COURAGE FOR LIFE

COURAGE FOR LIFE™

Study Bible for Women

TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

a personal word from

ANN WHITE

WE ALL NEED COURAGE FOR LIFE!

Fear is one of the greatest enemies of the abundant life God offers. Embracing the courage to take the next best step toward the life God intended for you begins with a commitment to change—specifically, a commitment to renew your mind. And the best way to renew your mind is by reading, hearing, studying, and applying God's Word to your life.

Although in the past you might have found the Bible difficult to understand or intimidating to study and apply, I have provided book introductions, teaching notes, and inspirational profiles to assist you in your personal study. The *Courage For Life Study Bible for Women* will help you answer common questions like these: Who is talking? What is being said? What does it mean? How can applying each lesson make a positive impact on my life?

If you want to grow in your relationship with God; to discover, study, and apply God's Word for yourself; to embrace your God-given courage for life; and to be inspired to make adventurous and courageous choices that prepare you to experience the life God intended for you to live, then this study Bible is for you!

Courage begins with one fearless choice. My prayer is that you will make that choice today and allow God to change your life forever!

"With God everything is possible." MATTHEW 19:26

SALVATION INVITATION

IF YOU HAVE NEVER asked Jesus into your life, or if you have any doubt about whether you have completely surrendered your life to your Creator, I invite you to do so today by praying the short prayer below. What may seem to be a simple prayer can completely change the course of your life forever when it comes from a genuine place in your heart.

Abba Father,
I humbly confess to you that I am a sinner. I have lived my life by following my own selfish wants and desires. I come before you today to ask you to forgive me of my sins, believing that you sent your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay for them in full. He did for me what I am not able to do for myself.

Therefore, today I receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of my life. I invite him to take up residence within me and to cover me with his abundant grace and mercy. Today I choose to follow Jesus and to turn my life over to him.

Lord, I'm not really sure what this looks like in its entirety. But I'm going to trust you to open the eyes and ears of my heart and to walk with me every step of the way.

I love you, and I thank you that I am your daughter in Christ Jesus.
Amen.

PRAYER ADAPTED FROM *COURAGE FOR LIFE* BY ANN WHITE (page 153).

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this Bible is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-5282-5 Hardcover
ISBN 978-1-4964-5283-2 Hardcover Indexed
ISBN 978-1-4964-5284-9 Softcover
ISBN 978-1-4964-5285-6 LeatherLike Brushed Aqua Blue
ISBN 978-1-4964-5286-3 LeatherLike Brushed Aqua Blue Indexed
ISBN 978-1-4964-7770-5 LeatherLike Fierce Pink
ISBN 978-1-4964-7771-2 LeatherLike Fierce Pink Indexed

Printed in China

29 28 27 26 25 24 23
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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A NOTE TO READERS

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, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

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 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

A complete list of the translators can be found at tyndale.com/nlt/scholars.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English 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.

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.

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. (A list of these scholars can be found online.) 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, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

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. 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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.
- 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.' "
- 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.*"
- 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.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. 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. 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 Jewish 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 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

In the Old Testament, 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 Gospels and Acts, the Greek word *christos* has normally been translated as "Messiah" when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed (which is consistently the case in the Epistles and Revelation), *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

INTRODUCTION TO THE *COURAGE FOR LIFE STUDY BIBLE FOR WOMEN*

The book you are holding in your hands is completely unique and one of the most fascinating books of all time. It's a refuge in troubled times, a storehouse of wise counsel for everyday living, and the greatest source of encouragement, hope, and inspiration you will ever possess. The Bible is actually a library of books—sixty-six in all—written over a span of more than 1,500 years. The authors of these books were historians, poets, farmers, prophets, and preachers who were inspired by God to write down real-life events and eternal truths that continue to challenge and encourage us on our journey with God.

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, starts with an overview of the beginning of the universe, focusing on the creation of our world and of the life that exists here. The last book, Revelation, ends with a vision of a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1).

The Bible is God's story, and along the way it chronicles the lives of those who, like you and me, were on a courageous journey—a walk with the Creator, who seeks to reveal himself to his creation. The lessons God's Word teaches us can be summed up in this way:

- We were made by a loving God who wants us to know him personally.
- We rebelled against God, desiring to go our own way.
- Our rebellion separated us from God and brought us under the penalty of righteous judgment.
- God seeks us out while we are in our rebellious state and calls us to return to him.
- We can be restored to a right relationship with our loving God and receive forgiveness for our sins, the gift of abundant life here on earth, and the blessings of eternal life in heaven—but only if we choose to repent of our sins, believe the Good News about Jesus, trust in him alone for salvation, and make him Lord of our lives.

This restoration with our Creator comes in an amazing way—God showed his great love for us by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to be our sacrificial Savior. This plan is revealed throughout Scripture. The first promise of this restoration can be found in Genesis 3:15, right after the fall of Adam and Eve. The first mention of a sacrifice to cover the effects of sin is six verses later (Gen 3:21). Everywhere we look in Scripture, we see God's redemptive plan in action.

If at some point in your life you realized your need for Jesus and surrendered your life to him, God accepted you as his daughter and now speaks to your heart and soul in response to your commitment to him. When you surrendered to Jesus, he gave you a new heart, one that mirrors his. You then began the courageous journey of faith, which you will be on until you pass from this world and enter the presence of God.

When you believe in Jesus, the Spirit of God resides within you, shaping you into the vessel he desires you to be as a potter shapes a piece of clay (see Isa 29:16; 64:8; Jer 18:2-6 to learn more). Studying the Bible is one way to invite the Holy Spirit to help us know God and to bring us closer to him. This action is a discipline. It does not come naturally or easily. But if you neglect this discipline, you will experience only slow spiritual growth full of roadblocks. However, when you study and gain

an understanding of God's Word—learning who God is and how he wants you to live your life—you will begin to exchange stagnant, slow-paced spiritual growth for growth that brings glory to God and produces transformation in your life.

As we journey together, discovering God's truth for ourselves, remember that studying the Bible is different from reading the Bible. Studying means giving greater attention to what you're reading. In doing so, you'll discover ancient cultures that will fascinate you, confront ideas that will challenge and transform you, read some of the greatest poetry ever written, and come to know the Creator of the universe up close and personally. You will see just how great God's love for you truly is. Studying the Bible will usher you into the adventure of a lifetime, and your submission to its truth will change your life forever.

But Bible study is not just for your own moral and spiritual development, as important as that is. Jesus told his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone" (Mark 16:15). To obey this command, you must be prepared. And Bible study is one of the primary ways you can ready yourself to share God's truth with others. The apostle Paul tells us, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives" (2 Tim 3:16).

The Need for Courage

So now you realize that studying the Bible is essential to having a thriving relationship with your loving God. But where does courage fit into the equation? Why would you need to be courageous to learn what God wants to say to you through the Scriptures?

Because God's Word is life-changing, you will most certainly encounter resistance as you study the Bible and apply its truth to your life. Therefore, you will need to embrace your God-given courage during the process.

According to the author of the book of Hebrews, "our God is a devouring fire" (Heb 12:29), a jealous God who calls everyone to worship him and him alone. And though God told Moses on Mount Sinai, "No one may see me and live" (Exod 33:20), he lovingly invites all people to enter an intimate relationship with him through his Son, Jesus, and to grow in their relationship with him by studying his Word. Therefore, we need great courage to come before God and meet him face-to-face in the Bible. Thankfully, Jesus allows us to enter God's presence, and the Holy Spirit is our guide.

One of the primary reasons we need courage is that the Bible functions as a mirror to our hearts and souls. When we read God's Word, we see our real selves, without all our masks and pretenses—a sight that, if we're honest, can be somewhat startling at times. It takes courage to face our true selves, yet this is a vital step toward fully embracing the abundant life God has planned for us.

The NT book of James clearly articulates this truth: "For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 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" (Jas 1:23-25).

You need courage to face the person the Bible reveals you to be. It takes courage to embrace the transformative process to become the person God created you to be. It will take courage to *do* what the Word says instead of merely *hearing* it. And without taking these courageous steps, you will never fully experience the abundant blessings God so graciously has in store for you. But first, let's learn what I believe to be the best method of studying the Bible.

The Inductive Bible Study Method

I believe the best way to study the Bible is *inductively*. Studying inductively simply means asking investigative questions of the text to discover its intended meaning. When you approach God's Word inductively, you begin with the Bible text, apply established Bible study steps, and discover truths that can either confirm or change the way you think. In other words, you begin with God's Word and learn the truth communicated there. Then you can apply God's truth to what you are experiencing—not the other way around.

It's all about asking the right questions.

When you ask questions of each verse of Scripture (such as "Whom was the message originally delivered to?" "When was the message first given?" or "What did the message mean to its original audience?"), you begin to put the verse in its proper context and prepare yourself to discover a more accurate understanding of God's intended meaning.

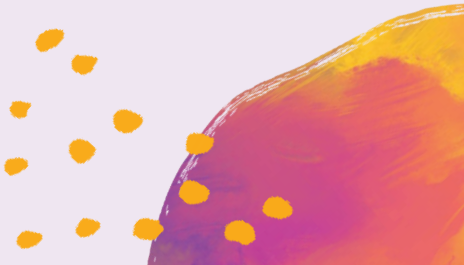
Four Basic Bible Study Steps

Four basic steps allow you to study the Bible inductively so you can accurately interpret and apply God's Word. These four basic steps are important for studying Scripture with courage and confidence. In time, these steps will become as natural to you as breathing. Just remember P-O-I-A:

1. **Pray:** As you approach God's Word, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth.
2. **Observe:** Ask, "What does the Bible text say?"
3. **Interpret:** Ask, "What does the Bible text mean?"
4. **Apply:** Ask, "As I reflect on what I've read in God's Word, what do I need to do?"

