

presented to

by

on the occasion of

date

The grass withers
and the flowers fade,
but the word of our
God stands forever.

ISAIAH 40:8

new believer's B I B L E

compact

first steps for new christians

GREG LAURIE, GENERAL EDITOR



**New Living
Translation®**

SECOND EDITION

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welcome!

Congratulations! You are holding in your hands the best-selling book in the history of humanity—the Bible. It was given to us by God thousands of years ago. Although the Bible has been around for some time, the wisdom and knowledge contained within are still relevant today. In fact, everything you need to know about God and life is found in the pages of this book. It is the “user’s manual of life” that we all have been searching for.

The Bible does not just teach us about life, though. It also shows us how to come into a *personal* relationship with the very God who inspired this book. This particular Bible contains features that have been specially designed to help you understand, discover, and deepen the personal relationship that God wants to have with you.

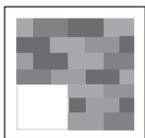
Perhaps you are not yet a believer in Jesus Christ, but you want to know more about Christianity. You may even want to be a believer, but you just don’t know how to become one. In the *New Believer’s Bible*, you will find a section titled “How You Can Know God” (page A 11). Here, you will learn how to establish a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Maybe you have just started in the Christian faith. You are a new believer. Here you will find out how to lay a good foundation for your faith and walk with God in the years ahead.

You may even be a believer who is mature in the faith. Here you will be refreshed and reminded of the essentials of the Christian faith and life.

THE MAIN FEATURES

The *New Believer’s Bible* contains four reading tracks: Cornerstones, First Steps, Off and Running, and Big Questions. Each reading track (except Big Questions) is composed of two kinds of notes: *up-front* and *in-text*. The up-front notes appear before the Bible text and are made up of one to two paragraphs and two to eight numbered points that refer you to Scripture passages and their accompanying in-text notes. (Big Questions is composed of an up-front list of questions and the page numbers you can find them on, and the in-text notes that answer those questions.)



Reading Track One: Cornerstones: Cornerstones—blocks of stone—were traditionally used to start a building's foundation. Likewise, the Cornerstones reading track helps you to begin to lay a solid foundation for your faith. Here you will learn about God's character, Jesus'

life, and the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of believers. Cornerstones also contains notes on the essential Christian character traits that are developed and nurtured by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of those traits are love, forgiveness, purity, honesty, wisdom, peace, and joy.



Reading Track Two: First Steps: The phrase *first steps* brings to mind the image of a young child taking his or her first unassisted steps. Like this young child, new believers in Christ need to learn how to walk all over again, so to speak. That is because the Christian life for

most people is a completely new way of living. To help you learn to live this new life, the First Steps reading track gives you valuable building blocks for growing in your faith. Here you will discover the importance and "how to" of studying the Bible, praying, finding the right church, resisting temptation, and seeking God's will for your life.



Reading Track Three: Off and Running: "How does God's Word apply to my everyday life?" This is one of the most widely asked questions about the Bible today. The Off and Running reading track answers this question.

Here you will discover how to put your faith into action.

You will see what the Bible has to say about important topics like marriage, parenting, priorities, conversation, and job performance. By helping you apply biblical principles to these aspects of your life, Off and Running takes you to the next level of the Christian life—living it day to day.



Reading Track Four: Big Questions: Life often presents us with difficult situations that cause us to ask hard questions. For instance, you may wonder how a good God could let something bad—like cancer—happen to you. Or you may wonder why Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Aren't other religions just as good? In the Big Questions reading track, you will find out what the Bible has to say about tough issues. Everything from alternative lifestyles to the second coming of Christ is covered here.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

At the back of the *New Believer's Bible* you will find several features that will help you understand the Bible and your faith better. These features include:

- *How to Study the Bible*—a practical way for you to read through the Bible and a list of questions to ask yourself as you read.
- *One Year New Testament Reading Plan*—an outline for reading the New Testament in five minutes a day in one year.
- *52 Great Bible Stories*—a list of well-known Bible stories, where you can find them, and the main lesson you can get out of them.
- *Memory Verses*—a list of key Bible verses to commit to memory.
- *Prophecies about Jesus*—a list of Old Testament passages that contain prophecies about Jesus, and the New Testament references that record his fulfillment of those prophecies.
- *Glossary of Christian Terms*—a quick-reference guide to help you understand the meanings of words like *atonement*, *justification*, *redemption*, and *sanctification*.

HOW TO USE THE READING TRACKS

The *New Believer's Bible* is easy to use. Simply turn to page A23 and begin reading the “Who Is God?” up-front note in the “Cornerstones” reading track. Look up the Scripture passages and in-text notes referred to at the end of this note. After you have read all the Scripture passages and in-text notes for “Who Is God?” move on to the next up-front note (“Who Is Jesus?”) and begin the process over again.

You can read one up-front note and its Scripture passages and in-text notes a day. Or, if you prefer, browse through the table of contents and choose the topic(s) that interests you the most for your daily reading.

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.” God wants his Word to permeate every area of your life—your home, your business, your play time as well as your prayer time. So open your Bible and your heart, and God will speak to you from these pages. Don't let anything keep you from spending time each day in God's Word.

Greg Laurie



what is missing in our lives?

Purpose, meaning, a reason for living—these are all things we desire and search for in life. Despite steps each one of us takes to find purpose and meaning in life, we still feel empty, unfulfilled. That is because there is a spiritual emptiness in each of our lives. We

each have a hole in our heart, a spiritual vacuum deep within our soul—a “God-shaped blank.” Possessions won’t fill this hole, nor will success. Relationships alone cannot satisfy this emptiness, and morality, in and of itself, falls miserably short of occupying this space. In fact, even religion cannot fill the void in our heart.

There is only one way to effectively fill that void. This way will not only help us to have a life that is full and rich on this earth, but—more important—will give us the absolute hope of spending eternity in the presence of God. Before we can truly appreciate this good news, though, we need to understand the bad news, which is a serious problem we all have.

the problem: sin The Bible clearly identifies our serious problem as sin. Sin is not just an act but the actual nature of our being. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are sinners! We are born with a nature to do wrong. King David, an Old Testament Israelite ruler, wrote, “For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Because we are born sinners, sinning comes to all of us

naturally. That is why it is futile to think that the answer to all of life's problems comes from "within." According to the Bible, the *problem* is within! Scripture tells us, "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

We are not basically good—we are basically sinful. This sinfulness spills out into everything we do. Every problem we experience in our society today can be traced back to our refusal to live God's way. Clear back to the Garden of Eden, Adam made his choice, and he suffered the consequences of it, setting the pattern that all humanity would follow. The Bible explains, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. . . . Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone" (Romans 5:12, 18).

"That's not fair!" you may protest. Why should we suffer because of what someone else has done? Yet, given the opportunity, each one of us would have done the same thing as Adam. In fact, not a single day passes that we do not face the same test that was set before Adam. God has given us the freedom to choose between two separate paths: the path that leads to life and the path that leads to death. The Bible says, "Today, I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

without a leg to stand on Someone may say, "But I live a good life. I try to be kind and considerate to others. I live by the Ten Commandments." But the truth of the matter is that the Ten Commandments, or the law, as they are called in the Bible, were not given to make us good but to show us how bad we are. The Bible tells us, "No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are" (Romans 3:20). The purpose of the law is to make us realize how sinful we are. You might say that God's law was given to "shut our mouths" and show us that we desperately need his help and forgiveness for our terminal condition as sinners.

Look at the passages below to get a better understanding of the nature and seriousness of sin.

- 1. We Have All Missed the Mark** (see Romans 3:23, page 1006). Romans 3:23 says, we have *all* sinned. For those who would claim to be the sole exception to this eternal truth, verse ten of this chapter plainly says, "No one is righteous—not even one" (Romans 3:10). Another word for *righteous* is *good*. The word *righteous* means, "One who is as he or she ought to be." When the Bible says that no one is righteous, or good, it is not so much referring to behavior but to inner character.

What exactly is “God’s glorious standard” that Romans 3:23 says we have failed to meet? God’s “glorious standard” is absolute perfection. Jesus said, “But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In other words, anyone who is not as good as God is not acceptable to him.

One definition of *sin*, derived from the Greek word *hamartia*, is to “miss the mark.” As far as the mark of perfection goes, we miss it by a mile. Although our sinful nature makes it impossible for us to live up to God’s standard, we cannot blame sin on our nature alone. Sin is also a deliberate act.

2. *Sin Is a Deliberate Act* (see Ephesians 2:1-3, page 1064). Another word for *sins* in Ephesians 2:1 is *transgressions* or *trespasses*. This word speaks of a lapse or deviation from truth. In contrast to simply “missing the mark,” this is a deliberate action. Because sin is a deliberate action, we cannot blame our sin on our society or our environment or our mental or physical state. Everyone has chosen to do what was wrong. If we protest this point, “we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth” (1 John 1:8).

3. *The Ultimate Penalty for Sin Is Death* (see Romans 6:23, page 1011). According to the Bible, we have offended a Holy God. We have not done this once or twice, but so many times that we are unable to keep count. Romans 6:23 says, “The *wages* of sin is death. . . .” *Wages* are something you are paid for work rendered. In other words, you earn your wages. Because we have all repeatedly sinned, we have earned the penalty of death, which is eternal torment and punishment in a place called hell.

