot speak a truthful word.
Their deepest desire is to destroy others.
Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.
Their tongues are filled with flattery.*
- 10 O God, declare them guilty.
Let them be caught in their own traps.
Drive them away because of their many sins,
for they have rebelled against you.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them sing joyful praises forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that all who love your name may be filled with joy.
- 12 For you bless the godly, O LORD;
you surround them with your shield of love.

5:9 Greek version reads *with lies*. Compare Rom 3:13.

PROVERBS 1:24-28

²⁴ “I [Wisdom] called you so often, but you wouldn’t come.

I reached out to you, but you paid no attention.

²⁵ You ignored my advice and rejected the correction I offered.

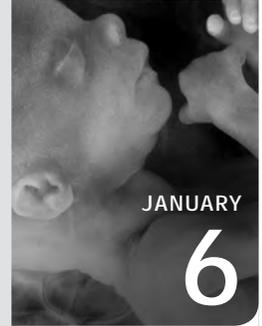
²⁶ So I will laugh when you are in trouble!

I will mock you when disaster overtakes you—

²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster engulfs you like a cyclone, and anguish and distress overwhelm you.

²⁸ “When they cry for help, I will not answer. Though they anxiously search for me, they will not find me.”

LORD, YOUR GREAT LOVE RENEWS, rejuvenates, and restores. Bless you for shining light and bringing life into dark places! You call me to a higher standard—to love my enemies and those who do not matter to the world. Heal what’s shattered in me. Straighten what’s twisted. Renew my heart and mind according to your Word and not to this world. Amen.

**GENESIS 13:5–15:21**

Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! ⁹The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹²So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram,

“Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants* as a permanent possession. ¹⁶And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! ¹⁷Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

^{14:1}About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ²fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea*). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah,

Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.* ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

¹⁷After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,* brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you."

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered."

²²Abram replied to the king of Sodom, "I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram

rich.' ²⁴I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre."

^{15:1}Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

²But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."

⁴Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

⁶And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

⁷Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession."

⁸But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?"

⁹The LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction."

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this

land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt* to the great Euphrates River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

13:15 Hebrew *seed*; also in 13:16. 14:1 Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. 14:3 Hebrew *Salt Sea*. 14:8 Hebrew *Siddim Valley* (see 14:3); also in 14:10. 14:18 Hebrew *El-Elyon*; also in 14:19, 20, 22. 15:18 Hebrew *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the Brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

MATTHEW 5:27-48

“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’* ²⁸But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹So if your eye—even your good eye*—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your hand—even your stronger hand*—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³¹“You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’* ³²But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

³³“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’* ³⁴But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

³⁸“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’* ³⁹But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,* carry it two miles. ⁴²Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

⁴³“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’* and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But

I say, love your enemies!* Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends,* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

5:27 Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18. 5:29 Greek *your right eye*. 5:30 Greek *your right hand*. 5:31 Deut 24:1. 5:33 Num 30:2. 5:38 Greek *the law that says: ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21. 5:41 Greek *million* [4,854 feet or 1,478 meters]. 5:43 Lev 19:18. 5:44 Some manuscripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you.* Compare Luke 6:27-28. 5:47 Greek *your brothers*.

PSALM 6:1-10

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.**

- 1 O LORD, don’t rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your rage.
- 2 Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.
Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
- 3 I am sick at heart.
How long, O LORD, until you restore me?
- 4 Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
Save me because of your unfailing love.
- 5 For the dead do not remember you.
Who can praise you from the grave?*
- 6 I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping, drenching it with my tears.
- 7 My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies.
- 8 Go away, all you who do evil,
for the LORD has heard my weeping.
- 9 The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD will answer my prayer.
- 10 May all my enemies be disgraced and terrified.
May they suddenly turn back in shame.

6: TITLE Hebrew with *stringed instruments*; according to the *sheminith*. 6:5 Hebrew from *Sheol*?

PROVERBS 1:29-33

- ²⁹ “For they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the LORD.
- ³⁰ They rejected my [Wisdom’s] advice and paid no attention when I corrected them.

³¹ Therefore, they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way, choking on their own schemes.
³² For simpletons turn away from me—to death.

Fools are destroyed by their own complacency.
³³ But all who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm."

LORD, SARAH LAUGHED at the very idea of giving birth at her age. But with you, nothing is impossible. You are the God of the impossible! You are the Creator of all life and the source of all wisdom, yet you know my deepest wounds and unanswered prayers. Help me to trust your promises to me. If I laugh, may it be laughter of joy and confidence—sweet music to your ears. Amen.



GENESIS 16:1–18:15

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. ³So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who's wrong—you or me!"

⁶Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied.

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority."