As Christ's disciple, you should include these steps in your daily reading habits. And as you put these Bible study steps into practice, God will transform you into the image of Christ, our King.

In this study Bible, I want you to focus on individuals and events that demonstrate courage in action. To that end, you will encounter practical teaching about courage on each page as you read through the books of the Bible. Make it your practice to read through each book as you would any other book—straight through and in large chunks, rather than reading verses at random. When you are studying the Bible, I recommend that you commit to focusing on one book at a time. Keep in mind that the authors recorded what God revealed to them, so you are entering a specific point within God's story each time you open God's Word. Fun fact: Chapter and verse numbers were not added to the Bible until hundreds of years after the books were written. Although they weren't in the original manuscripts, these numbers do serve as helpful tools for locating specific content.



HOW TO USE THE *COURAGE FOR LIFE STUDY BIBLE FOR WOMEN*

I wrote the feature content of this Bible—the section and book introductions, the Listen to the Word statements, the Courageous Women of Faith profiles, and the inductive Bible studies—to provide you with practical guidance as you pray, observe, interpret, and apply (P-O-I-A) God's Word.

INTRODUCTIONS

At the beginning of both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT), you will discover informative introductions that give you a basic understanding of each and help you see how each collection of books reveals God's great love and faithfulness. At the beginning of each Bible book, you will find introductions that answer six important questions: Who is the author? Who is the audience? When was it written? Where did the events take place? What was happening? Why was it written? and How should we read this book? These questions will help you put each book in its proper historical and literary context.

LISTEN TO THE WORD

In the top right-hand corner of many pages, you will find a Listen to the Word feature that encourages you to listen to the Courage For Life audio Bible and replace the lies that this world wants you to believe with truths from God's Word. The Courage For Life audio Bible can be accessed by scanning the Filament icon at the top of each page. See the instructions on page A9 to begin using Filament today!

COURAGEOUS WOMEN OF FAITH

Throughout this Bible, you will find eighty-two inspiring features about courageous women of faith. These are the stories of women who appear in the Bible, women of previous historical periods, and women of the twenty-first century. You might discover that you have different beliefs or opinions from some of the women in these features. That's okay—so do I! Every woman remains a work in progress on this side of eternity, with blind spots and shortcomings alongside her strengths and successes. No matter what we may agree or disagree on, the lives and testimonies of these eighty-two women have inspired me to embrace an unshakable and fearless faith in God. I pray that their testimonies will also ignite within you a courageous faith that boldly pursues the abundant life God desires for you.

BIBLE STUDIES

At the bottom of each Scripture page, you will find a study that guides you through the four basic steps of inductive Bible study—Pray, Observe, Interpret, and Apply (P-O-I-A)—and encourages you to apply God's truth to your life. As you begin each study, you will encounter a prayer that begins with "Abba Father." I encourage you to read the prayer aloud as you prepare to do each study.

The term "Abba Father" is significant because it is a term of endearment that expresses deep affection and confidence in God, who is a loving, protective, and trustworthy Father who will be with us forever. It is an Aramaic term used to address one's earthly father, and it overflows with the intimacy and warmth of a happy relationship between father and child. I chose to begin each prayer with "Abba Father" in response to a powerful testimony from a dear friend of one of our editors. She had been deeply wounded by a broken relationship with her earthly father, and she found it difficult to trust God as her heavenly Father. As she discovered this very personal name, Abba, that Jesus used to address our heavenly Father as he prayed just before dying on the cross (Mark 14:36; see also Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), she began to sense the depth of God's love for her. When she added this term to her prayers, she started to feel the goodness and trustworthiness of her heavenly Father. While the scars from her human father ran deep, the healing power of her heavenly Father completely covered each wound. She began her prayers in this way to communicate her deep devotion and gratitude for her loving Creator and Redeemer.

In honor of God's character and the testimony of courageous faith from the friend of our editor, I have provided these opening prayers as a way for you to confidently call upon God as you study and apply his Word.

Before you begin studying the Bible, I want to share with you a little about the ministry of Courage For Life and how the Seven Steps to COURAGE that you will encounter throughout this Bible came into being.

About Courage For Life

I founded Courage For Life in 2014 to provide resources that help individuals strengthen their relationship with the Lord and embrace their God-given courage for life. My greatest desire is to see everyone experience the life God intended for them. Therefore, our vision is to multiply those who live courageously and inspire them to pass it on to others who will also embrace their God-given Courage For Life!

At Courage For Life, we believe Jesus transforms lives and that anyone can discover the truth about life, love, themselves, others, and God through the study and application of Scripture. We accept that the Bible reveals truth, making God's Word a source of authority for our lives and a unique resource for all individuals to know God and receive courage from him.

We recognize that God gives courage by strengthening individuals with the truth of his Word and that he empowers them by the work of the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that we are all stewards of our God-given courage. It is our responsibility to offer our abilities, personalities, responsibilities, resources, giftedness, training, relationships, and experiences—in other words, our entire lives—back to God for his purposes. Therefore, I, the Courage For Life team and board, and our many volunteers and supporters desire to show all people that they not only have value but also can discover truth, experience life transformation, and embrace their God-given courage while stewarding these assets for God's glory.

About the Seven Steps to COURAGE

On June 19, 2012, I began a journey with God that ultimately led me to create the Seven Steps to COURAGE. With the help of my life coach and spiritual mentor, Robbie Goss, I set aside my fears and embraced my God-given courage. Through proven techniques and exercises, I learned how to act more than react, experience the power of making fearless decisions, and find joy in the journey of healthy choices.

The Seven Steps to COURAGE are grounded in biblical principles. When we faithfully implement these life-changing steps, the exercise produces amazing results. Each step strengthens our courage muscles and, ultimately, brings us into a closer relationship with our heavenly Father. And it's this relationship, above all others, that enables us to walk with courage, live in grace, and find true joy in the miraculous journey of life. To learn more about Courage For Life and the Seven Steps to COURAGE, check out the book *Courage For Life* by Ann White.

seven steps to COURAGE

Get ready to unpack the Seven Steps to COURAGE you will find throughout this study Bible as you read, study, and apply God's Word to your life!

The Seven Steps to COURAGE

- **C** **COMMIT** to Change
- **O** **OVERCOME** Obstacles
- **U** **UNCOVER** Your True Self
- **R** **REPLACE** Worldly Lies with Scriptural Truth
- **A** **ACCEPT** the Things You Cannot Change
- **G** **GRASP** God's Love for You
- **E** **EMBRACE** a Life of Grace

Together, let's begin the journey of a lifetime—the journey to a more confident, courageous, faith-filled you!

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MY SINCERE THANKS to many special people who have inspired me, encouraged me, prayed for me, and helped me during the many months it took to write and edit the teaching and inspirational content for this study Bible.

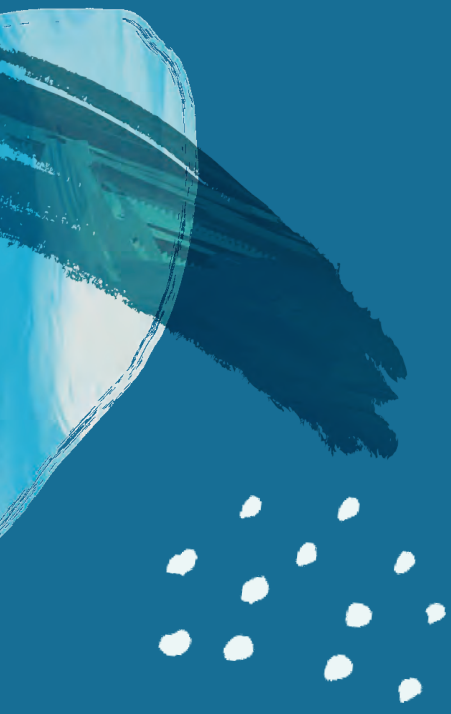
First and foremost, I am eternally grateful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose love, grace, and presence in my life consistently give me wisdom, guidance, and the ability to persevere.

I am forever grateful for my husband, sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, whose love, support, understanding, and patience allowed me to prioritize and safeguard countless hours for writing and editing. And for my dear friends who cheered me on, ran errands for me, and helped me balance and meet the normal demands of my everyday life.

I would especially like to thank the entire Tyndale team for being so amazing to work with throughout every aspect of this vast and God-directed project!

Thank you to writers and editors Melody Schmidt, Ashley Cunningham, Dr. Angie Bauman, Allison Bottke, and Mary Bernard for contributing their time, content, and talents to this project. To my spiritual mentor, Robbie Goss, and my hermeneutics professor, Dr. Danny Akin, I am sincerely grateful for your investment in my spiritual growth and for your editorial and professional advice throughout this undertaking.

And last—but certainly not least!—a very special thank you to my incredible team at Courage For Life—Kathy Sherwin, Ashley Cunningham, and Dr. Angie Bauman—who not only encouraged me but also made sure that every aspect of our ministry ran smoothly and continued to grow as they generously gave me the grace and space I needed to complete this project.



OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible tells about historical events that reveal God to us in a special way. The Bible is not a list of rules to follow or a guidebook for how to have a successful life on your own. It is the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21). It is the story of God's love for his creation. These truths are important to remember as you approach any of the books of the Bible.

The word *testament* is a synonym of the biblical word *covenant*, which refers to a bond of agreement between two or more people. God wants to have a close and personal bond with his creation. He began communicating with humankind the moment he created Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28). Since that time, God has communicated with us in very distinct, purposeful, and strategic ways:

- He walked and talked with Adam and Eve, and he communicated directly with many of their descendants.
- He spoke to and through Moses and Aaron, guiding them to lead the Israelites from slavery to the land of Canaan.
- He communicated through judges, prophets, and priests in order to instruct and warn his people.
- He sent Jesus, God in human form, to offer wisdom, revelation, and salvation.
- He gave the indwelling Holy Spirit to provide wisdom, knowledge, and the ability to live godly and abundant lives.

The Old Testament (OT)—or Old Covenant—centers on the promises made between God and the people he chose as his own: the people of Israel. The historical, poetic, and prophetic books of the OT tell a single grand story:

- God created the world and commanded the first humans to govern it.
- God judged humanity with a flood while preserving life on earth through Noah and his family.
- God chose Abraham and his descendants, the people of Israel, as his own nation and promised to make them a blessing to all people and nations.
- God gave Israel laws so that they would understand his expectations, recognize their need for him, and experience the joy of walking in obedience to him.
- Israel disobeyed God and worshiped false gods to fit in with the unbelieving people around them.

- God punished Israel for their disobedience by sending famine, disease, and war.
- God renewed his covenant relationship with Israel and promised to send them a redeemer to rescue them from their sin.

As believers in Jesus, we are grafted into the covenant as heirs of God's great promises to his people (Rom 11:17). Therefore, as we read the OT accounts of God's covenant relationships with women and men of the Bible, we uncover our heavenly Father's unwavering faithfulness to us even when we are unfaithful to him. And we discover that the central character of God's great story, the Messiah, is found in countless prophetic statements throughout the OT, each pointing to and fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

The OT is often divided into four sections. These divisions generally fall in chronological order, though there is chronological overlap between the sections.

THE OT CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FOUR PARTS:

- **Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy):** tells the story of how sin entered God's perfect world and how God responded, offering a sobering yet inspiring picture of God's relationship with humankind.

- **History (Joshua—Esther):** tells the story of the ancient nation of Israel from its entrance into the Promised Land to its return from exile.

- **Poetry & Wisdom (Job—Song of Songs):** expresses the joyful and troubled prayers of God's people, offers wise advice for healthy living, wrestles with the apparent unfairness of life, and celebrates God's design for marriage.

- **Prophets (Isaiah—Malachi):** unveils God's messages for the people of Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations as well as for all people in the future.

Genesis

WHO IS THE AUTHOR? Moses is the author of the first five books of the OT, which are also known as the Pentateuch. The NT writers and Jesus himself refer to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Matt 19:8, page 1230; see also Luke 24:27; John 5:45-47; Rom 10:5). In both the OT and the NT, the Pentateuch is sometimes called "the Book of Moses" or "the Law of Moses."

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE? The people of Israel—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—were the original hearers and readers of Genesis.

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN? Although the events in Genesis (from Creation to the death of Joseph) span an unknown period of time, Genesis was written during Moses' lifetime. Many scholars believe Moses lived from approximately 1526 to 1406 BC.

WHERE DID THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE? The major events recorded in Genesis took place in the ancient Near East—from Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) to Egypt, along with the lands in between—bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and on the east by the Persian Gulf.

WHAT WAS HAPPENING? Genesis 1–11 covers more than 2,000 years of human history, focusing on God's creation of the universe, the origins of humanity, and humanity's fall into sin. Genesis 12–50 recounts the establishment of God's covenant people, the Israelites, and his promises to them.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN? Moses wanted the Israelites to know and serve the one true God, the Creator of all that is, and not the false gods of other nations. He also wanted them to know the foundational history of their ancestors. Genesis reassured the suffering Israelites that they were God's chosen people and that God would go with them as they sought to enter and settle the land promised to their ancestor Abraham (50:24, page 70). Genesis also provides the account of human disobedience and our subsequent need for salvation. A key verse is Genesis 1:1 (page 5).

HOW SHOULD WE READ GENESIS? Genesis is the book of beginnings. It is a foundational book, containing important background information for every other book of the Bible. In Genesis we find the accounts of the first day, the first man and woman, the first sin, and the first covenants between God and humankind, as well as the first mention of God's desire to redeem humans from sin and restore his covenant relationship with them.

For Bible books and their abbreviations, see page A7.
For definitions of theological words, see page 1619.

GENESIS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FIVE MAIN PARTS:

- 1:1–2:25 • The creation of the heavens and the earth.
- 3:1–6:8 • Adam and Eve's fall into sin and life outside the Garden of Eden.
- 6:9–9:29 • The Flood and repopulation of the earth.
- 10:1–11:32 • The tower of Babel and the descendants of Noah.
- 12:1–50:26 • The lives of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and their descendants.

The Account of Creation

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

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

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

[6]Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." [7]And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. [8]God called the space "sky."

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

[9]Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. [10]God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. [11]Then 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. [12]The 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.

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

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

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

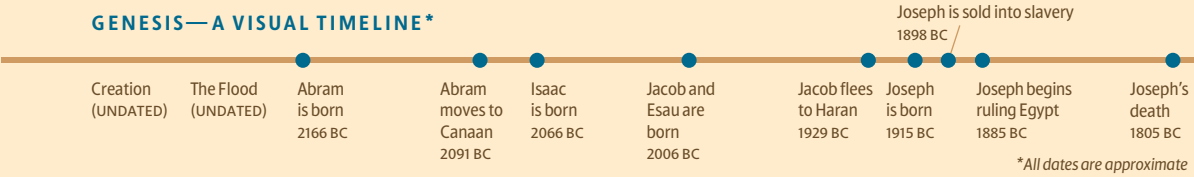
[20]Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." [21]So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. [22]Then God

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, . . .*

listen to the Word

Listen to Genesis 1, and reject the worldly lie that the sun, moon, and stars originated from an accident or a random explosion. Replace it with the truth that God created everything in heaven and on earth with intricate detail, design, and purpose. He placed the sun, moon, and stars in their locations perfectly so that life on earth could exist (see also Rom 1:20; Col 1:16).

GENESIS—A VISUAL TIMELINE*



*All dates are approximate

the beginning 1:1-31

PRAY • Abba Father, you created everything and are in complete control. Help me to recognize your powerful attributes and artistic expression as I admire beautiful skies, incredible landscapes, massive bodies of water, and all living things.

OBSERVE • The Creation account is foundational to the message of the entire Bible. Genesis begins by showing that the one true God created and is sovereign over all things; he alone is worthy of worship. Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life.

INTERPRET • By the power of God Almighty, the earth, the heavens, and everything in them were spoken into being. Though many people have tried to disprove the existence of a sovereign Creator, scientific discoveries consistently lend support to the idea that an intelligent Designer created the universe in all its intricate detail and precision.

APPLY • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** Journal how the beauty of God's creation helps you recognize his great love for you (1:26-30). • ***Overcome obstacles:*** List the physical and emotional obstacles that keep you from experiencing and taking delight in God's creation (1:31). How will you overcome these obstacles?

As you read the Creation account, what additional *COURAGE* steps are you inspired to take?

blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

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

24 Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. 25 God 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.

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

27 So God created human beings* in
his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 Then 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."

29 Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. 30 And 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.

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

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

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

4 This 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, 5 neither 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. 6 Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. 7 Then 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.

8 Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. 9 The 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.

10 A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. 11 The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found.

1:26a Or *man;* Hebrew reads *adam.* **1:26b** As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth.* **1:27** Or *the man;* Hebrew reads *ha-adam.* **2:2** Or *ceased;* also in 2:3. **2:6** Or *mist.*

the first couple 2:7-25

PRAY • Abba Father, you made me in your image so that I could know you and make you known. Help me to live according to your will and to achieve the purpose for which you created me.

OBSERVE • Genesis 2 provides a theological and historical expansion of the Creation account. Special attention is given to the first man and woman. God created the first couple in his image and commanded them to populate the earth and rule over it. Eve's creation from Adam's rib portrays the unity that God intended for a man and a woman in marriage.

INTERPRET • Marriage between a man and a woman is rooted in God's created order. It entails a shift of loyalty from one's parents to one's spouse. The marriage commitment is the most fundamental covenant relationship that humans can share. It is designed to be an inseparable, exclusive relationship that both spouses cherish and respect. The family unit created by marriage is the basic building block of human society.

APPLY • ***Uncover your true self:*** Do you isolate yourself from others? God did not create you to be alone (2:18). How will you connect with others to create healthy relationships? • ***Commit to change:*** What changes will you make in your relationships to help them be healthier and more in keeping with God's perfect design (2:24)?

What other *COURAGE* steps can you apply to your daily life to improve your relationships?

12 The gold of that land is exceptionally
pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are
also found there. 13 The second branch,
called the Gihon, flowed around the entire
land of Cush. 14 The third branch, called
the Tigris, flowed east of the land of As-
shur. The fourth branch is called the Eu-
phrates.
15 The LORD God placed the man in the
Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.
16 But the LORD God warned him, "You
may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the
garden—17 except the tree of the knowl-
edge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit,
you are sure to die."
18 Then 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." 19 So
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. 20 He 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.
21 So 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.
22 Then 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.'"