Amid all this talk about sin and death, there is some good news. God has given us a way to escape the penalty of our sin. He has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him and enjoy the hope of eternal life without punishment.



the solution: Jesus Christ

God understood our problem and knew that we could do nothing about it. Because God loves us, he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to bridge the chasm of sin that separates us from him.

why Jesus can bridge the gap There has never been anyone like Jesus. For starters, Jesus was not conceived in the womb of his mother through natural means. Rather, he was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a young virgin named Mary. Because of his supernatural conception, Jesus, who is wholly God, also became wholly human.

Though Jesus is God, he chose to lay aside the privileges of his deity to live on earth as a man. The Bible, describing the sacrifice Christ made in becoming a man, says that Jesus “gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). It is extremely important to note that Jesus did not cease to be God when he came to earth. He simply laid aside his divine privileges and walked the earth as a man. In doing so, he was personally able to experience the gamut of human emotions, ranging from happiness to deep sorrow. He felt what it was like to be tired, cold, and hungry.

Moreover, he came to this earth with a clear objective in mind: to bridge that gap between us and God.

When the Israelites of the Old Testament sinned, they would have the high priest go into the Temple and offer an animal sacrifice to God to atone for their sins. In a symbolic sense, this was a way of putting one’s sins on the animal, which stood in the place of the guilty person. The Bible teaches, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

The sacrificial rituals carried out by the Israelites in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus would do when he came to this earth. He took the sin of the world upon himself when he hung on the cross so many years ago.

Numerous Old Testament prophecies pointed not only to his birth and life but also to his death, including the way in which he would die.

Jesus knew from the beginning that he had come expressly to die for the sins of humanity. He also knew that this sacrifice would be made on a Roman cross. He began his final journey to the cross of Calvary at a place called Caesarea Philippi, and he often spoke of his impending death with his disciples. Scripture records, “From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead” (Matthew 16:21).

He was eventually arrested on false charges after Judas Iscariot, one of his own disciples, betrayed him. But it was no accident. If humanity was going to be put in touch with God and have the barrier that separated them removed, something drastic had to be done. In essence, with one hand Jesus took hold

of a Holy God, and with the other hand he took hold of the sinful human race. As crude nails were pounded into his hands, he bridged the gap for us!

We must not forget, however, that three days after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead! If it is true that “you can’t keep a good man down,” then it is even truer that you can’t keep the “God-man” down



we put Jesus on the cross

The necessity of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows just how radical our situation was as fallen people. It’s been said that you can tell the depth of a well by how much rope is lowered. When we look at “how much rope was lowered” from heaven,

we realize how grave our situation really was.

For that reason, don’t blame the people of that day for putting Jesus on the cross. We are just as guilty as they. In reality, it was not the Roman soldiers who put him on the cross, nor was it the Jewish leaders: it was our sins that made it necessary for Jesus to volunteer for this torturous and humiliating death.

Read the verses and notes below to see exactly what Jesus did for us.

1. The Greatest Demonstration of Love (see Romans 5:6-8, page 1009).

Jesus did not die for us while we were his friends but while we were his enemies, opposing him by our sinfulness. Yet, in spite of all of this, God demonstrated his love for us by dying on the cross. In this verse, the apostle Paul explains that Jesus did not simply die for humanity as a whole but that he died for us as individuals. Elsewhere, Paul writes, “[Christ] loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Whenever you are tempted to doubt God’s love for you, take a long look at the cross on which Jesus died. Then realize that, for all practical purposes, it was not nails that held him to the cross, but love.

2. Forsaken That We Might Be Forgiven (see Luke 23:32-49, page 935).

Many of us have heard this story at some point in our lives. Yet the significance behind this heart-wrenching scene is often missed or misunderstood. This was not simply some “good teacher” being crucified for his beliefs. It was God in human form who hung on that cross, bridging the gap between sinful people and a holy God.

Matthew's Gospel tells us that when Jesus hung on that cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46). Many Bible scholars believe that those words marked the precise moment at which God placed the sins of the world upon his Son. The Bible, speaking of God, says, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Habakkuk 1:13, NKJV). For that reason, the holy Father had to "turn his face" and pour out his wrath upon his own Son. On the cross, Jesus received the wages that were due us. He was not heard that we might be heard. The ear of God was closed to Jesus for a time that it might never be closed to us.

3. Christ, the Sole Mediator (see 1 Timothy 2:5-6, page 1096). Why is there only one mediator who is qualified to bridge the gap between God and people? Haven't there been other religious leaders who have claimed to have *the* way to God? Haven't some of them also died as a result of their message?

While the answers to these questions may be yes, the truth is that not one of these other leaders was fully God and fully human. That is why Jesus is uniquely qualified to deal with sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 tells us, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." And, most important, Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

Though it is true that you must believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins in order to receive eternal life and be a true Christian, there is still something else you must do.



the response: accept God's offer

To know Jesus Christ personally and have your sins forgiven, you must believe that you are a sinner separated from God and that your only hope is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came and died for your sins. To stop here, however, would be to stop short of salvation.

There are two things you must now do to enter into a relationship with the God from whom you have been separated.

1. Turn From Your Sins. As Jesus began his public ministry, his first message was "Repent of your sins" (Mark 1:15). In essence, Jesus was telling the

people to repent—to acknowledge their sinning, change their minds, and change the direction of their lives.

Look at it this way. In the past, we have been blinded by our sins, causing us to run from God. As we repent, we do a “U-turn” and start running toward him. It is not enough just to be sorry for our sins. We must also change our lifestyle, for the Bible teaches that “The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin” (2 Corinthians 7:10). In other words, if you are really sorry for something, it will result in a change in your actions.

The apostle Paul summed up this change succinctly when he quoted Jesus, who had said that people must “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me” (Acts 26:18).

You see, there are some things only God can do and some things only you can do. Only God can remove your sins and give you the gift of eternal life, but only you can turn from your sins and receive Jesus as your Savior. That brings up the second thing you must do to respond to God’s offer.

2. Believe in Jesus Christ and Receive Him into Your Life. Having seen the enormity of your sin and decided to turn from it, you then must believe in and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Becoming a Christian, however, is far more than following a creed or trying to live by certain standards. Jesus said that you must be “born again,” or more literally, “born from above” (John 3:3). This spiritual rebirth happens when we personally believe in Jesus Christ, receive him by inviting him into our lives, and turn from our sins. In other words, we ask Jesus to come and take residence in our lives, making the changes he deems necessary. A person must take this all-important step in order to become a child of God.

Notice that this offer is yours for the asking, and it is free. You don’t have to work for it, trying to clean up your life before you make this life-changing decision. The Bible says, “The free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Being a Christian also means having a relationship with the living God. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” To better understand the meaning of this verse, it is important to understand the culture at the time it was written. Eating together in Bible times was a long, drawn-out affair. People would not sit on chairs behind tables in a formal setting as we do, but they would sit on the floor, reclining on pillows around a low table. The relaxed atmosphere made meals a time when you would not only satisfy your appetite but also receive a gratifying

servicing of enjoyable table conversation. You would share your heart and life with those who sat beside you.

Consequently, when Jesus says that he will “share a meal” with us, it implies intimacy, closeness, and friendship. He offers this to us, but we must first “hear him calling” us.

To hear God calling us, we must know how he speaks. One way in which God speaks to us is described in the Bible as a “still, small voice.” This could be described in another way as that tug you might have felt on your heart from the Holy Spirit showing you your need for Jesus. He may even be speaking to you right now! It is at that point that you must “open the door.” Only you can do that. Jesus will not force his way in.

Receiving Jesus Christ into Your Heart. If you are ready to turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ so that you can receive the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life, then take a moment to bow your head and pray a prayer like this one right now:

God, I'm sorry for my sin. I turn from it right now. I thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sin.

Jesus, I ask you to come into my heart and life right now. Be my Lord, Savior, and friend. Help me to follow you all the days of my life as your disciple.

Thank you for forgiving and receiving me right now. Thank you that my sin is forgiven and that I am going to heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Rededicating Your Life to Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are already a Christian but you have strayed from Jesus Christ. You have been a prodigal son or daughter. God will forgive you right now if you will return to him. He tells us in Scripture, “My wayward children . . . come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts” (Jeremiah 3:22). If you would like to return to God and rededicate your life to him right now, you may want to pray something like this:

God, I am sorry for my sin. I am sorry that I have strayed from you. I ask you to forgive me now as I repent of my sin. I don't want to live like a prodigal any longer.

Renew and revive me as I once again follow you as my God. Thank you for your forgiveness. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Whether you prayed to make a first time commitment or a recommitment, you have made the right decision. God has forgiven and received you if you really meant it. Know that your relationship with Jesus Christ will bring radical and

dramatic changes in your life. Describing this, the Bible says, “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now that is good news! But more importantly, God has changed your eternal destiny. Instead of fearing an eternal punishment in a place called hell, you will spend peaceful eternity in his presence in heaven.

Read the next section to see what else God has done for you now that you have taken this step.



what God has done for you

What actually happens when Jesus Christ comes into your life? First, he saves you from your sins and the punishment you deserve as a result of them—eternity in hell. This is called salvation, or regeneration, and has to do with what takes place in your heart: God gives you new life.

Second, he justifies you. Justification has to do with your standing before God and includes the complete removal and forgiveness of your sins. Think about it! When you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you are completely forgiven. God’s Word tells us, “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God [justified]—something the law of Moses could never do” (Acts 13:38-39). Speaking of our sins, God says, “I will never again remember [your] sins and lawless deeds” (Hebrews 10:17). What a wonderful promise!

