

Rēad to Read Daily Devotions

Moving individuals from “I will read the Bible” to “I have read the Bible” at the speed of the sound of turning pages

William T. Howe, Ph.D.



“Read your Bible through this Year!” Pastors usually make this challenge to their church members at the beginning of each year. Many of their members take this challenge and begin in earnest to read their Bibles cover to cover over the next twelve months. Genesis is great, Exodus is like an exciting novel, then comes Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Some make it through, but the books of History come next with all the kings, the different nations, and the back and forth of the narrative causes the reader confusion. When one arrives at Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the rest of the prophets, many stop reading because of confusion, saying “I just don’t understand those books.”

This is why the Rēad-to-Read program was developed. These short daily devotions were written to help the first-time reader of the Bible make it through the entire Bible. Sometimes the content of the daily devotion is explanatory, sometimes historical, sometimes prophetic, and sometimes just a simple reminder, but the aim is the same! Help those who want to read their Bibles through in a year to get past the temptation to quit.

If you desire to move from “I will read the Bible” to “I have read the Bible” the Rēad-to-Read tutorial may help. Give it a try. After all this entire project has but one aim...

...Helping individuals move from I will read the Bible to I have read the Bible at the speed of the sound of turning pages.



January 1

Daily Reading: Genesis 1-3

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

In Bible college there is a class called Homiletics that every preacher takes. It is a class about the art and science of preaching. In this class we are taught that a highly effective introduction to any message is to use a “startling statement”. This is a statement that immediately brings the hearer into the subject matter at hand. Frankly, there is no more startling statement ever spoken than the one that starts the Bible. ***In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*** This grabs the attention of the reader.

Nowhere does God defend this statement, nowhere does He prove it, nowhere does He include such details as: who is God, where did He come from, how exactly did He create the heaven and the earth, or where did the earth come from, or what is the scope and nature of heaven. He speaks this great statement as a fact that needs no foundation. Yet, this statement is the foundation of all which we believe by faith. Which is that there is a God, that He is ever-existent, that He is creative, that He is powerful, that He is the Creator of all, and that He was at the beginning of all things seen and unseen.

As you read the book of Genesis remember this illustration. It is the seed plot of the Bible. All true and relevant doctrines can be found in this book in seed form. These doctrines then are revealed in time throughout the pages of God’s Holy Word. Genesis is like the headwaters of the mighty Mississippi River. At the headwaters where the Mississippi River begins it is small, narrow and has no indication of the greatness that the river will grow into. But at the place where the Mississippi River flows into the Gulf of Mexico it is wide and has richness in it from sedimentation of minerals. Genesis too, begins as a narrow stream, by the time the reader arrives at the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, it is filled with richness and is huge in scope and truth.

One such doctrine that begins with a passing remark is the coming Christ. Genesis 3:15 states: ***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*** Christ is the seed of the woman who had His heel bruised by the serpent. Yet, one day this same Christ will bruise the head of that old serpent. From Genesis and throughout the entire Bible we read of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent. Christ’s heel was bruised 2,000 years ago when He died on the cross and it seemed He was buried in finality. Yet, His heel was only bruised because He was raised triumphantly! We know this because we have the entire Bible containing the unfolding drama of all that is taught in seed form in Genesis.

From the very first verse of the Bible we can conclude that there was a beginning, God was at the beginning, and He created the heaven and the earth and all they contain. These three things are stated clearly in the greatest startling statement ever.

Until tomorrow, live for Christ today!

January 2

Daily Reading: Genesis 4-7

Genesis 4:5

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

So, it began. This is the beginning of religious conflict. The age-old story of Cain and Abel, ending with the first murder in recorded history. Brother against brother, all over religious belief systems. It didn't have to happen, but it did. How sad Adam and Eve must have been. At a time when the life span was 900 to 1,000 years, their son Abel went to an early grave. It is not natural that a parent buries a child, but it happens all too often (for numerous reasons) and is always a heartbreaking experience.