24 This explains why a man leaves his fa-
ther and mother and is joined to his wife,
and the two are united into one.
25 Now the man and his wife were both
naked, but they felt no shame.

The Man and Woman Sin

3 The serpent was the shrewdest of all
the wild animals the LORD God had
made. One day he asked the woman, "Did
God really say you must not eat the fruit
from any of the trees in the garden?"
2 "Of course we may eat fruit from the
trees in the garden," the woman replied.
3 "It's only the fruit from the tree in the
middle of the garden that we are not al-
lowed 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."
6 The woman was convinced. She saw
that the tree was beautiful and its fruit
looked delicious, and she wanted the wis-
dom 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. 7 At that moment their eyes
were opened, and they suddenly felt
shame at their nakedness. So they sewed
fig leaves together to cover themselves.
8 When 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. 9 Then the LORD God called to the
man, "Where are you?"
10 He 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?"
12 The man replied, "It was the woman
you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I
ate it."

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.

listen to the Word

Listen to Genesis 2, and reject the worldly lie that physical intimacy is primarily for pleasure or reproduction. Replace it with the truth that biblical sexuality has the whole person in view. Sex is a gift for marriage that results in truly knowing your spouse and seals a permanent, mutual commitment between husband and wife (see also 1 Cor 7:3-5; Heb 13:4).

falling to temptation 3:1-13

PRAY • Abba Father, you have warned me about Satan and his desire to steal your glory, kill your creation, and destroy my life. Help me to recognize his deception, and give me the courage to resist his temptations.

OBSERVE • In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned, shattering their unity and harmony with each other and with God. The deceiver is described as a serpent, and he is later identified as Satan, the great enemy of God's people (Rev 12:9; 20:2). Satan attacks humans in various ways (1 Chr 21:1; Zech 3:1-2), yet deception remains a key strategy (2 Cor 11:3, 14).

INTERPRET • Since the Fall, all humans are sinful by nature (Gen 8:21; Job 4:17) and experience the life-altering consequences of sin. While Satan is not aware of God's plans or our thoughts (1 Cor 2:7-11), he is aware of our weaknesses and whispers negative messages that try to seduce us to turn away from God and give in to temptation.

APPLY • ***Overcome obstacles:*** Do you struggle with temptation, self-condemnation, or doubt (Gen 3:1)? Name one person you will reach out to who can pray for you, encourage you, and hold you accountable. • ***Accept the things you cannot change:*** Satan is real (1 Pet 5:8). How do you prepare daily to courageously resist temptation?

Name additional *COURAGE* steps that will help you resist temptation.

13 Then the LORD God asked the woman,
"What have you done?"
"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."
14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, you are
cursed
more than all animals, domestic
and wild.
You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as
you live.
15 And I will cause hostility between you
and the woman,
and between your offspring and her
offspring.
He will strike* your head,
and you will strike his heel."

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 live.* 21 And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.
22 Then 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!"
23 So 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. 24 After 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.

Cain and Abel
4 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!" 2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.
When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but 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?

3:15 Or *bruise;* also in 3:15b. **3:16** Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.* **3:20** *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." **3:22** Or *the man;* Hebrew reads *ha-adam.* **4:1a** Or *the man;* also in 4:25. **4:1b** Or *I have acquired. Cain* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "produce" or "acquire."

sin's first consequences 3:14-19

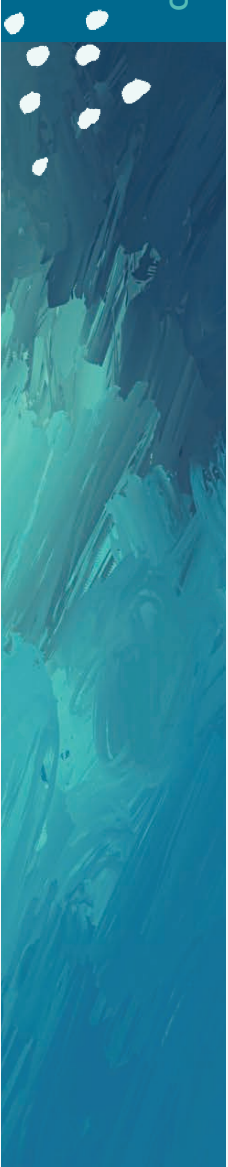
PRAY • Abba Father, I am a sinner. Thank you for forgiving me and for providing consequences that urge me to turn away from my sin and toward you.

OBSERVE • Adam and Eve's willful disobedience brought painful consequences but, by God's grace, also led to hope. Christian interpreters have traditionally understood Genesis 3:15 as a prophecy about Jesus Christ, the woman's ultimate offspring. The striking of his heel is a reference to Christ's suffering, while the striking of the serpent's head is fulfilled in Christ's death, resurrection, and final victory over Satan (1 Cor 15:54-57; Rev 12:7-9; 20:7-10).

INTERPRET • Sin has consequences—for the sinner and for those connected to the sinner. Consider this anonymous quote: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay." But if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all wickedness (Rom 6:23; 1 Jn 1:9).

APPLY • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** God loves you too much to leave you in a state of sin (Gen 3:16-23). In the margin, thank God for consequences that cause you to turn from sin and draw closer to him. • ***Embrace a life of grace:*** Journal your acceptance of God's forgiveness and your willingness to forgive others (Eph 1:7; 4:32).

How do these verses inspire you to embrace more *COURAGE* in your life?



Eve

CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

God formed the first human, Adam, from the dust of the ground and then announced that it was not good for the man to be alone. God led the animals to Adam, but none of them was a suitable helper for him. So God created the woman, Eve, but not as he had created Adam. God didn't go back to the dust of the ground; he made Eve from Adam's rib. She was perfect for him. Together, they were able to experience a pure, unashamed connection with each other and with God.

The serpent, later identified as Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2), hated the relationship between the humans and God and set out to destroy it. Satan deceived Eve and Adam into disobeying God. When Eve and Adam disobeyed God, they felt shame, which they had not known before. Sin had not been a part of their lives in the garden God had created for them; but now it would be a reality for every human after them.

God asked the woman what she had done, and instead of taking responsibility, Eve explained how the serpent had deceived her. Eve and Adam's disobedience caused great damage. They were guilty of sin because they had disobeyed God, and God punished the serpent, Eve, and Adam for their rebellion.

Even though one of the consequences of sin was significantly increased pain during childbirth, Eve knew that her purpose was to be the mother of all who live (Gen 3:20). She painfully gave birth to children, including Cain, Abel, and Seth. Eve courageously fulfilled her role of motherhood despite the shame and consequences of her sin.

The shame and consequences of our past mistakes could keep us from fulfilling God's purposes for our future. Satan is opposed to God and would love to see us held in bondage to our pasts. But you were created for God's will and purpose. Write a prayer asking God to give you the courage to accept the past you cannot change and overcome the obstacle of shame so you can live in obedience to God and serve him faithfully.

Eve's courageous story can be found in Genesis 2–4.

7 You 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."

8 One 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.

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

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

10 But the LORD said, "What have you
done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries
out to me from the ground! 11 Now you are
cursed and banished from the ground,
which has swallowed your brother's
blood. 12 No 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."

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

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

The Descendants of Cain

17 Cain 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.
18 Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad be-
came the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael
became the father of Methushael. Me-
thushael became the father of Lamech.

19 Lamech married two women. The
first was named Adah, and the second
was Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal, who
was the first of those who raise livestock
and live in tents. 21 His brother's name was
Jubal, the first of all who play the harp
and flute. 22 Lamech'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. 23 One 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

25 Adam 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." 26 When Seth
grew up, he had a son and named him
Enosh. At that time people first began to
worship the LORD by name.

The Descendants of Adam

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

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.

a clean heart 4:1-16

PRAY • Abba Father, search me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

OBSERVE • There was probably nothing wrong with Cain's offering of grain or vegetables to the Lord. But it's possible that Cain brought only a token gift, while Abel brought God his best. Perhaps the real problem with Cain's offering was the attitude that lay behind it. God searches all hearts and examines secret motives; he then responds to all people according to what they have done (Jer 17:10).

INTERPRET • In this passage, sin is pictured as a vicious animal lying in wait. Scripture also warns in 1 Peter 5:8 that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. God knows our every thought and is concerned about the motives behind our actions. Jesus taught that "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God" (Matt 5:8).

APPLY • ***Uncover your true self:*** Examine your heart, and journal what God reveals to you. Are your motives pure, or is there lingering rebellion, bitterness, or unforgiveness (Gen 4:4-5)? • ***Overcome obstacles:*** List the people, places, and things that lead your heart astray (4:7). Describe your plan to overcome these obstacles.

What additional *COURAGE* steps will you take as you strive to have a clean heart?

3 When Adam was 130 years old, he
became the father of a son who
was just like him—in his very image.
He named his son Seth. 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.
6 When 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.
9 When 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. 11 Enosh lived
905 years, and then he died.
12 When 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.
15 When 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.
18 When 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.
21 When 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. 23 Enoch lived
365 years, 24 walking in close
fellowship with God. Then one day he
disappeared, because God took him.
25 When 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.
28 When 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.
32 After Noah was 500 years old, he
became the father of Shem, Ham,
and Japheth.