Justification, however, is more than just the forgiveness and removal of the guilt and condemnation that accompany sin. While God has removed your sins and forgiven you of them, he has also placed the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ “into your account,” so to speak. You don’t have to earn it or try to achieve it. It is yours as a gracious gift from the God who loves you. To understand justification more fully, read the following Scripture passages and notes below.

- 1. God Promises Us His Gracious Forgiveness** (see 1 John 1:9, page 1141). The word *confess* means “to say the same thing as another” or “to agree with.” To confess means that we are agreeing with God about our sin. We are seeing it as he does. We know that God hates sin. Therefore, to truly

confess our sin means that we essentially feel the same way God feels about what we have done. After committing that sin, we will be determined to put it out of our lives and never do it again. That is true confession in the biblical sense. The reason many believers are not experiencing the forgiveness and joy they desire is that they have not yet truly confessed! Once we have met God's conditions, however, we will know his gracious forgiveness. We may not "feel" forgiven, but we are. We have his word on it.

2. God Has Balanced Our Moral and Spiritual Budget (see Romans 5:1-2, page 1009). When God makes us right in his sight, he does so by placing all of the righteousness of Christ to our credit. This balances the moral and spiritual budget for us. We now have sufficient "capital of character" to get on with the business of living.

Up to this point, salvation has been God's responsibility. From this point on, it continues to be his responsibility except that we are responsible for the wise investment of our "capital of character"—that is, we are responsible for living as God desires us to. It is as if your checking account were empty, but then someone made a \$100,000 deposit. What you do with that money is up to you.

3. God Calls Us His Children (see Luke 15:11-32, page 922). This incredible story illustrates what happens when a person turns from sin and returns to God. First, notice that the father in the story did not give this prodigal son what he deserved—banishment. In the same way, we do not receive from God what we deserve—punishment for sin. Second, the young man was given what he did not deserve—the rights and privileges of full sonship. Likewise, although we are not worthy to be called children of God, he calls us sons and daughters. In summary, he doesn't give us what we deserve (judgment). He gives us what we don't deserve (forgiveness and justification).

Speaking of sons and daughters, read on to see how God has adopted you into his family.



adopted and assured

We have looked at what happens when we are regenerated (when Christ comes into our lives) and when we are justified (when God forgives our sin and puts his righteousness in its place). Now let us look at another incredible thing God has done for us. He has adopted us into his family as his children!

Adoption means "to be given the rights of a son." In

essence, you have been given the full rights of sonship in the family of God as though you were born that way. The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates this (Luke 15:11-32). The wayward son thought that after leaving home, he would no longer be considered a son but would instead be treated as a hired servant. Much to his surprise, when he made the long journey home, his father welcomed him and smothered him with kisses. He then gave orders to bring out the best robe and to put a ring on his finger, signifying full rights as a son. That is exactly what God has done for you! Take some time now to examine three Scripture passages that assure you of your adoption into God's family.

1. God Disciplines His Children (see Hebrews 12:5-9, page 1122).

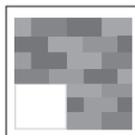
Recognizing you are now a child of God is not some distant hope but a present reality. One of the ways God will remind you of this is by correcting you and bringing you back into line like a loving father when you stray away from him.

Before we were believers, we may have felt no sense of guilt for certain things we did or did not do. But now that we are Christians, God's Holy Spirit shows us the way to live, which includes correcting us. He does this not because he hates us but because he loves us as his own dear children. Understanding this truth should help us in the way we behave.

2. You Have an Approachable Father (see Galatians 4:6, page 1060). The Aramaic word translated "dear Father" is *abba*, which is a word of affection that a young child would use endearingly toward his or her father. A western equivalent of that phrase would be "papa" or "daddy." God does not want to be viewed as some distant, uninterested father but as a loving, approachable father to whom you can turn at any time because you are his child.

3. His Promises Are Not Based upon Your Feelings (see 1 John 5:11-13, page 1147). There will be times as a Christian when you may not "feel" God's presence. You may even be tempted to doubt that he has come into your life. But 1 John 5:13 does not say, "I write this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may *feel* you have eternal life." This is because feelings come and go. They fluctuate. Nor does the Bible say, "I write this so that you may *hope*—if God is in a really good mood—that you have eternal life." It says, "so that you may *know*. . . ." Eternal life is yours! Stand on God's promise to you. You are forgiven, justified, adopted into his family, and assured of salvation. Now that is reason to rejoice!

To find out more about God, turn to "Who Is God?" on the next page in the Cornerstones section.



who is God?

Thousands of years ago, Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler, posed a question people are still asking today: “Who is the LORD that I should listen to him?” That’s a good question, but it is not an easy subject to tackle. It is difficult for our limited minds to grasp the limitless, eternal God. It has been said, “If God were small enough for your minds, he wouldn’t be big enough for your needs.” For that reason, don’t be exasperated if you can’t fully understand who God is or why he does certain things. One day, Scripture promises, everything about God and his character will be made perfectly clear to us (1 Corinthians 13:12). But until then, we will find everything we need to know about him in his Word. Look up the following notes and passages to find out who God is.

- 1. God Is All-Knowing, Ever-Present, and All-Powerful.** The Creator of the Universe knows every intimate detail of his creation (see Psalm 139:1-24, page 536).
- 2. God Is Holy.** God’s incomparable holiness merits our worship (see Isaiah 6:1-8, page 592).
- 3. God Is Loving and Just.** God’s justice is tempered by his love (see 2 Peter 3:3-9, page 1138).
- 4. God Is Personal.** This characteristic of God sets him apart from the so-called “gods” of other religions (see Acts 17:22-33, page 992).
- 5. God Is in Control.** It is important to remember that God is still in control, even if things around us seem to be in chaos (see Habakkuk 3:2-19, page 810).
- 6. The God of the Bible Is the One True God.** While some insist on the existence of many gods, only the God of the Bible is the true, living God, worthy of our devotion (see Isaiah 45:9-23, page 624).

who is Jesus?

Throughout history many people have attempted to answer this question. Some have done so accurately, but many have not. Our best source for answering this question is—once again—God’s own Word. The Bible presents us with some inescapable truths about Jesus that demand a response. Anyone who seriously studies Scripture to learn more about Jesus must answer two probing questions: (1) What do you think of Jesus Christ? and (2) Who is he? The writer C. S. Lewis made this observation: “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (*Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1952], 41).

Jesus was not just a good man. He was—and is—the God-man. Let’s examine what the Bible has to say about Jesus.

- 1. *Jesus Is Human.*** Jesus became our supreme example as God in human form (see Philippians 2:5-11, page 1074).
- 2. *Jesus Is Divine.*** Even though Jesus became human, he still remained God (see Colossians 1:15-20, page 1080).
- 3. *Jesus Had a Specific Mission to Accomplish.*** Jesus came to save humankind from sin (see Luke 4:16-21, page 904).
- 4. *Jesus Made the Ultimate Sacrifice.*** Jesus endured tremendous pain so that we could enjoy eternity with him (see Isaiah 53:1-12, page 632).
- 5. *Jesus Has Great Power to Transform People.*** Jesus can change the most unlikely person into one of the most powerful witnesses on his behalf (see Acts 4:1-13, page 970).
- 6. *Jesus Has an Eternal Dominion.*** Jesus’ Kingdom extends beyond the boundaries of space and time (see Revelation 1:4-8, page 1156).

who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious member of the Trinity, which includes God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Spirit (or the Holy Spirit). Many struggle with the idea of God being three persons, yet one. Quite honestly, we will never fully grasp the concept this side of heaven.

Some, however, have wrongly thought of the Holy Spirit as more of an “it” than a “he.” That is probably due in part to biblical descriptions of him as being like the wind or coming upon Jesus in the form of a dove, among other comparisons.

Yet these descriptions must be balanced with the descriptions of the other members of the Trinity. For instance, Jesus referred to himself as “the bread of life” and “the good shepherd.” In the same way, God the Father is referred to as “a refuge” and “a consuming fire.” Does this mean that Jesus is a loaf of bread or a sheep farmer, or that the Father is a pile of rocks or a blast furnace? Of course not! These are simply metaphors used in Scripture to help communicate God’s character. Likewise, the unique descriptions attributed to the Holy Spirit do not imply that the Holy Spirit is merely some “force” or “power.” Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will tell you about the future” (John 16:13). Note the use of the pronoun *he*. The Holy Spirit has a distinct personality, and he also has specific work that he wants to do in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Explore what the Bible says about him.

- 1. Whom the Holy Spirit Helps.** The Holy Spirit strengthens and empowers followers of Christ (see Acts 2:1-41, page 968).
- 2. How the Holy Spirit Works with the Father and the Son.** The Holy Spirit works alongside God the Father and Jesus, God’s Son, to make our lives pleasing to God (see 1 Peter 1:2, page 1132).
- 3. Why God Gives Us the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives is God’s mark of ownership (see Ephesians 1:13-14, page 1064).
- 4. How the Holy Spirit Works in Our Lives.** The Holy Spirit draws us to Christ, enters our lives at conversion, and empowers us as we allow him to work in our lives (see John 14:15-17, page 956).
- 5. When the Holy Spirit Can Be Sinned Against.** There are six specific ways we can sin against the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:1-10, page 974).
- 6. Why Christians Need the Holy Spirit.** Living the Christian life is impossible without the Holy Spirit’s help (see Galatians 5:16-26, page 1058).

who is the devil?