As we consider the story of Cain and Abel questions arise. One question is, "Why was God satisfied with Abel's offering and not Cain's?" Verses 4 and 5 state clearly that the Lord had **respect** unto Abel's offering and yet had no respect for Cain's. "Why?" Another question one might ask is: "How did Cain and Abel even know to bring offerings to the Lord?" Prior to this in Genesis there is no clear command to do so. But there is a story of sacrifice, or an offering, being made. When Cain's parents, Adam and Eve, sinned they attempted to cover their shame by a human made covering (fig leaves). They hid from the Lord, yet the Lord came down to them, dealt with their sin and covered their shame with coats of skin. Practically thinking, these **coats of skin** had to be taken from an animal. Which means the Lord had to sacrifice an innocent animal to make them these coats of skin (chapter 3). Evidently, at this time the Lord set up a system of animal sacrifices to be offered to Him in worship and for forgiveness of sins; for from this time on in the Bible humans brought to the Lord sacrificial animal offerings upon various occasions.

Allow us to point out in passing, the story of the Lord's actions toward Adam and Eve, coupled with their own actions of sin, fleeing from the Lord, and their homemade covering, is the first story of individual salvation. Adam and Eve sinned, they fled from the Lord and attempted to cover their shame, yet He came to them, they confessed, He pronounced the results of their sin, and sacrificed an animal so that they could be covered. This is how it happens today, because of people's sins, they run from the Lord, they attempt to cover their shame by their own religious devices, but the Lord comes to them, through the Holy Spirit and His Word. Through His Gospel He teaches us that He gave Himself as the sacrifice for sins for the entire world. When they receive Him as that sacrifice through faith, the relationship is repaired, the sinner goes free, yet faces the residual consequences of their wrongdoing to one extent or another in this life.

Cain's sacrifice was of his own efforts as it was the fruit of the ground, fruit that he cultivated and earned. Abel's sacrifice was of an innocent animal of the Lord's making. The Lord tried to help Cain, but his anger and hatred could not be assuaged.

The best advice any person can give another is to make sure to offer unto God the proper sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus, ... ***the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*** (John 1:29)

Until tomorrow, live for Christ today.

January 3

Daily Reading: Genesis 8-11

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives; eight people in all had the world all unto themselves. We can only dream of what it must have been like. I would call it amazing; others may call it isolated, but an entire world to explore without a million other people doing the same thing at the same time. It was a new world, or rather a remake of the old. A world forged by the flood, with its mountain ranges, crevasses, new weather patterns, cold and heat variances. Yes, these eight humans had much to learn, which for survival's sake they had to learn quickly. Remember, prior to the flood the physical world was quite different.

When thinking about this new world with all its possibilities and opportunities I think about my Uncle Ron. Ron was my dad's brother. He led an amazing life filled with adventure. He was a fighter jet pilot during the Vietnam War era, a private pilot with his own plane, he loved boats and the ocean, fishing, and wildlife. He was also a business owner who taught me much about an industry that I would make a fine living in before being called into ministry. I worked for him for a few years, and we spent some time together flying in his plane. One time, as we were flying over the South Padre Island coast, he asked me if I knew why he loved flying and boating. I didn't so he told me. Very succinctly he said, "There are no roads in the air or on the water." Then he explained further that he never liked the overpopulated areas, or the rules of society, or the laws that govern our every movement. In the air, or on the water, he felt free. My dad is very much the same, they both walked to their own drummer (Dad still does).

Some people just have that pioneering spirit. I do. If it were not for my call to pastor in the Fort Worth area, I would be a vagabond. Alone in a cabin, in the forest, by a trout stream, living a remarkably simple, yet free life. But that is not God's will for me. Neither was it for my dad and his brother. We must "make a living" to live in society and play according to its norms of behavior. Noah and his family did not. They were free to roam wherever they desired, live according to their ability, they paid no taxes, there were no traffic jams, just life. I'm envious of them, I confess.

Noah and his family had one other thing in their favor. Upon exiting from the ark, every human alive on earth believed in God; believed and understood the covenant that God made with them. What a world it would be if every person alive would believe God, know Him, and live according to His teachings. Sounds like heaven. Oh, wait, that will be Heaven, our future home. It will be populated with more than eight people for sure, but all people there will believe God, and live free lives in a new world created for us by our loving Father. I for one, can't wait. Perhaps He will give me that cabin.

Until tomorrow, live for Christ today.