A World Gone Wrong

6 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* hu-
mans for such a long time, for they are
only mortal flesh. In the future, their
normal lifespan will be no more than
120 years."
4 In those days, and for some time after,
giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for
whenever the sons of God had inter-
course with women, they gave birth to
children who became the heroes and fa-
mous warriors of ancient times.
5 The LORD observed the extent of hu-

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.*

listen to the Word

Listen to Genesis 6, and reject the worldly lie that truth is subject to your own beliefs and opinions. Replace it with the truth that moral order is woven into the fabric of the world. When God's moral order is violated, it must be restored through judgment and consequences (see also Ps 7:14-16; Prov 11:18; 26:27).

walk with God 5:1-32

PRAY • Abba Father, you promise to never leave me or forsake me. Help me to rely on your presence and strive to do your will so that I can walk closely with you as Enoch did.

OBSERVE • The genealogies of Genesis go beyond merely recording history. They highlight God's blessing, authenticate the family heritage of important individuals, and hold the Genesis narrative together. Adam's genealogy through Seth traces ten generations to Noah. From Noah to Abraham is another ten generations. The number ten indicates completeness.

INTERPRET • Death did indeed come to Adam and his descendants. Yet Enoch simply disappeared because he walked closely with God. Walking with God means trusting him and seeking his will in every situation; when we do, he will show us which path to take (Prov 3:5-6). When we live by believing and not by seeing, trust God with every care and concern, and commit what we do to him, he will help us (Ps 37:5; 2 Cor 5:7).

APPLY • ***Commit to change:*** Are you walking closely with God? Write about your commitment to trust him completely and to seek his will in every situation (Gen 5:22). • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** God deeply desires for you to walk closely with him (5:23-24). Journal a prayer thanking God for his great love and concern for you.

List the *COURAGE* steps you will take to trust God more fully.

man wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. 6So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. 7And the LORD said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." 8But Noah found favor with the LORD.

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

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

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

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

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

The Flood Covers the Earth

7 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,

6:14a Traditionally rendered *an ark.* **6:14b** Or *gopher wood.* **6:15** Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] *long, 50 cubits* [23 meters] *wide, and 30 cubits* [13.8 meters] *high.* **6:16** Hebrew *an opening of 1 cubit* [46 centimeters]. **7:2** Hebrew *of each clean animal;* similarly in 7:8.

courageous obedience 6:9-22

PRAY • Abba Father, you have given me your Word so that I can know you and discover your will. Help me to understand your precepts and honor you by walking in obedience.

OBSERVE • God intended to destroy all creation because humans had become so evil. But he preserved Noah, who walked closely with God and was a righteous and blameless man. God gave Noah precise instructions for building a large boat. A boat built to these specifications would be exceptionally stable; the same ratio of length to width is used for the design of modern-day tankers and freight-hauling ships.

INTERPRET • Noah walked closely with God and obeyed his calling even when it resulted in rejection and mistreatment by others. Trust and obedience go hand in hand. When we truly trust God, our natural response is to do what he asks. God values our obedience, and he blesses us when we hear his words and put them into practice (1 Sam 15:22; Luke 11:27-28).

APPLY • ***Overcome obstacles:*** List the people and things that hinder you from walking closely with God and obeying his Word (Gen 6:9). How will you overcome these obstacles? • ***Commit to change:*** Name the changes you need to make to trust God daily and obey him faithfully (6:22).

As you read about Noah's closeness and obedience to God, what other *COURAGE* steps are you inspired to take?

just as God had commanded Noah.
10 After seven days, the waters of the flood
came and covered the earth.
11 When 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 tor-
rents from the sky. 12 The rain continued
to fall for forty days and forty nights.
13 That very day Noah had gone into the
boat with his wife and his sons—Shem,
Ham, and Japheth—and their wives.
14 With them in the boat were pairs of
every kind of animal—domestic and wild,
large and small—along with birds of every
kind. 15 Two by two they came into the
boat, representing every living thing that
breathes. 16 A male and female of each
kind entered, just as God had com-
manded Noah. Then the LORD closed the
door behind them.
17 For forty days the floodwaters grew
deeper, covering the ground and lifting
the boat high above the earth. 18 As the
waters rose higher and higher above
the ground, the boat floated safely on the
surface. 19 Finally, the water covered even
the highest mountains on the earth,
20 rising more than twenty-two feet*
above the highest peaks. 21 All the living
things on earth died—birds, domestic
animals, wild animals, small animals
that scurry along the ground, and all the
people. 22 Everything that breathed and
lived on dry land died. 23 God 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. 24 And the floodwaters
covered the earth for 150 days.

The Flood Recedes

8 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 be-
gan to recede. 2 The underground waters
stopped flowing, and the torrential rains
from the sky were stopped. 3 So the flood-
waters gradually receded from the earth.
After 150 days, 4 exactly five months from
the time the flood began,* the boat came
to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 Two
and a half months later,* as the waters
continued to go down, other mountain
peaks became visible.
6 After another forty days, Noah opened
the window he had made in the boat 7 and
released a raven. The bird flew back and
forth until the floodwaters on the earth
had dried up. 8 He also released a dove to
see if the water had receded and it could
find dry ground. 9 But 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. 10 After waiting
another seven days, Noah released the
dove again. 11 This 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. 12 He
waited another seven days and then re-
leased the dove again. This time it did not
come back.
13 Noah was now 601 years old. On the
first day of the new year, ten and a half
months after the flood began,* the flood-
waters had almost dried up from the
earth. Noah lifted back the covering of
the boat and saw that the surface of the
ground was drying. 14 Two more months
went by,* and at last the earth was dry!
15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Leave the

7:20 Hebrew *15 cubits* [6.9 meters]. **8:4** Hebrew *on the seventeenth day of the seventh month;* see 7:11. **8:5** Hebrew *On the first day of the tenth month;* see 7:11 and note on 8:4. **8:13** Hebrew *On the first day of the first month;* see 7:11. **8:14** Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived;* see note on 8:13.

listen to the Word

Listen to Genesis 8, and reject the worldly lie that God has forgotten you and has left you to fend for yourself. Replace it with the truth that God will never abandon, fail, or forget you. He will help you and strengthen you when you wholeheartedly seek him (see also Deut 31:6; Isa 49:14-15; Jer 29:11; Heb 13:5).

God restores 8:1-22

PRAY • Abba Father, my flesh is weak and in a continual battle against sin. Give me the courage and ability to turn away from sin and to seek shelter and restoration in your merciful presence.

OBSERVE • The Flood was God's judgment against evil and brought cleansing and a fresh start to the world. God maintains moral order by enacting justice, punishing wickedness, and rewarding right behavior (Gal 6:7). But God's discipline is always intended to restore his people's covenant fellowship with him (Isa 44:22; Jer 3:12-14; Hos 14:1-2).

INTERPRET • When we experience God's discipline, we can respond in hope because Jesus paid the costly price to cover whatever sin separates us from the Lord (Ps 130:7-8; Heb 9:11-12; 1 Pet 1:18-20). God is faithful to his promise of salvation—a gift we cannot earn. All that is required of us is to confess our sin; to believe in Jesus, who shed his blood to pay for our sin; and to genuinely receive God's grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness.

APPLY • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** God saved Noah, and Noah worshiped God in response (Gen 8:20). Journal your response to God's grace-filled gift of salvation for you. • ***Accept the things you cannot change:*** Do you accept God's statement in Genesis 8:21? How does this inspire you to prepare for the fight against temptation and sin?

Name other *COURAGE* steps that help you fully embrace God's restoration.

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

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

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

God Confirms His Covenant

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

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

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

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

Noah's Sons

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

20After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. 21One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. 22Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers.

8:20 Hebrew *every clean animal and every clean bird.* **9:6** Or *man;* Hebrew reads *ha-adam.*

God's covenant 9:1-17

PRAY • Abba Father, your faithful covenant provides a way for me to have a personal relationship with you. Thank you for loving me unconditionally despite my sins.

OBSERVE • A covenant is a binding relationship rooted in a commitment that includes promises and obligations. The first explicit reference in Scripture to a covenant occurs in these verses. God took the initiative to bind himself to human beings despite human faithlessness. Through his covenant with Noah, God promised to never again send a flood as judgment on the world.

INTERPRET • God's OT covenants (9:1-17; 15:1-21; Exod 19:5-6; Deut 30:1-10; 2 Sam 7:4-17) prepared the way for God's new covenant through Jesus Christ, which was prophesied in the OT (Jer 31:31-34) and recorded in the NT (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). Despite humanity's evil ways, we can live in God's world and seek a deeper relationship with him because of his covenant promises.

APPLY • ***Commit to change:*** What changes do you need to make in your daily life to honor God's sacrificial covenant with you (Matt 26:28)? • ***Uncover your true self:*** Do you remember and honor your promises to God and others (Gen 9:15)? List practical ways you will keep your promises to God and others today.

How do God's covenant promises inspire you to embrace more *COURAGE* in your life?

John

WHO IS THE AUTHOR? In the final chapter of this Gospel, we get a clue that the apostle John composed this account of Jesus' life (21:20-25, page 1369; see also 13:23; 19:26-27, 35; 20:2-10; 21:7). John was one of Jesus' original twelve disciples and part of the inner circle around Jesus. He later became a pastor-theologian in Ephesus, a city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE? The intended audience for John's Gospel may be a specific Christian community he refers to as "my dear children" (1 Jn 2:1, page 1581; see also 1 Jn 2:12-13; 3:18). At some point, John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos for preaching the Good News of Jesus (Rev 1:9, page 1596). When he was released, he returned to Ephesus, where he lived the rest of his life. Most likely, John's intended audience was those he knew well—the Christian community in Ephesus. Even with that focus, we should also notice this Gospel's emphasis on the availability of salvation for all people (John 1:29, page 1335; see also 3:16).