What is the devil like? Does he really look like the red-suited, pitchfork-holding cartoon caricature seated on a throne in hell? Or does he roam through the earth disguised as an angel of light?

Unfortunately, far too many people do not have an accurate view of who the devil is. Many underestimate him and his prowess, even going so far as to doubt his very existence. Someone once asked the great evangelist Charles Finney, “Mr. Finney, do you believe in a literal devil?” Finney replied, “You try opposing him for a while, and you see if he’s literal or not.” You will find out how literal the devil is the moment you make a commitment to Jesus Christ.

The Bible clearly shows us just how active and conniving the devil really is. At the same time, Scripture also lets us know about the devil's limitations and ultimate demise. The more we understand the tactics of this intelligent spirit being, the better equipped we will be to ward off his attacks. Below are some key passages of Scripture that answer some of the most commonly asked questions about the devil—who is also referred to as Satan.

- 1. *Where Did Satan Come From?*** Satan's pride led to his fall from heaven (see Ezekiel 28:12-19, page 736).
- 2. *What Are Satan's Abilities?*** Satan does have the power and access to do certain things in this world (see 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, page 1048).
- 3. *What Are Satan's Limitations?*** While we should not underestimate Satan's power, we should realize that it is limited (see Job 1:1-2:10, page 438).
- 4. *How Does Satan Attack People?*** Satan masterfully uses manipulation and distortion to deceive people (see Genesis 3:1-7, page 6).
- 5. *Who Can Thwart Satan's Agenda?*** Those who lay down their lives for Christ will defeat this evil foe (see Revelation 12:10-12, page 1164).

what are angels?

According to recent surveys, most people believe in the existence of angels. A glut of books on the subject fills bookstore shelves. Still, our only reliable source on angels and their activity is the Bible. Just who are these mysterious creatures? What do they look like? Do they wear long, flowing robes and have large birdlike wings? And what is their purpose?

You might call angels "God's secret agents." They basically work undercover. Most of the time these secret agents remain invisible—except on those special occasions when God allows people to see them. No doubt God realized that if we were allowed to see them all of the time, they would become an object of our worship, which is to be reserved for God alone. Let's take some time to see what the Bible has to say about angels and their role in this world.

- 1. *Why Did God Create Angels?*** God created angels as unique spiritual beings who worship Christ and care for his followers (see Hebrews 1:4-14, page 1112).
- 2. *What Do Angels Do in the Life of a Christian?*** God has ordered the angels to protect his followers and keep them from harm (see Psalm 91:1-16, page 512).

- 3. How Are Angels Involved in Our Prayers?** Our prayers can trigger spiritual warfare (see Daniel 10:1–11:1, page 768).
- 4. What Role Will Angels Play in the End Times?** Angels will play a strategic role in spreading the everlasting gospel (see Revelation 14:6-7, page 1166).

what are demons?

Just as there are angels who look out for your welfare, there are angels who are bent upon your destruction. The Bible teaches that when Satan fell from heaven, he took one-third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:4). Although we do not know their exact number, Scripture tells us there are multitudes (Luke 2:13) and legions (Matthew 26:53) of angels. So Satan has a sizable, highly organized force under his control. These fallen angels, also known as demons, help Satan accomplish his purpose, which, in the words of Christ, is to steal, kill, and destroy. While the Bible does not give us specific details as to how demons work, we can be confident that everything we need to know about them is found in Scripture. We do not need to look elsewhere for insights into the spiritual world. See what God's Word has to say about these evil agents.

- 1. What Do Demons Believe?** Strange as it may seem, demons acknowledge that there is only one God (see James 2:19, page 1130).
- 2. Can Demons Personally Harm You?** Those people who have a true relationship with Christ cannot be overcome by demons; those who do not are “fair game” for these servants of Satan (see Acts 19:13-20, page 994).
- 3. What Makes Demons Powerless?** The name of Jesus used by the followers of Jesus makes the demons tremble (see Luke 10:1-20, page 914).

what is heaven?

The Bible gives us wonderful, vivid descriptions of heaven. From Scripture we know that heaven's streets are made of gold, and that pain, fear, and sorrow are not present there. But even with all of this detail, we still fall short of understanding “the big picture.” That is because it is difficult for us to grasp the absolute perfection and glory of heaven.

All splendor aside, though, what truly makes heaven spectacular is that we will be forever in God's presence. As the psalmist so poignantly expressed, “You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever” (Psalm 16:11).

While we may not be able to have all of our questions about heaven answered here on earth, the Bible does answer some of our most probing questions.

- 1. Who Will Enter Heaven?** Heaven is a place for those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord (see John 14:2-6, page 954).
- 2. When Does a Christian Enter Heaven?** When we take our last breath on earth, we will take our first breath in heaven (see 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, page 1050).
- 3. Will We Recognize People in Heaven?** While our heavenly bodies may resemble our earthly bodies, we will in some ways be like the angels (see Matthew 22:23-33, page 866).
- 4. What Will Life in Heaven Be Like?** Our lives in heaven will no longer be consumed by the cares of this life, but we will be filled with joy being in the presence of our heavenly Father (see Revelation 7:13-17, page 1160).

what is hell?

According to the Bible, you have two options to choose from when it comes to deciding where you will spend your life after death. One option is heaven. The other is hell. Interestingly enough, while there seems to be an increased belief in a place called hell, most people don't believe they are headed there. Instead, they believe that hell is reserved for only the most hardened of criminals and other "evil" elements of our society. But God's Word judges people by a different set of criteria. You are not sent to hell for being a bad person any more than you are sent to heaven for being a good person. We all deserve to spend eternity in hell (Romans 3:22-23).

While God clearly says that those who reject the salvation offered through his Son, Jesus Christ, will spend eternity in this place of torment, he repeatedly gives each person ample opportunity to choose life—abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven (2 Peter 3:9). If you haven't made that choice yet, or if you have decided and want a better understanding of what your nonbelieving friends will have to face, consider these facts about hell from the pages of Scripture.

- 1. What Is Hell Like?** Hell is a place of unending, isolated torment (see Luke 16:19-31, page 924).
- 2. Who Will Go to Hell?** Those whose names do not appear in the Book of Life are destined to everlasting punishment (see Revelation 20:11-15, page 1170).
- 3. What Is the Worst Punishment of Hell?** Hell's worst punishment is everlasting separation from God's presence (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, page 1092).



first steps

what to do after you
have accepted Christ

study the Bible

You might say that the Bible is the “user’s manual of life” we have all been searching for. Everything we need to know about God and living a life that pleases him is found in its pages.

Tragically, some of us go through life without so much as picking up this amazing book, whose words were inspired by God. Yet success or failure in the Christian life is determined by how much of the Bible we get into our hearts and minds and how obedient we are to the principles and teachings found within it. Just as we need to continually breathe oxygen to survive, we need to regularly study the Bible to grow and flourish spiritually. Here are some important reasons why we need to spend time in this life-changing book.

- 1. Studying the Bible Is Necessary for Our Spiritual Growth.** The Bible performs three functions to help us mature spiritually (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17, page 1103).
- 2. Studying the Bible Keeps Us Spiritually Strong.** The more we get into this book and apply its teachings, the more we will be able to stand our ground in the storms and trials of life (see Psalm 119:9-18, page 527).
- 3. Studying the Bible Makes Scripture a Central Part of Our Lives.** God desires that we make the Bible an integral part of our lives (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20, page 167).
- 4. Studying the Bible Helps Us Apply Its Truth to Our Lives.** We will notice positive changes in our lives as we apply what we read in Scripture (see Psalm 1:1-3, page 469).

pray

The idea of talking to God can be intimidating. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, prayer can be a wonderful experience if we know how to do it God's way. Fortunately, we have God's Word to teach us how to pray. The Bible instructs us to pray at all times, in any posture, in any place, for any reason. In addition, it does not matter whether you pray in King James English or the most contemporary jargon. God only desires that you pray from a pure and sincere heart.

The disciples observed the profound effect prayer had in Jesus' life and ministry. They witnessed how Jesus would often go off by himself to spend time in prayer with his heavenly Father. They saw the power, peace, and tranquility that emanated from his life, giving him the ability to stay calm in troubled circumstances. Jesus' prayer life so impressed these men that they asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1-13). Certainly if the perfect Son of God often took time to pray during his life here on earth, how much more do we, mere men and women, need to pray?

Because prayer is an essential ingredient to walking with Jesus Christ, we need to examine its elements found in God's Word.

- 1. Prayer Was Modeled for Us by Christ.** Jesus took the time to show his followers how to pray (see Matthew 6:5-15, page 843).
- 2. Prayer Is Not a Solitary Experience.** God has given us his Holy Spirit to aid us in prayer, even when we do not know what to pray (see Romans 8:26-27, page 1011).
- 3. Prayer Allows Us to Voice Our Requests to God.** Prayer is God's appointed way for us to relate our concerns and present our needs to him (see James 4:2-3, page 1127).
- 4. Prayer Enables Us to Seek Forgiveness.** When we pray sincerely for forgiveness, God will hear our prayers and restore us (see Hosea 14:1-7, page 781).
- 5. Prayer Helps Us Overcome Worry.** In the midst of troubles, we can receive God's peace through prayer (see Philippians 4:6-7, page 1077).
- 6. Prayer Increases Our Spiritual Knowledge and Maturity.** God will give us greater spiritual understanding through prayer (see Jeremiah 33:3, page 683).

look for and attend the right church

One of the essential building blocks of spiritual growth is fellowship with other believers by becoming part of a local church. The church (meaning the entire body of Christians) is not really an organization so much as an organism. It

thrives by keeping its members spiritually active and well-fed. The church provides you with spiritual instruction from God's Word, allows you to worship God with other believers, enables you to use your God-given gifts and abilities as God intended, and makes you accountable to spiritual leadership.