January 4

Daily Reading: Genesis 12-15

Genesis 12:1

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

Yesterday's reading took us from Noah to Abram. Today the story of Abram begins in earnest, it will continue until chapter 25:8 when the great father of all the faithful ***gives up the ghost***. Many people believe and falsely claim that the Bible story of creation was handed down hundreds of times over thousands of years. The fact of the matter, according to the Scriptural record, the first 2,157 years of human history are overlapped by three men: Adam, Methuselah, and Shem. Shem was Noah's son, his life overlapped Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Noah had 6 living ancestors that could have personally known Adam. Noah was alive during the events surrounding the Tower of Babel.

From all this we can conclude that: the story of creation was not passed down hundreds of times, Adam probably told Methuselah, Methuselah could have related it to Shem, and Shem could have given it to Abram, Isaac and/or Jacob. Also, know this, it was approximately 1,656 years from the days of creation until the worldwide flood. It was about 101 years from the flood to the Tower of Babel, and it was about 1,950 years from creation to Abram's birth.

This brings us to Abram, whose name was changed by God to Abraham. He is one of the most prominent men of the Bible, his name is recorded 230 times in Scripture. This man is so vitally important that he is mentioned in the very first verse of the New Testament, ***The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.***

We have more to learn about this great patriarch of the faith whom we commonly call Abraham. However, let's leave it here for today. If you get a chance, think on purpose about the dates given above, it will help you grasp the validity of the Genesis account of creation. Also, mark this, from this point on, the Bible focuses on the Hebrew nation, Israel, of whom the father was Abram. That is until the New Testament then the focus changes to the Gentile believers in Jesus Christ, but just for a short time until the Book of Revelation when the focus switches back to Israel.

Until tomorrow, live for Christ today.

January 5

Daily Reading: Genesis 16-18

Genesis 18:28

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

Years ago, when I was young, I had a job that involved negotiating medical supply agreements with hospital purchasing groups. On a plane one day I entered into a conversation with a man who was a lawyer. He told me about his job, and I told him about mine. Upon saying that I was involved in negotiating contracts he seemed to be incredulous. He bluntly asked me, "What makes you qualified to negotiate contracts?" To which I said, "I don't know, but I'm doing it." It reminded me of the boy playing in the mud puddle, a businessman passed by and asked the boy "What are you trying to do?" To which the boy said, "I'm not trying to do anything, I'm doing it!"

Anyway, I enjoy negotiation. I've studied negotiation and love to "haggle". Today, in our reading we read a tremendous story of a man who negotiated with the Lord. Upon learning that the Lord was going to destroy Sodom, a city in which his nephew Lot lived with his family, Abraham interceded. He began by asking the Lord if He would destroy the city if there were fifty righteous people living there. The Lord said no. Thereafter, Abraham continued lowering his "offer" getting the Lord all the way down to ten righteous. That is where Abraham ceased the negotiation. As you read the story today notice a few practical thoughts about negotiation.

First, the Lord did not become angry at Abraham's continuing offers. To the Lord, it was not personal, not threatening, it was just business, so to speak. Through life I have made offers and counter offers to individuals, sometimes, in fact oftentimes, they become angry or offended. When this happens, I walk away from the negotiation. I choose not to do business with an angry person. Proverbs 22:24 is the reason why: ***Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:*** This has served me well over the years, for I do not do business with someone who cannot control their temper.

Second, Abraham continued asking until he obtained his comfort level. Knowing that Lot and his family were in the city, Abraham must have been confident that there were ten righteous. Yet evidently there was not in that the Lord did overthrow that city. The Lord never told Abraham to stop asking for further concessions, but Abraham reached his goal and was satisfied with the deal. I sometimes wonder what the Lord would have said if Abraham would have gone to five righteous. The lesson here, keep asking until you get a no. It may be on the first counteroffer or the tenth, you never know. The other party also has a place where they are comfortable, when asked to go beyond that, you will know.

Third, notice how respectful Abraham was when requesting a concession from the Lord. In verse 27 he says ***...Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.*** Be respectful, remember, it's business. The person you are negotiating with owes you nothing and you owe them nothing. That is until a deal is agreed upon.

Until tomorrow, live for Christ today.