¹⁰Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

¹¹And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the LORD has heard your cry of

distress. ¹²This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

¹³Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me."* She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" ¹⁴So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

^{17:1}When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ²I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,* for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷"I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants* after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live

as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

⁹Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant."

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.* ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants."

¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of 100?" he thought. "And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?" ¹⁸So Abraham said to God, "May Ishmael live under your special blessing!"

¹⁹But God replied, "No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,* and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year." ²²When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

²³On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. ²⁶Both Abraham and his son,

Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, ²⁷along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

^{18:1}The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ²He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³"My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵And since you've honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said." ⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Get three large measures* of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread." ⁷Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹"Where is Sarah, your wife?" the visitors asked.

"She's inside the tent," Abraham replied.

¹⁰Then one of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!"

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹²So she laughed silently to herself and said, "How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?"

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh."

But the LORD said, "No, you did laugh."

16:13 Hebrew *El-roi*. 17:5 *Abram* means "exalted father"; *Abraham* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "father of many." 17:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 17:7b, 8, 9, 10, 19. 17:15 *Sarai* and *Sarah* both mean "princess"; the change in spelling may reflect the difference in dialect between Ur and Canaan. 17:19 *Isaac* means "he laughs." 18:6 Hebrew *3 seahs*, about half a bushel or 22 liters.

MATTHEW 6:1-24

“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ²When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁵“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
 May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,*
¹² and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin
 against us.
¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation,*
 but rescue us from the evil one.*

¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷But when you fast, comb your hair* and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

¹⁹“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break

in and steal. ²¹Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²²“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.”

6:11 Or Give us today our food for the day; or Give us today our food for tomorrow. 6:13a Or And keep us from being tested. 6:13b Or from evil. Some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. 6:17 Greek anoint your head.

PSALM 7:1-17

A psalm of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin.*

- 1 I come to you for protection, O LORD my God.
 Save me from my persecutors—
 rescue me!
- 2 If you don’t, they will maul me like a lion,
 tearing me to pieces with no one to
 rescue me.
- 3 O LORD my God, if I have done wrong
 or am guilty of injustice,
- 4 if I have betrayed a friend
 or plundered my enemy without cause,
- 5 then let my enemies capture me.
 Let them trample me into the ground
 and drag my honor in the dust. *Interlude*
- 6 Arise, O LORD, in anger!
 Stand up against the fury of my enemies!
 Wake up, my God, and bring justice!
- 7 Gather the nations before you.
 Rule over them from on high.
- 8 The LORD judges the nations.
 Declare me righteous, O LORD,
 for I am innocent, O Most High!
- 9 End the evil of those who are wicked,
 and defend the righteous.
 For you look deep within the mind
 and heart,
 O righteous God.
- 10 God is my shield,
 saving those whose hearts are true
 and right.
- 11 God is an honest judge.
 He is angry with the wicked every day.
- 12 If a person does not repent,
 God* will sharpen his sword;
 he will bend and string his bow.
- 13 He will prepare his deadly weapons
 and shoot his flaming arrows.

- ¹⁴ The wicked conceive evil;
they are pregnant with trouble
and give birth to lies.
- ¹⁵ They dig a deep pit to trap others,
then fall into it themselves.
- ¹⁶ The trouble they make for others backfires
on them.
The violence they plan falls on their
own heads.
- ¹⁷ I will thank the LORD because he is just;
I will sing praise to the name of the LORD
Most High.

7:TITLE Hebrew *A shiggaion*, probably indicating a musical setting for the psalm. 7:12 Hebrew *he*.

PROVERBS 2:1-5

- ¹ My child,* listen to what I say,
and treasure my commands.
- ² Tune your ears to wisdom,
and concentrate on understanding.
- ³ Cry out for insight,
and ask for understanding.
- ⁴ Search for them as you would for silver;
seek them like hidden treasures.
- ⁵ Then you will understand what it means
to fear the LORD,
and you will gain knowledge of God.

2:1 Hebrew *My son*.

LORD, JUST TEN. Abraham pleaded, and you were willing to withhold destruction if only ten faithful people could be found in Sodom. Your mercy is majestic! I, too, am called to intercede on behalf of others, declaring the value of every life—born or unborn. I can't let the cares of this world distract me from proclaiming Truth. Help me extend grace to others as you have extended grace to me—to be just, yet loving. Amen.



GENESIS 18:16–19:38

Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the LORD asked. ¹⁸“For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.”

²⁰So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

²²The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. ²³Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the

wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

²⁶And the LORD replied, “If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

²⁷Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

And the LORD said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there.”

²⁹Then Abraham pressed his request further. “Suppose there are only forty?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty.”

³⁰“Please don't be angry, my Lord,” Abraham pleaded. “Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it if I find thirty.”

³¹Then Abraham said, “Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?”

And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

³²Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don't