Some people think they can get enough spiritual input from Christian television, radio programs, and books. While those things do have value, nothing can replace the need to become an active member of a church. Think about it—if joining in fellowship with other believers was not important, why did Jesus establish the church? (See Matthew 16:18, page 858.) The Bible has plenty to say about the characteristics of a healthy, vibrant church and the necessity of Christian fellowship. There are four helpful insights from God's Word on looking for and attending the right church.

- 1. What to Look for in a Church.** You should look for a church that has the qualities and characteristics of the first-century church (see Acts 2:42, 44-47, page 969).
- 2. Why We Need Fellowship with Other Believers.** Fellowship with other Christians sharpens our spiritual discernment and prepares us for Christ's return (see Hebrews 10:25, page 1119).
- 3. Why the Church Needs You.** Not only will you benefit from the church, but the church will benefit from you and your God-given abilities (see Ephesians 4:11-16, page 1065).
- 4. You Have a Place in the Church.** God has given each one of us a unique role to play in our place of fellowship (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, page 1041).

obey God

The real evidence of a true Christian is a changed life. The great British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "Of what value is the grace I profess to receive if it does not dramatically change the way that I live? If it doesn't change the way that I live, it will never change my eternal destiny."

A changed life begins with obedience to God. This means that you will have to stop doing certain things and start doing others. While God begins to change your heart and desires once you have surrendered your life to him, he still gives you the freedom to decide just how much of your life you will let him control. But know this: Whatever you give up to follow Jesus Christ will pale in comparison to what he will give you in return. For example, when you give up sinful behaviors for God, he will replace your sin with forgiveness and a clear conscience. With this incentive for obedience, look at six specific ways the Bible instructs us to obey God.

- 1. Recognize That You Are a New Creation.** When you understand what God has done in your life, obedience becomes more of a desire than a mere duty (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, page 1051).
- 2. Follow God Wholeheartedly.** When you follow God completely, you will finish the race of life well (see Joshua 14:6-14, page 201).
- 3. Offer God More than Lip Service.** God looks at your heart more than your religious actions (see 1 Samuel 15:1-23, page 249).
- 4. Live in God's Love.** Discover the secret of true and lasting joy (see John 15:9-11, page 957).
- 5. Put On God's Armor.** Obedience prepares you for the battles of life (see Romans 13:11-14, page 1019).
- 6. Let God Occupy Your Thoughts.** Your thoughts will affect your actions (see Colossians 3:2-4, page 1081).

resist temptation

Now that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, Satan is going to try to draw you away by tempting you to disobey God's Word. It is not a sin to be tempted—even Jesus was tempted (see Luke 4:1-13, pages 902-903). We sin when we give in to that temptation. The good news is that God will never let a temptation become so strong that we can't handle it. In addition, he has given us specific ways to handle temptation. Here are four things to remember when dealing with temptation.

- 1. Realize Who Is Tempting You.** Satan is the mastermind behind all of your temptations (see Ephesians 6:10-12, page 1069).
- 2. Resist the Devil.** The Bible says that if you resist Satan's enticements, he will flee from you (see James 4:7-8, page 1129).
- 3. Rejoice Because Victory Is Yours in Christ Jesus.** God promises that he will always provide a way of escape (see 1 Corinthians 10:13, page 1037).
- 4. Remember That Others Have Successfully Dealt with Temptation.** Joseph's example shows us one of the best ways to resist temptation (see Genesis 39:1-23, page 37).

live in God's power

Some people look at the Christian life and say, "I couldn't begin to live that way and hold to those standards. It is too hard!" This is true. It is not hard to be a Christian—it is impossible (that is, without the help of the Holy Spirit). You see, God has given you power to live the Christian life. The moment you asked Jesus

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The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004 and is reflected in this edition of the New Living Translation. An additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007.

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 our 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 public worship services.

We believe that 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.

The Publishers
October 2007

Translation Philosophy and Methodology. glish Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept

the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader's understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team. To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of Evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide Evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has

been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud. It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation. The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues. The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow

subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s wage.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him

Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

- Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.
- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.
- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish

people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology. For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In

place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names. Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names. All appearances of ‘el, ‘elohim, or ‘eloah have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name ‘adonai, which we render “Lord.” When ‘adonai and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes ‘adonai YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with ‘elohim, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes. The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread.*”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote

or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’ ” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

The Bible Translation Committee
October 2007

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OLD TESTAMENT



Genesis

AUTHOR: MOSES | DATE WRITTEN: 1450–1410 B.C. | GENRE: NARRATIVE

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. The word *genesis* means “the origin or coming into being of something.” Recorded here are such important beginnings as the Creation, the fall of man, and the early years of the nation of Israel.

CHAPTER 1 *The Account of Creation*

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

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, . . .*

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.”

²⁷So 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.

CHAPTER 2

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.

1:26 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. 1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. 2:6 Or *mist*.



off and running

GOD CREATED MARRIAGE

Read GENESIS 2:15-25

When Jesus was asked about the issue of divorce, he replied, “[Divorce] was not what God had originally intended” (Matthew 19:8). In other words,

“From the beginning it was not so.” So what is God’s original design for marriage?

God created Eve because he knew that it wasn’t “good for [Adam] to be alone” (verse 18). The way God uniquely created Eve from one of Adam’s ribs illustrates God’s design for marriage: that the husband and wife become one. Achieving oneness in marriage requires couples to do two things:

1. Leave. As verse 24 states, marriage begins when a “man leaves his father and mother.” By specifying the parent-child relationship, it is implied that if it is necessary to leave your father and mother, then all lesser ties must be broken,

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.

The Man and Woman in Eden

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.

CHAPTER 3

The Man and Woman Sin

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

2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of the man’s side*. 3:8 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

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.

changed, or left behind. You will still love and honor your parents. You will still have other friends. But your best friend should be your spouse. And no one or thing—including hobbies, business, or even church activities—should get in the way of that relationship.

2. Cleave. To cleave means “to adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly.” As the text says, “the two are united into one” when this happens. In the original Hebrew, the word used for cleaving meant an aggressive action, implying that you are holding tightly to your relationship with your spouse. The Greek translation of this same word means “to cement together, to stick like glue, or to be welded together so the two cannot be separated without serious damage to both.” For that reason, you must periodically take stock of your life and ask yourself whether your current relationships or pursuits are drawing you and your spouse together or driving you apart.

For the next note on “Marriage,” turn to p. 1068.


cornerstones
HOW DOES SATAN ATTACK PEOPLE?
Read GENESIS 3:1-7

This passage records Satan's first tempting of humans, and it provides us with a wealth of information concerning his tactics.

Here are the four strategies Satan used effectively in his attack in the garden:

1. He Questioned God's Word. Satan did not deny that God had spoken. He simply questioned whether Eve understood what God meant. He wanted her to think that perhaps she had misunderstood God's command. Today Satan still twists the truth to try to alienate people from God.

2. He Questioned God's Love. Satan wanted to make Eve think that God was holding something back. In reality, God had placed those restrictions in Adam and Eve's life to keep them from sinning and destroying themselves. Likewise, the barriers God places in our lives are there because he loves us.

3. He Denied God's Word. First Satan questioned God's word, but then he denied God's word. He went from "Did God really say this?" to "That's a lie!" It is a short step from questioning God's word to denying it. If Eve had not listened to Satan's questioning, she may never have fallen into his trap.

4. He Substituted His Own Lie. Satan led Eve to believe that if she ate the fruit she would become like God. At that point Eve had a choice: She could take God at his word or believe Satan's lie.

The Bible calls Satan "the father of lies" and even acknowledges that in the last days Satan will resort to deceiving people through a grand, counterfeit scheme (see 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, pp. 1091-1092). The best defense against Satan's attack is to fill your mind with the truth found in God's Word.

Satan knows that our minds are the core of our thoughts—where we reason, fantasize, and imagine. He will attempt to make you second-guess what God has said in his Word and get you to dwell on the what-ifs in life. Our counterattack is found in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ."

For the next note on "Who Is the Devil?" turn to p. 1164.

- 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."
- ¹⁶ Then 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.*"
- ¹⁷ And 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."

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

²⁰ Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve,
because she would be the mother of all who

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.*

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.

CHAPTER 4

Cain and Abel

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 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 seven-fold 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.

The Descendants of Cain

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 Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain 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!"

The Birth of Seth

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.

CHAPTER 5

The Descendants of Adam

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—

^{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." ^{5:1} *Or man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2.

in his very image. He named his son Seth.⁴ After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.⁵ Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh.⁷ After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters.⁸ Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan.¹⁰ After 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.¹³ After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters.¹⁴ Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared.¹⁶ After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters.¹⁷ Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch.¹⁹ After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.²⁰ Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah.²² After 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,²⁴ walking 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.²⁶ After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters.²⁷ Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son.²⁹ Lamech 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."³⁰ After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and

daughters.³¹ Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²By the time Noah was 500 years old, he was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

CHAPTER 6

A World Gone Wrong

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them.² The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives.³ Then 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.⁶ So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart.⁷ And 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."⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.