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN? Scholars generally agree that this was one of the last NT books to be written. It was probably composed near the end of the first century (before AD 90).

WHERE DID THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE? Although the apostle John wrote his Gospel while living in Ephesus, the events he describes in his Gospel took place throughout the land of Israel.

WHAT WAS HAPPENING? The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in AD 70, and Roman authorities were beginning to persecute Christians throughout the Roman Empire. John addressed these issues by presenting Jesus as the loving Savior of the world for all who believe in him.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN? John sought to reassure Christians that what they believe is true—indeed, truth is found in the person of Jesus. A key verse is John 20:31 (page 1368).

HOW SHOULD WE READ JOHN? Notice how often John presents Jesus as Love personified. Imagine how that would comfort those whose world had been turned upside down.

For Bible books and their abbreviations, see page A7.
For definitions of theological words, see page 1619.

JOHN CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS:

- 1:1-18 • Prologue: a hymn to Christ, the eternal Word.
- 1:19–12:50 • The Book of Signs: John records seven miraculous signs performed by Jesus.
- 13:1–21:25 • The Book of Glory: John explains that in Jesus we see the glory of God in a human being.

JOHN CAN ALSO BE DIVIDED INTO FIVE PARTS:

- 1:1-18 • The Word made flesh.
- 1:19–12:50 • The Word among people.
- 13:1–17:26 • The Word as the Vine.
- 18:1–19:42 • The Word crucified.
- 20:1–21:25 • The Word risen.

Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

1 [1] In the beginning the Word
already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
[2] He existed in the beginning with God.
[3] God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except
through him.
[4] The Word gave life to everything that
was created,*
and his life brought light
to everyone.
[5] The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never
extinguish it.*

[6] God sent a man, John the Baptist,* [7] to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. [8] John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. [9] The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

[10] He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. [11] He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. [12] But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. [13] They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

[14] So the Word became human* and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.* And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

[15] John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

[16] From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.* [17] For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God,* is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

[19] This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants* from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" [20] He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

[21] "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?"*

"No."

[22] "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

1:3-4 Or *and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything.* **1:5** Or *and the darkness has not understood it.* **1:6** Greek *a man named John.* **1:14a** Greek *became flesh.* **1:14b** Or *grace and truth;* also in 1:17. **1:16** Or *received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law;* Greek reads *received grace upon grace.* **1:18** Some manuscripts read *But the one and only Son.* **1:19** Greek *and Levites.* **1:21** Greek *Are you the Prophet?* See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6.

JOHN—A VISUAL TIMELINE

- Herod the Great begins to rule — 37 BC
- Jesus is born — 6~4 BC
- Jesus' family returns to Nazareth — ABOUT 4 BC
- Tiberius Caesar becomes emperor — AD 14
- Jesus begins his ministry — ABOUT AD 28
- Paul's conversion — AD 34~35
- Jesus' death and resurrection — AD 30 OR 33
- John is exiled to Patmos; writes Revelation — AD 60s OR 90s
- Rome destroys Jerusalem — AD 70
- John writes Gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John — BEFORE AD 90

Jesus is God 1:1-18

PRAY • Abba Father, by your Word all things were created. Thank you for shining your light into my life, rescuing me from darkness, and giving me new life in Christ.

OBSERVE • John's Gospel opens with a beautiful description of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God in the flesh who came to earth to live among his creation. Jesus is also the Son of God through whom God created everything. These two facts—that Jesus is 100 percent divine and 100 percent human—are foundational to the Christian understanding of Christ.

INTERPRET • In beginning his Gospel with a hymn about Christ, the apostle John shows us that John the Baptist correctly identified and exalted Jesus. John the Baptist was "a witness to tell about the light" (1:8); Jesus Christ, the Word, not only reveals God but is God. He is the light of the world who brings new life to all who believe in him. Only through divine rebirth can we follow the light and enter God's family (1:12-13).

APPLY • ***Uncover your true self:*** Describe how your life has changed by becoming a divinely reborn child of God (1:12-13). • ***Commit to change:*** List at least one way you will commit to showing others that Christ's light lives within you (1:4-5).

As you read the beginning of John's Gospel, can you identify verses that correspond to the *COURAGE* steps? In what practical ways can you apply these to your life?

23 John replied in the words of the
prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the
wilderness,
'Clear the way for the LORD's
coming!'"*

24 Then the Pharisees who had been
sent 25 asked him, "If you aren't the Mes-
siah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right
do you have to baptize?"

26 John told them, "I baptize with* wa-
ter, but right here in the crowd is some-
one you do not recognize. 27 Though his
ministry follows mine, I'm not even wor-
thy to be his slave and untie the straps of
his sandal."

28 This encounter took place in Betha-
ny, an area east of the Jordan River, where
John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming
toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb
of God who takes away the sin of the
world! 30 He is the one I was talking about
when I said, 'A man is coming after me
who is far greater than I am, for he ex-
isted long before me.' 31 I did not recog-
nize him as the Messiah, but I have been
baptizing with water so that he might be
revealed to Israel."

32 Then John testified, "I saw the Holy
Spirit descending like a dove from
heaven and resting upon him. 33 I didn't
know he was the one, but when God sent
me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The
one on whom you see the Spirit descend
and rest is the one who will baptize with
the Holy Spirit.' 34 I saw this happen to
Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen
One of God.*"

The First Disciples

35 The following day John was again stand-
ing with two of his disciples. 36 As Jesus
walked by, John looked at him and de-
clared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!"
37 When John's two disciples heard this,
they followed Jesus.

38 Jesus looked around and saw them
following. "What do you want?" he asked
them.

They replied, "Rabbi" (which means
"Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come and see," he said. It was about
four o'clock in the afternoon when they
went with him to the place where he was
staying, and they remained with him the
rest of the day.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was
one of these men who heard what John
said and then followed Jesus. 41 Andrew
went to find his brother, Simon, and told
him, "We have found the Messiah" (which
means "Christ"*).

42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet
Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus
said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—
but you will be called Cephas" (which
means "Peter"*).

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to
Galilee. He found Philip and said to him,
"Come, follow me." 44 Philip was from
Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's home-
town.

45 Philip went to look for Nathanael and
told him, "We have found the very person
Moses* and the prophets wrote about!
His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from
Nazareth."

46 "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael.
"Can anything good come from Naza-
reth?"

"Come and see for yourself," Philip
replied.

1:23 Isa 40:3. **1:26** Or *in;* also in 1:31, 33. **1:34** Some manuscripts read *the Son of God.* **1:41** *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "anointed one." **1:42** The names *Cephas* (from Aramaic) and *Peter* (from Greek) both mean "rock." **1:45** Greek *Moses in the law.*

listen to the Word

Listen to John 1, and reject the worldly lie that you will never overcome your past. Replace it with the truth that you have been reborn, your sins have been forgiven, and you are a beloved child of God (see also Rom 6:4; 8:16; 1 Jn 1:9).

follow Jesus faithfully 1:35-51

PRAY • Abba Father, I am eternally grateful that you sent your Son, Jesus, to take away my sin. Thank you for baptizing me with the Holy Spirit, covering my sin, and allowing me to follow you and become your disciple.

OBSERVE • This passage introduces the template for discipleship. Disciples are those who come to Jesus and, when they encounter him, follow him faithfully. The first half of John's Gospel describes a variety of people who model true discipleship (1:19-51; 4:1-42; 9:1-41). Through them, John provides a profile of a mature disciple—a follower of Christ.

INTERPRET • To be a disciple means to be a follower and learner, someone who puts into practice the teaching of another. To be a true disciple of Christ means to follow him in your daily life, to learn from him and live like him (Gal 2:20). True disciples accept that Jesus is God and choose to follow him faithfully, no matter the consequences.

APPLY • ***Commit to change:*** Read John 1:19-51; 4:1-42; and 9:1-41. List the attributes of a true disciple, and describe your commitment to implement each characteristic. • ***Overcome obstacles:*** Describe how you intend to overcome fear and courageously share Jesus with others (1:41, 45).

Can you identify additional *COURAGE* steps in these verses that you need to apply to your life?

47 As they approached, Jesus said, "Now
here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of
complete integrity."
48 "How do you know about me?" Na-
thanael asked.
Jesus replied, "I could see you under
the fig tree before Philip found you."
49 Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi,
you are the Son of God—the King of
Israel!"
50 Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this
just because I told you I had seen you un-
der the fig tree? You will see greater
things than this." 51 Then he said, "I tell
you the truth, you will all see heaven open
and the angels of God going up and down
on the Son of Man, the one who is the
stairway between heaven and earth.*"

The Wedding at Cana

2 The next day* there was a wedding
celebration in the village of Cana in
Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and
Jesus and his disciples were also invited
to the celebration. 3 The wine supply ran
out during the festivities, so Jesus'
mother told him, "They have no more
wine."
4 "Dear woman, that's not our prob-
lem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet
come."
5 But his mother told the servants, "Do
whatever he tells you."
6 Standing nearby were six stone water
jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing.
Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons.*
7 Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with
water." When the jars had been filled, 8 he
said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the
master of ceremonies." So the servants
followed his instructions.
9 When the master of ceremonies
tasted the water that was now wine, not
knowing where it had come from
(though, of course, the servants knew), he
called the bridegroom over. 10 "A host al-
ways serves the best wine first," he said.
"Then, when everyone has had a lot to
drink, he brings out the less expensive
wine. But you have kept the best until
now!"
11 This miraculous sign at Cana in Gali-
lee was the first time Jesus revealed his
glory. And his disciples believed in him.
12 After the wedding he went to Caper-
naum for a few days with his mother, his
brothers, and his disciples.