The Story of Noah

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.¹⁰ Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.¹² God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.¹³ So 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.¹⁵ Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.*¹⁶ Leave an 18-inch opening*

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].

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.

CHAPTER 7

The Flood Covers the Earth

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.

CHAPTER 8

The Flood Recedes

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

¹⁻² Hebrew of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8. ³⁻⁴ Hebrew 15 cubits (6.9 meters). ⁵⁻⁶ Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. ⁷⁻⁸ Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4.

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

AUTHOR: MATTHEW (Levi) | DATE WRITTEN: A.D. 60–65 | GENRE: GOSPEL

This Gospel was written with the Jew in mind and therefore has many references to Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus. It contains at least 129 quotations or allusions to the Old Testament. Matthew's objective was to show the Jewish people that Jesus was indeed their long-awaited Messiah.

CHAPTER 1

The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

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.

The Birth of Jesus 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, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, son of David*. 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 *Jeconiah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16.

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.

CHAPTER 2

Visitors from the East

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.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³After 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."*

The Return to Nazareth

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."

CHAPTER 3

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His mes-

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. 2:15 Hos 11:1. 2:18 Jer 31:15.

sage was, ²"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."³ The 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.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,* he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee God's 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."

The Baptism of Jesus

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."

3:2 Or has come, or is coming soon. 3:3 Isa 40:3 (Greek version). 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. 4:15-16 Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version).

CHAPTER 4

The Temptation of Jesus

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.

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

¹²When 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,

¹⁶the 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.*”

The First Disciples

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.

Crowds Follow Jesus

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.

4:17 Or has come, or is coming soon. 4:25 Greek Decapolis. 5:11 Some manuscripts do not include *and lie about you*.

CHAPTER 5

The Sermon on the Mount

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.

The Beatitudes

³“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,*

for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,* for they will be satisfied.

⁷God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

⁹God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰God 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.

5:3 Greek poor in spirit. 5:6 Or for righteousness.



off and running

WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE OUR TRUE CONDITION

Read MATTHEW 5:3-5

Jesus shows us the way to true happiness in this text. And believe it or not it has nothing to do with personal fulfillment. Here Jesus gives us a

three-step prescription to spiritual health and happiness:

1. See Yourself as You Really Are. When you realize your need for God (verse 3), you see yourself as you really are: a sinner, in desperate need of God’s forgiveness. This is the first step. The phrase “need for [God]” in this verse comes from a verb meaning “to shrink, cower, or cringe.” It speaks of someone who is destitute and completely dependent on others. Therefore, to realize your need for God is to admit that you are spiritually destitute apart from God.

2. Take Action. Another way to translate verse 4 is “happy are the unhappy.” Because we see ourselves as we really are, we mourn over our condition. This

And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

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.

Teaching about the Law

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!

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!’* 5:22d Greek *Gehenna*; also in 5:29, 30. 5:23 Greek *gift*; also in 5:24. 5:26 Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans]. 5:27 Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18. 5:29 Greek *your right eye*. 5:30 Greek *your right hand*.

Teaching about Anger

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.*

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷“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

leads us to begin making changes in our lives. Scripture tells us, “For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Our true sorrow will lead to joy—salvation in Jesus Christ.

3. Pursue Meekness. Seeing ourselves as we really are produces two vital spiritual qualities: gentleness and lowliness (verse 5). We have an accurate and honest assessment of ourselves that, in turn, affects how we approach others. This contradicts the world’s way of thinking, which advocates standing up for your rights and asserting yourself in order to get what you deserve. The meekness Jesus describes here is not weakness or cowardice, but rather power under constraint, much like a powerful stallion submitting to the control of the bit.

The more we humble ourselves and admit our weaknesses, the more we will rely on God’s grace—and the happier we will be with ourselves and others.

For the next note on “Attitude toward Self,” turn to p. 1124.


cornerstones
Beware of the Sins of the Heart

Read MATTHEW 5:27-30

Some people have the mistaken notion that unless you commit the act of adultery, you have not really sinned. They think it is OK to fantasize

about or look at someone, so long as you don't become involved with that person. But Jesus cuts straight to the core. He lets us know that even a lustful glance is as sinful as committing the act of adultery.

In the original Greek, one of the meanings for the word Jesus uses for "look" is intentional and repeated gazing. Jesus' remedy for someone who has a problem in this area seems rather harsh, but you really have to look at the context and the culture of the day to understand this radical but important statement.

In the Jewish culture, the right eye represented one's best vision and the right hand represented one's best skills. In essence, Jesus is saying that you should be willing to give up whatever is necessary to keep you from falling into this sin. That may mean terminating a relationship, canceling cable or a magazine subscription, or changing how or where you spend your spare time. Remove yourself from those things that can have a spiritually destructive effect on your life. Then take practical steps to fill your mind with the things of God: "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8).

For the next note on "Purity," turn to p. 1088.

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.

Teaching about Divorce

³¹"You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.'³² But 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.

Teaching about Vows

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.'³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. ³⁵ And 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. ³⁶ Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. ³⁷ Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

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.'³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,* carry it two miles. ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor'* and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies!* Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In 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. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends,* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

CHAPTER 6
Teaching about Giving to the Needy

"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. ² When you

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 *milion* [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.*

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.³ But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

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.⁶ But 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 people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.⁸ Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!⁹ Pray 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.¹⁵ But 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.¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face.¹⁸ Then 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.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them,

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.



first steps

PRAYER WAS MODELED FOR US BY CHRIST

Read MATTHEW 6:5-15

You have probably heard of “the Lord's Prayer.” Jesus gave us this prayer to show us *how* to pray. Incidentally, just because we call this prayer “the Lord's Prayer,” does not mean that Jesus prayed it for himself. He had never sinned. It is more accurate to call this prayer “the Disciples' Prayer,” because Jesus gave it to his disciples in response to their request, “Lord, teach us to pray.” To better understand this prayer, we can break it down into two sets of petitions:

The first three petitions focus on the glory of God.

- “Our Father in heaven”: Recognize that you are addressing a holy God who sees you as his child.
- “May your name be kept holy”: Begin your prayers with reverence and praise for who God is. This will enable you to put your needs or problems in their proper perspective.
- “May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven”: Ask God for his will to rule your life. You cannot pray “your Kingdom come” until you pray “my kingdom go.”

The second three petitions focus on our personal needs.

- “Give us today the food we need”: Tell God your physical and personal needs. Remember, Scripture tells us that God will provide for all of our needs (see Philippians 4:19, p. 1077).
- “And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us”: Confess your sins to God. Psalm 66:18 says, “If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” If you are clinging to some sin, your prayer life will suffer.
- “And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one”: Recognize your inclination to fall into sin, and pray that the opportunity to sin will not lead to committing the sin.

Make it a point to include these important aspects in your personal prayers. By doing so, you will begin to understand how immense your God is and how small your problems are in comparison.

For the next note on “Pray,” turn to p. 1011.


cornerstones
FORGIVENESS IS NOT SELECTIVE

Read MATTHEW 5:43-48

As one Bible commentator has put it, “To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human. To return good for evil is divine.” Although

we are not divine, we do not have the liberty to choose whom we will forgive and not forgive. This means that we must not only forgive our enemies, but love them as well.

Loving our enemies is certainly something that does not come easily—or naturally. In fact, if we wait for some feeling of love to suddenly overtake us, it simply won’t happen. We must begin to pray for our enemies even before we are conscious of loving them. This is absolutely impossible to do apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. If you feel you fall short in the area of forgiveness, take heart. The Bible is full of examples of that divine ability to forgive, which can only come from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

- God’s Spirit enabled Abraham to give the best land to his traveling partner and nephew, Lot (see Genesis 13:1-12, p. 13).
- God’s Spirit gave Joseph the ability to embrace and kiss his brothers, who had sold him into slavery (see Genesis 45:1-15, p. 45).
- God’s Spirit kept David from taking advantage of an opportunity to kill King Saul, who was seeking David’s life (see 1 Samuel 24, p. 258).
- God’s Spirit caused Stephen (the first Christian martyr) to pray for those who were stoning him to death (see Acts 7:59-60, p. 975).

But the ultimate example of forgiving one’s enemies comes from Jesus. While hanging on the cross, he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing” (see Luke 23:34, p. 935). If the cruel torture of crucifixion would not silence Jesus’ prayer for his enemies, what pain, prejudice, or unfair treatment could justify the silencing of our prayers for our enemies? Just as God’s Spirit worked in the lives of the individuals above, he will enable you to love, pray, and do good to those who hate and hurt you.

For the next note on “Forgiveness,” turn to p. 44.

and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²²“Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light.²³ But when your eye is bad, 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 both God and money.

²⁵“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more

valuable to him than they are?²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing,²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.³³ Seek the Kingdom of God* above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

CHAPTER 7

Do Not Judge Others

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ²For you will be treated as you treat others.* The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

³"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye* when you have a log in your own? ⁴How can you think of saying to your friend,* 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

⁶"Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy.* Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Effective Prayer

⁷"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹"You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

The Golden Rule

¹²"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

¹³"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell* is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵"Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree

7:2a Or For God will judge you as you judge others.

7:2b Or The measure you give will be the measure you get back. 7:3 Greek your brother's eye; also in 7:5. 7:4 Greek your brother. 7:6 Greek Don't give the sacred to dogs.

7:13 Greek The road that leads to destruction.



first steps

HOW SHOULD YOU VIEW MATERIAL WEALTH?

Read MATTHEW 6:19-34

This section of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount deals with possibly the greatest distraction to following him wholeheartedly: wealth. This series of verses gives us at least three warnings about wealth and one prescription to overcome its enslaving effects:

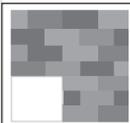
1. We Must Watch How and What We Store. Verse 19 says that we should not "store up treasures." The idea here is not simply saving, but stockpiling. Jesus is not condemning saving your resources or providing for your family (see Proverbs 6:6, p. 545; and 1 Timothy 5:8, p. 1098). He is condemning the accumulation of possessions in order to impress others. Enjoy what God has given you without making those possessions your primary ambition.

2. We Must Keep Our Vision Clear. While we can enjoy what God gives us, we need to understand that the material things of this world are only temporary. Our possessions can lose their value, be destroyed by natural disasters, get lost, or be stolen. That is the problem with making the accumulation of "things" your life's passion. It is fleeting, unfulfilling, and even enslaving. Without proper perspective, we can easily become ensnared. Then we are no longer serving God but money (verses 22-24).

3. We Should Not Worry about Material Things. Worry is a powerful force that can divide or distract us. You can worry about anything in your life. But Jesus tells you to stop worrying, because God will *always* meet your needs (verses 25-30). Quite simply, worry is a waste of your valuable time as his servant.

4. We Must Put God First in Our Lives. Our main concern should not be acquiring material possessions or prestige. Our primary pursuit should be seeking to put Jesus Christ first in our lives (verses 31-34). It makes a lot of sense to place your temporary needs and worries in the hands of an eternal God.

For the next note on "Give to God," turn to p. 1097.


cornerstones
**OUR WALK SHOULD MATCH
OUR TALK**
Read MATTHEW 7:21

In this verse, Jesus gets to the heart of every person's belief. He states that calling him Lord is not enough to get into heaven. That is because anyone can say

the word and not mean it. What counts is a changed person living in obedience to God's will.

Regarding the Christian life, it has been said, "It is not how high you can jump that matters, but how straight you can walk when you hit the ground again." You may be able to say all of the right things, but if your faith does not impact the way you live, it is meaningless—even offensive. In truth, you do not have a real relationship with God.

An engraving on a cathedral wall in Germany bears these soul-searching words:

Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us,
 "You call me Master and obey me not;
 You call me light and see me not;
 You call me the Way and walk me not;
 You call me life and live me not;
 You call me wise and follow me not;
 You call me fair and love me not;
 You call me rich and ask me not;
 You call me eternal and seek me not;
 If I condemn you, blame me not."

The more we learn about what God has done for us, the more we will want to know about how to live for him. Our motives will come from a pure heart, not from selfish ambition. God is looking for genuine believers whose walk matches their talk. Are you one?

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A33.

produces bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. ¹⁹So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

²¹"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²²On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' ²³But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Building on a Solid Foundation

²⁴"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶But anyone who

hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching. ²⁹for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

CHAPTER 8
Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. ²Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. "Lord," the man said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."

³Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.* This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

8:4 See Lev 14:2-32.

Now that you are a Christian, one thing you will want to do on a daily basis is study the Bible. You may, however, have some questions about this. For example, you may ask yourself, *How do I study the Bible?* Or, *Where do I begin reading?* This feature will answer those questions and give you the information you need to develop the basic techniques necessary for effective Bible study.

Pray for Wisdom and Understanding. The most often overlooked and undervalued aspect of Bible study is prayer. Yet prayer is essential to gaining wisdom and understanding when you read God's Word. Through prayer, you can approach God and acknowledge your incomplete knowledge of his Word, as well as your need for him to open your heart to his instruction. Therefore, determine to begin each study with prayer. Only God can give you the wisdom to understand his Word.

Read in an Orderly Manner. If you received a letter and read only a few sentences here and there, the letter would not make much sense to you. But if you read the letter in order, you would understand it. The same holds true when you read the Bible.

Sadly, many Christians do not realize the shallowness of this approach. They read a portion of Matthew, a story from Daniel, a verse or two from Exodus, and then a chapter or so from Revelation and wonder why they do not have a good understanding of God's Word. Furthermore, they end up misinterpreting the meaning of these passages because they have failed to grasp the context from which they came.

To avoid developing this poor habit, you need to discipline yourself to read the Bible in an orderly manner. One way to do this is to use an established reading plan. A reading plan lists Scripture passages to be read in a certain order. Many of the existing plans were created with a goal in mind. Some plans break the whole Bible down into 365 daily readings. Others help you read through the Bible in the order that the events actually happened. For now, you may want to use the following plan as your reading guide. Start with the Gospel of John. This Gospel was written so that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Then, after you have finished reading

John, read the rest of the New Testament. Once you have finished the New Testament, you should read the books of the Old Testament. There you will see the coming of Jesus foreshadowed.

If you prefer a more structured approach, a one-year New Testament reading plan has been included on p. 1177 to help you get started.

Finish What You Start. In life, the benefits of doing anything are often not realized until the task is completed. The same is true when reading a book from the Bible. Once you choose a book to read, read it from beginning to end. Although you may benefit spiritually by reading a verse from one book or a story from another, you will benefit more by reading the entire book from which the verse or story came. Reading the entire book puts each verse and story in its proper context. Thus, you will have a better understanding of what each verse and story means. In addition, by reading books from beginning to end you will become more familiar with the Bible as a whole. You may even discover passages that will one day become your favorites.

Meditate on God's Word and Ask Questions. Thinking about what you have read cannot be overemphasized. Meditating on what you have read helps you to discover the importance of the passage. It also helps you to examine your life in light of what God reveals in his Word.

One of the best ways to begin meditating on God's Word is to ask questions. Here are a few questions to help you get started:

- What is the main subject of the passage?
- To whom is this passage addressed?
- Who is speaking?
- About what or whom is the person speaking?
- What is the key verse?
- What does this passage teach me about God?

To see how the text might apply to you personally, ask yourself these questions:

- Is there any sin mentioned in the passage that I need to confess or forsake?
- Is there a command given that I should obey?
- Is there a promise made that I can apply to my current circumstances?
- Is there a prayer given that I could pray?

Invest in a Few Good Resource Books. The Bible alludes to many ancient customs that are completely unfamiliar to us today. Much of the subtle meaning behind these allusions that would give us greater insight into and appreciation for God's Word is therefore lost. To understand the culture in which the Bible was written, you may want to purchase a few good biblical resource books.

There are two types of resource books you should look into purchasing: (1) a one- or two-volume commentary on the whole Bible and (2) a Bible dictionary. Most one- or two-volume commentaries are concise. They give you the necessary information on important words, phrases, and verses from the Bible. They will not give you commentary on each verse, and they will not go into detailed explanations on any one verse. But they are good resources to help you begin to understand God's Word. The price for such a commentary can range from twenty-five to forty dollars per volume.

Bible dictionaries contain short articles (in alphabetical order) on people, places, and objects found in the Bible. Some Bible dictionaries also contain maps, diagrams, and pictures of biblical cities, regions, and artifacts. Bible dictionaries cost between twenty-five and thirty-five dollars. You can find these resources wherever Christian books are sold.

If you apply these practices to your daily personal Bible study, you are bound to develop habits that will help you grow in your faith.

January 1

Matthew 1:1-17
Romans 1:1-7

January 2

Matthew 1:18-25
Romans 1:8-15

January 3

Matthew 2:1-12
Romans 1:16-17

January 4

Matthew 2:13-23
Romans 1:18-32

January 5

Matthew 3:1-12
Romans 2:1-16

January 6

Matthew 3:13-17
Romans 2:17-29

January 7

Matthew 4:1-11
Romans 3:1-8

January 8

Matthew 4:12-25
Romans 3:9-20

January 9

Matthew 5:1-16
Romans 3:21-31

January 10

Matthew 5:17-48
Romans 4:1-12

January 11

Matthew 6:1-18
Romans 4:13-17

January 12

Matthew 6:19-34
Romans 4:18-25

January 13

Matthew 7:1-6
Romans 5:1-5

January 14

Matthew 7:7-12
Romans 5:6-11

January 15

Matthew 7:13-29
Romans 5:12-21

January 16

Matthew 8:1-17
Romans 6:1-14

January 17

Matthew 8:18-22
Romans 6:15-23

January 18

Matthew 8:23-34
Romans 7:1-6

January 19

Matthew 9:1-8
Romans 7:7-13

January 20

Matthew 9:9-13
Romans 7:14-25

January 21

Matthew 9:14-17
Romans 8:1-8

January 22

Matthew 9:18-26
Romans 8:9-17

January 23

Matthew 9:27-38
Romans 8:18-27

January 24

Matthew 10:1-18
Romans 8:28-39

January 25

Matthew 10:19-11:1
Romans 9:1-5

January 26

Matthew 11:2-19
Romans 9:6-18

January 27

Matthew 11:20-30
Romans 9:19-26

January 28

Matthew 12:1-21
Romans 9:27-33

January 29

Matthew 12:22-37
Romans 10:1-13

January 30

Matthew 12:38-50
Romans 10:14-21

January 31

Matthew 13:1-23
Romans 11:1-6

February 1

Matthew 13:24-35
Romans 11:7-12

February 2

Matthew 13:36-43
Romans 11:13-21

February 3

Matthew 13:44-58
Romans 11:22-27

February 4

Matthew 14:1-12
Romans 11:28-36

February 5

Matthew 14:13-21
Romans 12:1-5

February 6

Matthew 14:22-36
Romans 12:6-13

February 7

Matthew 15:1-20
Romans 12:14-21

February 8

Matthew 15:21-28
Romans 13:1-7

February 9

Matthew 15:29-39
Romans 13:8-14

February 10

Matthew 16:1-12
Romans 14:1-4

February 11

Matthew 16:13-28
Romans 14:5-9

February 12

Matthew 17:1-13
Romans 14:10-16

February 13

Matthew 17:14-21
Romans 14:17-23

February 14

Matthew 17:22-27
Romans 15:1-6

February 15

Matthew 18:1-20
Romans 15:7-17

February 16

Matthew 18:21-35
Romans 15:18-22

February 17

Matthew 19:1-12
Romans 15:23-33

This list not only gives you the fifty-two Bible stories you should be familiar with as a Christian, but it also provides an interesting reading plan. Using the list below, you can read through one great Bible story a week for a whole year.