Jesus Clears the Temple

13 It was nearly time for the Jewish Pass-
over celebration, so Jesus went to Je-
rusalem. 14 In the Temple area he saw
merchants selling cattle, sheep, and
doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers
at tables exchanging foreign money. 15 Je-
sus made a whip from some ropes and
chased them all out of the Temple. He
drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered
the money changers' coins over the floor,
and turned over their tables. 16 Then, go-
ing over to the people who sold doves, he
told them, "Get these things out of here.
Stop turning my Father's house into a
marketplace!"
17 Then his disciples remembered this
prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion
for God's house will consume me."*
18 But the Jewish leaders demanded,
"What are you doing? If God gave you au-
thority to do this, show us a miraculous
sign to prove it."
19 "All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy
this temple, and in three days I will raise
it up."
20 "What!" they exclaimed. "It has
taken forty-six years to build this Temple,

1:51 Greek *going up and down on the Son of Man;* see Gen 28:10-17. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.
2:1 Greek *On the third day;* see 1:35, 43. **2:6** Greek *2 or 3 measures* [75 to 113 liters]. **2:17** Or *"Concern for God's house will be my undoing."* Ps 69:9.

Jesus reveals God to the world 2:1-12

PRAY • Abba Father, thank you for forgiving my doubts and for displaying the reality of your existence all throughout creation. I am grateful for your undeniable presence and unconditional love for me.

OBSERVE • John labeled each of Jesus' miracles as a "sign" and also described them as "works." Jesus' miracles were part of the work God gave him to do (17:4): revealing the Father to the world. John selectively recorded seven miraculous signs that occurred during Jesus' ministry. The first miracle John recorded was Jesus' turning water into wine.

INTERPRET • Jesus had a dual purpose for performing miracles: He wanted to provide evidence of his identity, and he wanted each sign to point to a greater reality. When Jesus performed his first miracle in Cana, he established that he was God in the flesh and had full access to God's power. His disciples witnessed his glory firsthand, and as a result, they believed in him (2:11).

APPLY • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** Do you believe that Jesus still performs miracles? Write a love letter to God describing your willingness to trust him. • ***Commit to change:*** List at least five things you are thankful for, and commit to beginning each day with gratitude.

What other *COURAGE* steps do Jesus' power and presence inspire you to apply to your daily life?

and you can rebuild it in three days?"
21But when Jesus said "this temple," he
meant his own body. 22After he was raised
from the dead, his disciples remembered
he had said this, and they believed both
the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Jesus and Nicodemus

23Because of the miraculous signs Jesus
did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebra-
tion, many began to trust in him. 24But
Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew
all about people. 25No one needed to tell
him about human nature, for he knew
what was in each person's heart.

3 There was a man named Nicodemus,
a Jewish religious leader who was a
Pharisee. 2After dark one evening, he
came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he
said, "we all know that God has sent you
to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evi-
dence that God is with you."

3Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, un-
less you are born again,* you cannot see
the Kingdom of God."

4"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nico-
demus. "How can an old man go back into
his mother's womb and be born again?"

5Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can
enter the Kingdom of God without being
born of water and the Spirit.* 6Humans
can reproduce only human life, but the
Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.*
7So don't be surprised when I say, 'You*
must be born again.' 8The wind blows
wherever it wants. Just as you can hear
the wind but can't tell where it comes
from or where it is going, so you can't ex-
plain how people are born of the Spirit."

9"How are these things possible?" Nic-
odemus asked.

10Jesus replied, "You are a respected
Jewish teacher, and yet you don't under-
stand these things? 11I assure you, we tell
you what we know and have seen, and yet
you won't believe our testimony. 12But if you
don't believe me when I tell you about
earthly things, how can you possibly believe
if I tell you about heavenly things? 13No one
has ever gone to heaven and returned. But
the Son of Man* has come down from
heaven. 14And as Moses lifted up the
bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness,
so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15so
that everyone who believes in him will
have eternal life.*

16"For this is how God loved the world:
He gave* his one and only Son, so that
everyone who believes in him will not
perish but have eternal life. 17God sent his
Son into the world not to judge the world,
but to save the world through him.

18"There is no judgment against any-
one who believes in him. But anyone who
does not believe in him has already been
judged for not believing in God's one and
only Son. 19And the judgment is based on
this fact: God's light came into the world,
but people loved the darkness more than
the light, for their actions were evil. 20All
who do evil hate the light and refuse to go
near it for fear their sins will be exposed.
21But those who do what is right come to
the light so others can see that they are
doing what God wants.*"

John the Baptist Exalts Jesus

22Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusa-
lem and went into the Judean country-
side. Jesus spent some time with them
there, baptizing people.

23At this time John the Baptist was bap-
tizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there

3:3 Or *born from above;* also in 3:7. **3:5** Or *and spirit.* The Greek word for *Spirit* can also be translated *wind;* see 3:8. **3:6** Greek *what is born of the Spirit is spirit.* **3:7** The Greek word for *you* is plural; also in 3:12. **3:13** Some manuscripts add *who lives in heaven.* "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. **3:15** Or *everyone who believes will have eternal life in him.* **3:16** Or *For God loved the world so much that he gave.* **3:21** Or *can see God at work in what he is doing.*

listen to the Word

Listen to John 3, and reject the worldly lie that you are unworthy of being God's spokesperson. Replace it with the truth that you have experienced a spiritual rebirth and that God's light shines in and through you, allowing others to see God at work in your life (see also Matt 5:14-16).

faith requires action 3:1-21

PRAY • Abba Father, you love me so much that you sacrificed your only Son so that, through my belief in him, I will not perish but have everlasting life. For this great gift, I will forever be humbled and grateful.

OBSERVE • To be adopted into God's Kingdom, one must be born again—a spiritual rebirth that results in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not passive but alive, and it requires action. Jesus' act of dying for our sins shows us just how great God's love for us is—it extends beyond race and nation, even to those who oppose him.

INTERPRET • To be *born again* means to believe Jesus is who he says he is and to accept that he gave his life to save us from judgment. It means to turn away from our old life of sin and embrace a new life with Christ (2 Cor 5:17). Because we have faith, we trust that God will help us do what he has planned for us. God tells us that we become his daughters and sons when we believe in Jesus.

APPLY • ***Overcome obstacles:*** If you remember it, describe the moment you believed in Jesus and were reborn in the Spirit (John 3:3-7) and what obstacles you overcame to become part of God's Kingdom. • ***Embrace a life of grace:*** Journal your commitment to embrace God's grace that transforms you because of Jesus (3:18).

List practical ways you can apply each *COURAGE* step to your everyday life.

was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. [24](This was before John was thrown into prison.) [25]A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew* over ceremonial cleansing. [26]So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us."

[27]John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. [28]You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' [29]It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. [30]He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

[31]"He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.* [32]He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! [33]Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. [34]For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. [35]The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. [36]And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

4 Jesus* knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John [2](though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). [3]So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

[4]He had to go through Samaria on the way. [5]Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6]Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. [7]Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." [8]He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

[9]The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans.* She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

[10]Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

[11]"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? [12]And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

[13]Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. [14]But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

[15]"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

[16]"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

[17]"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

3:25 Some manuscripts read *some Jews.* **3:31** Some manuscripts do not include *and is greater than anyone else.*
4:1 Some manuscripts read *The Lord.* **4:9** Some manuscripts do not include this sentence.

satisfy your thirst for God 4:1-15

PRAY • Abba Father, thank you for giving me your living water, which provides divine renewal and eternal life. Help me to focus less on myself so that Jesus will become greater in my life.

OBSERVE • The Samaritans had a long history of conflict with the Jews. A first-century reader would not have expected Jesus to acknowledge the Samaritan woman, much less speak to her. Yet Jesus reached beyond culturally accepted norms to invite this woman to believe in him. He offered her living water that would quench her thirst forever and give her everlasting life.

INTERPRET • Jesus echoed the prophet Isaiah's words of God's invitation to receive his living water of salvation (Isa 58:11). Yet Jesus is far more than a prophet—he is God himself, and he is calling for us to satisfy our thirst for God. When we accept Christ's living water, we receive eternal life and acquire restorative strength that helps us navigate the ups and downs of our everyday lives.

APPLY • ***Overcome obstacles:*** How does knowing that Jesus welcomes you unconditionally help you overcome negative self-talk (John 4:9; Rom 8:1)? • ***Grasp God's love for you:*** Journal what you've learned about Christ's living water (John 4:13-15). Describe how it helps you understand God's love for you.