1. In the Beginning

Genesis 1:1–2:3, page 3

In an incredible display of majesty and power, God creates the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

2. The First Sin

Genesis 2:4–3:24, page 4

God's original plan for humankind is spoiled in one small but deliberate act of disobedience that enables sin to enter the human race.

3. Noah and the Ark

Genesis 6:1–9:17, page 8

One man's faith in and obedience to God spares his family from certain death in the greatest flood ever experienced by humankind.

4. Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 18:16–19:29, page 16

Lot, a God-fearing man, allows outside influences and selfish pursuits to cloud his thinking. Though he escapes the destruction of his evil hometown, his compromising decisions leave a devastating mark on his life and family.

5. Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22:1–18, page 19

Abraham learns that complete obedience can mean great sacrifice—but also great blessing.

Memorizing Scripture is not really a difficult thing to do. You already have quite a bit in your memory bank: a few key phone numbers, your address, a relative's birthday, and many more essential pieces of information. So you *do* have the ability to memorize. The good news is that Scripture memorization is a refreshing exercise that the Lord will use to bless your life. As his Word says, "But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will *bless you for doing it*" (James 1:25, italics added).

Below are a few suggestions that may make memorizing God's Word easier for you:

1. When you pick a text to memorize, take time to read the verses surrounding the text so you can better understand the context of the verse. This will help you determine what the verse means.
2. Read the verse(s) several times aloud, and be sure to include the verse reference.
3. Think about the main idea of the verse and how it applies to you personally.
4. You may want to write down the verse several times. You may even choose to write the verse on little cards you can place on your bathroom mirror, in your car, on your refrigerator door, or any other place you frequently find yourself.
5. Review the verse frequently. As someone has said, you memorize a telephone number by dialing, Dialing, DIALING. You can memorize Scripture by reviewing, Reviewing, REVIEWING!
6. Finally, pray over the selected text throughout the day, asking God to help you comprehend its meaning as well as its significance in your own life.

As the verse in James attests, the more you memorize God's Word, the more you will find yourself doing what it says. In effect, filling your mind with Scripture is one of the strongest deterrents for temptation. That is because the more God's Word fills your heart and mind, the less likely you are to want to disregard his commands and displease him. In addition, making the Bible such a central focus of your day will "fill your lives" (Colossians 3:16).

Considering the benefits of Scripture memorization, here are some key verses to help you get started in this practice. The following verses have been selected to help you understand the message of salvation, encourage your spiritual growth, and remind you of God's promises as you journey through life.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**► We must acknowledge that we are sinners.**

ROMANS 3:23. Every person is guilty of sin and has fallen short of God's standard. *page 1006*

ISAIAH 53:6. We all have a basic instinct to follow our own way instead of God's. *page 632*

JAMES 2:10. Breaking one of God's laws makes us as guilty as someone who has broken all of God's laws. *page 1126*

ROMANS 3:10. No one can claim innocence before God. *page 1006*

► We must understand the penalty for our sins.

ROMANS 6:23. The wages of sin is death. *page 1011*

► We must confess and repent of our sins.

1 JOHN 1:9. God promises to forgive our sins when we confess them. *page 1141*

ACTS 20:21. We must turn from our sin and turn to God. *page 993*

► We must believe that Christ is the only way of salvation.

JOHN 14:6. Jesus Christ alone leads you to God. *page 953*

ACTS 4:12. Salvation can be found through no one other than Christ. *page 970*

ROMANS 5:8. Christ's death demonstrates God's unconditional love. *page 1009*

1 PETER 3:18. Christ, who never sinned, took the punishment for our sins on the cross of Calvary to bring us to God. *page 1135*

ROMANS 10:9-10. Belief in Jesus' death and resurrection is essential to salvation. *page 1016*

► We must receive Christ into our lives to obtain forgiveness and eternal life.

JOHN 3:3. We must be spiritually "reborn." *page 939*

JOHN 3:16. We are promised salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, God's Son. *page 939*

JOHN 10:9. Christ is the gate to salvation. *page 948*

REVELATION 3:20. Jesus waits for an invitation into our lives. *page 1158*

EPHESIANS 2:8-9. We can only receive salvation through faith in Christ, not through our good works. *page 1064*

TITUS 3:5. The salvation God extends washes away our sins and brings true joy. *page 1107*

► We have the assurance of our salvation.

JOHN 1:12. We become a child of God by receiving his free gift of salvation. *page 937*

GALATIANS 2:20. We have been given a "new" life in Jesus Christ. *page 1059*

ROMANS 8:1. We no longer have to fear condemnation. *page 1012*

prophecies about JESUS

For the Gospel writers, one of the main reasons for believing in Jesus was the way his life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Following is a list of some of the main prophecies and their fulfillments.

PROPHECY	<i>Old Testament Reference</i>	<i>New Testament Fulfillment</i>
Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-20
Messiah was to be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38
Messiah was to be a prophet like Moses	Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19	John 7:40
Messiah was to enter Jerusalem in triumph	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-9; John 12:12-16
Messiah was to be rejected by his own people	Isaiah 53:1-3 Psalm 118:22	Matthew 26:3-4; John 12:37-43; Acts 4:1-12
Messiah was to be betrayed by one of his followers	Psalm 41:9	Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50; Luke 22:16, 47-48
Messiah was to be tried and condemned	Isaiah 53:8	Luke 23:1-25; Matthew 27:1-2
Messiah was to be silent before his accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:62-63; 27:12-14; Mark 15:3-5; Luke 23:8-10

Messiah was to be struck and spit upon by his enemies	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67; 27:30 Mark 14:65
Messiah was to be mocked and taunted	Psalms 22:7-8	Matthew 27:39-44; Luke 23:11, 35-36
Messiah was to die by crucifixion	Psalms 22:14, 16-17	Matthew 27:31; Mark 15:20, 25
Messiah was to suffer with criminals and pray for his enemies	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27-28; Luke 23:32-34
Messiah was to be given vinegar and gall	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34; John 19:28-30
Others were to cast lots for Messiah's garments	Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35; John 19:23-24
Messiah's bones were not to be broken	Exodus 12:46	John 19:31-36
Messiah was to die as a sacrifice for sin	Isaiah 53:5-6, 8, 10-12	John 1:29; 11:49-52; Acts 10:43; 13:38-39
Messiah was to be raised from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9; Acts 2:22-32
Messiah is now at God's right hand	Psalms 110:1	Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51

What does it mean when someone refers to “the flesh”? What is the significance of the phrase “the blood”? And why is it important to “disciple” others? Whether you have just become a Christian or are simply interested in learning more about Christianity, you will soon discover that Christians sometimes seem to speak their own language. This basic glossary of commonly used Christian terms and phrases will help you uncover some of the mystery behind the Christian vocabulary. In addition, some entries will point you to areas of further study so that you can see how these expressions apply to your life. If for some reason you still have trouble comprehending what a Christian term means (or if it is not listed here), do not hesitate to ask a more mature Christian, a Bible study leader, or your pastor. As the saying goes, “There is only one bad question: the question you never ask.” The more you learn about your Christian faith and the God you now serve, the deeper and more meaningful your spiritual walk will be.

Abide: To remain consistently in fellowship with God by maintaining a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Most commonly used in the phrase “abide in Christ.” (For further study, turn to “Live as a Disciple,” page A42.)

Accepting Christ: To receive God’s gift of salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, asking God to forgive you of your sin that you have repented of, and inviting Christ to take up residence in your heart and allowing the Holy Spirit to change your life. (For further study, turn to How You Can Know God, page A11.) See also *Repent*.

Accountability: To be held responsible for your actions. For example, we are accountable to God for what we do with the talents and abilities he gives us. (For further study, turn to “Accountability,” page A35.)

Altar Call: See *Invitation*.

Angels: Spirit messengers who worship God and care for believers. (For further study, turn to “What Are Angels?” page A26.)

Antichrist: Literally means “false Christ” or “instead of Christ.” The Bible says that one great Antichrist, or “false Christ,” will appear in the final days before Christ’s return to earth and will deceive many (see Revelation 13:1-7, page 1164). This term is also used to describe anyone who opposes Jesus Christ and his teachings (see 1 John 2:18, page 1143; 1 John 4:3, page 1146; 2 John 1:7, page 1149).