As you read about Jesus and the Samaritan woman, list additional *COURAGE* steps you can apply to your life.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have
a husband—18for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the
man you're living with now. You certainly
spoke the truth!"
19"Sir," the woman said, "you must be a
prophet. 20So tell me, why is it that you
Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only
place of worship, while we Samaritans
claim it is here at Mount Gerizim,* where
our ancestors worshiped?"
21Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear
woman, the time is coming when it will
no longer matter whether you worship
the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. 22You Samaritans know very little
about the one you worship, while we Jews
know all about him, for salvation comes
through the Jews. 23But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true
worshipers will worship the Father in
spirit and in truth. The Father is looking
for those who will worship him that way.
24For God is Spirit, so those who worship
him must worship in spirit and in truth."
25The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called
Christ. When he comes, he will explain
everything to us."
26Then Jesus told her, "I Am the Messiah!"*
27Just then his disciples came back.
They were shocked to find him talking to
a woman, but none of them had the nerve
to ask, "What do you want with her?" or
"Why are you talking to her?" 28The
woman left her water jar beside the well
and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 29"Come and see a man who told me
everything I ever did! Could he possibly
be the Messiah?" 30So the people came
streaming from the village to see him.
31Meanwhile, the disciples were urging
Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something."
32But Jesus replied, "I have a kind of
food you know nothing about."
33"Did someone bring him food while
we were gone?" the disciples asked each
other.
34Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God,
who sent me, and from finishing his
work. 35You know the saying, 'Four
months between planting and harvest.'
But I say, wake up and look around. The
fields are already ripe* for harvest. 36The
harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit
they harvest is people brought to eternal
life. What joy awaits both the planter and
the harvester alike! 37You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.'
And it's true. 38I sent you to harvest where
you didn't plant; others had already done
the work, and now you will get to gather
the harvest."

Many Samaritans Believe

39Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had
said, "He told me everything I ever did!"
40When they came out to see him, they
begged him to stay in their village. So he
stayed for two days, 41long enough for
many more to hear his message and believe. 42Then they said to the woman,
"Now we believe, not just because of what
you told us, but because we have heard
him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

Jesus Heals an Official's Son

43At the end of the two days, Jesus went on
to Galilee. 44He himself had said that a
prophet is not honored in his own hometown. 45Yet the Galileans welcomed him,
for they had been in Jerusalem at the
Passover celebration and had seen everything he did there.

4:20 Greek *on this mountain.* **4:26** Or "The 'I Am' *is here*"; or "*I am the* LORD"; Greek reads "*I am, the one speaking to you.*" See Exod 3:14. **4:35** Greek *white.*

listen to the Word

Listen to John 4, and reject the worldly lie that you are too sinful to receive God's gifts of living water and eternal life. Replace it with the truth that Jesus freely offers you salvation, divine renewal, and an eternal home with him (see also Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 4:9-10).

God knows you 4:16-42

PRAY • Abba Father, you love me unconditionally and offer me abundant life—both here on earth and forever in heaven with you. Help me to drink daily from your living water and to always share it with others.

OBSERVE • Women normally drew water at the well in the early morning and late evening. However, this woman arrived at noon. She likely lived in isolation, separated from her community because of her lifestyle. Yet that didn't prevent her from running back to her village to tell everyone to come and see Jesus once she discovered who he was.

INTERPRET • Too often we allow fear and uncertainty to keep us from sharing our faith with others. The Samaritan woman could have allowed shame and self-condemnation to silence her testimony. Yet as a result of her courageous faith and bold testimony, many Samaritans experienced for themselves that Jesus was the Messiah and became believers. Jesus' ministry is for all people, no matter their gender, history, or social status.

APPLY • ***Uncover your true self:*** Journal the experiences that led you to become a believer. Now write a brief testimony you can easily share (4:28-29). • ***Overcome obstacles:*** Give an example of how you will overcome fear to courageously share your testimony.

What other *COURAGE* steps do you realize you need to apply to your life? Create a plan to implement them!

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

TRANSFORMED TO SHARE JESUS

The Samaritan woman was an outcast—a woman with a painful past who was living in a sinful relationship. Yet while others looked down on her, Jesus showed her compassion. She came to Jacob's well seeking physical water for her body, but Jesus knew she needed much more than that: She needed his living water for her soul.

John 4:4-42 details Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. As a Samaritan, she was from an ethnic group that had been rejected by the Jewish community. In Jesus' time, Jews avoided traveling through Samaria because of their hatred of the people who lived there. As a single Jewish man, Jesus would have been expected not to even acknowledge the woman, much less speak to her. But Jesus wasn't hindered by ethnicity, gender, or cultural expectations (Gal 3:28). He wanted to share his Good News with everyone.

This broken woman was living in social isolation. She was shamed because of her lifestyle and drew water at a time of day when no one else would be around. But on this particular day she met Jesus, and her life was forever changed.

Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living water, and she found the courage to share her new faith with others. She believed in Jesus and, despite her reputation, boldly ran back to her village to tell *everyone* to come and see the Messiah.

When we learn something amazing, we want to tell others. When we experience a life change, we can't wait to share our experience in hopes that others will have it too. Before Jesus returned to heaven, his final command to believers was to "go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19).

Yet sharing our faith can cause anxiety. We fear that we will experience conflict with nonbelievers, that others will disapprove of our beliefs, that we don't know enough, or that others won't believe us because of our pasts. But we exercise courage when we push past our fears and choose to share our testimonies.

How often do you share your faith? Is something keeping you from courageously sharing with others about Jesus? If so, how can you overcome your fears and make disciples?

The courageous story of the Samaritan woman at the well can be found in John 4:4-42.

46 As he traveled through Galilee, he
came to Cana, where he had turned the
water into wine. There was a government
official in nearby Capernaum whose son
was very sick. 47 When he heard that Jesus
had come from Judea to Galilee, he went
and begged Jesus to come to Capernaum
to heal his son, who was about to die.
48 Jesus asked, "Will you never believe
in me unless you see miraculous signs
and wonders?"
49 The official pleaded, "Lord, please
come now before my little boy dies."
50 Then Jesus told him, "Go back home.
Your son will live!" And the man believed
what Jesus said and started home.
51 While the man was on his way, some
of his servants met him with the news
that his son was alive and well. 52 He asked
them when the boy had begun to get
better, and they replied, "Yesterday after-
noon at one o'clock his fever suddenly
disappeared!" 53 Then the father realized
that that was the very time Jesus had told
him, "Your son will live." And he and his
entire household believed in Jesus. 54 This
was the second miraculous sign Jesus did
in Galilee after coming from Judea.

Jesus Heals a Lame Man

5 Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusa-
lem for one of the Jewish holy days.
2 Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was
the pool of Bethesda,* with five covered
porches. 3 Crowds of sick people—blind,
lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.*
5 One of the men lying there had been sick
for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw
him and knew he had been ill for a long
time, he asked him, "Would you like to get
well?"
7 "I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I
have no one to put me into the pool when
the water bubbles up. Someone else al-
ways gets there ahead of me."
8 Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your
mat, and walk!"
9 Instantly, the man was healed! He
rolled up his sleeping mat and began walk-
ing! But this miracle happened on the Sab-
bath, 10 so the Jewish leaders objected.
They said to the man who was cured, "You
can't work on the Sabbath! The law doesn't
allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"
11 But he replied, "The man who healed
me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"
12 "Who said such a thing as that?" they
demanded.
13 The man didn't know, for Jesus had
disappeared into the crowd. 14 But after-
ward Jesus found him in the Temple and
told him, "Now you are well; so stop sin-
ning, or something even worse may hap-
pen to you." 15 Then the man went and
told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus
who had healed him.

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

16 So the Jewish leaders began harassing*
Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules.
17 But Jesus replied, "My Father is always
working, and so am I." 18 So the Jewish
leaders tried all the harder to find a way
to kill him. For he not only broke the Sab-
bath, he called God his Father, thereby
making himself equal with God.
19 So Jesus explained, "I tell you the
truth, the Son can do nothing by himself.
He does only what he sees the Father do-
ing. Whatever the Father does, the Son
also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son
and shows him everything he is doing. In
fact, the Father will show him how to do
even greater works than healing this man.
Then you will truly be astonished. 21 For

5:2 Other manuscripts read *Beth-zatha;* still others read *Bethsaida.* **5:3** Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 3 and all of verse 4: *waiting for a certain movement of the water, 4 for an angel of the Lord came from time to time and stirred up the water. And the first person to step in after the water was stirred was healed of whatever disease he had.* **5:16** Or *persecuting.*

listen to the Word

Listen to John 5, and reject the worldly lie that God does not care about your everyday life. Replace it with the truth that God is all-knowing, ever present, and always working all things together according to his perfect will (see also Ps 68:19; Phil 1:6).

faith compels change 4:43–5:18

PRAY • Abba Father, thank you for providing an account of your divine power and majesty. I stand in awe of your unending love that forgives my sins and offers me true life.

OBSERVE • As Jesus traveled through Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, but their welcome was based on their awe of his miracles, not true faith. The second and third miracles (signs) John records are Jesus' healing of an official's son and his healing of a paralyzed man. The theme of belief occupies a central place in John's Gospel. He regularly illustrates that faith compels believers to change their priorities, behaviors, and speech.

INTERPRET • Faith is not a status but an investment in the person of Jesus. Faith is accepting who Jesus is and what he claims to be. Faith requires a commitment to let our relationship with Christ change the way we live. Faith is the work God wants from us (6:29) as we abide in his Word, love him faithfully, and obey his commands.

APPLY • ***Commit to change:*** Journal your commitment to believe in Jesus because of who he is and not because of what he can do for you (4:48). • ***Overcome obstacles:*** Explain how you can overcome discouragement by accepting that nonbelievers will often oppose your faith (5:10, 16, 18).

Describe the *COURAGE* steps God brings to your mind as you read about Jesus' miracles. How will you apply these to your life?

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