

EUGENE H. PETERSON



THE MESSAGE®
*PRAYERFUL
READING
BIBLE*



It's wonderful to witness more and more people incorporating the *lectio divina* into their devotional lives, moving from *reading* the biblical text in search of revelation to *prayerful exploration* of its message, in search of a personal, transformative encounter. Eugene Peterson was one of the great modern champions of this approach. His *Message* translation of the Bible and the *lectio divina* complement one another like fish and chips! This is a resource to revitalize the prayer lives of thousands.

PETE GREIG, cofounder of 24-7 Prayer International and senior pastor of Emmaus Rd church

A stunning and beautiful guide that understands, after all, that the only way to come to the Holy Bible is prayerfully. *The Message Prayerful Reading Bible* meets us there, affirming our astonished desire to stop, open our hearts, and hear well from God. Thoughtful, kind, and challenging, this Bible lights the way to that deeper walk. What we'll gain along the way can't be measured, and that's just one aspect that will make the journey so special.

PATRICIA RAYBON, author of *I Told the Mountain to Move*

I was taught to read Scripture in order to: understand God, apply his truth to my life, and teach it to others. But *The Message Prayerful Reading Bible* takes it deeper: to not just understand God but meet with him. We need wise guides on how to engage in the spiritual reading of Scripture, and this is as good as I've seen. Engaging soul and imagination with cognition and intellect, this resource connects one more fully to all the ways God speaks in and through his Scriptures. If you've been wanting to rediscover the presence of God—and the power of his written Word—I can think of no better resource.

MATT TEBBE, cofounder of Gravity Leadership

It's just plain rude not to respond when God speaks to us! Let *The Message Prayerful Reading Bible* help you never leave God's words without truly conversing with God about what you've read.

JAN JOHNSON, author of *When the Soul Listens* and coauthor of *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice*

Modernizing ancient practices of biblical reflection significantly enhances our prayerful reading of the Scriptures. Dig in. Eat this book. Savor every morsel. So good for your soul. Our beloved mentor, Eugene Peterson, would have been delighted with our prayerful attentiveness and our transformed lives.

STEPHEN A. MACCHIA, founder and president of Leadership Transformations and director of the Pierce Center for Disciple Building at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Choose for yourself a metaphor for *lectio divina*: diving into God's Word, carefully marinating in it, or slowly chewing on it to be nourished. It is not reading for information, but for transformation. Eugene Peterson brings the Bible to us in American English vernacular—making it easier for us to digest. As young as late elementary school, I pictured myself in Bible stories and could also relate to the sentiments in the Psalms. I was with Zacchaeus up in the tree, craning my neck to see Jesus, wondering if Jesus would see me. I was with Jesus and overcome with grief as he wept over his friend Lazarus. I practiced *lectio divina* without knowing it. Peterson's *Message* paraphrase allows for rich, robust prayer and contemplation. Nuance. Eat this book. Be filled full with the life of God.

MARLENA GRAVES, author of *The Way Up Is Down*

The Message Prayerful Reading Bible combines two of my favorite ways of reading the Scriptures. Eugene Peterson in *The Message* opens windows to new understandings of familiar passages. *Lectio divina* invites me to enter into God's love and grace as I embrace these truths in daily life. I look forward to continuing to experience truth and grace through this book for years to come and to passing it along to my companions on the journey.

ALICE FRYLING, author of *Mirror for the Soul* and *Aging Faithfully*

I love *The Message Prayerful Reading Bible*! Its take-and-eat, chew-and-digest approach to God's Word will help you receive his message more deeply, moving it from your head to your heart. Enjoy the feast!

AMY BOUCHER PYE, author of *7 Ways to Pray*

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

EUGENE H. PETERSON



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INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE

Reading is the first thing, just reading the Bible. As we read we enter a new world of words and find ourselves in on a conversation in which God has the first and last words. We soon realize that we are included in the conversation. We didn't expect this. But this is precisely what generation after generation of Bible readers do find: The Bible is not only written about us but to us. In these pages we become insiders to a conversation in which God uses words to form and bless us, to teach and guide us, to forgive and save us.

We aren't used to this. We are used to reading books that explain things, or tell us what to do, or inspire or entertain us. But this is different. This is a world of revelation: God revealing to people just like us—men and women created in God's image—how God works and what is going on in this world in which we find ourselves. At the same time that God reveals all this, God draws us in by invitation and command to participate in God's working life. We gradually (or suddenly) realize that we are insiders in the most significant action of our time as God establishes his grand rule of love and justice on this earth (as it is in heaven). "Revelation" means that we are reading something we couldn't have guessed or figured out on our own. Revelation is what makes the Bible unique.

And so just reading this Bible, *The Message*, and listening to what we read, is the first thing. There will be time enough for study later on. But first, it is important simply to read, leisurely and thoughtfully. We need to get a feel for the way these stories and songs, these prayers and conversations, these sermons and visions, invite us into this large, large world in which the invisible God is behind and involved in everything visible and illuminates what it means to live here—really live, not just get across the street. As we read, and the longer we read, we begin to "get it"—we are in conversation with God. We find ourselves listening and answering in matters that most concern us: who we are, where we came from, where we are going, what makes us tick, the texture of the world and the communities we live in, and—most of all—the incredible love of God among us, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Through reading the Bible, we see that there is far more to the world, more to us, more to what we see and more to what we don't see—more to everything!—than we had ever dreamed, and that this "more" has to do with God.

This is new for many of us, a different sort of book—a book that reads us even as we read it. We are used to picking up and reading books for what we can get out of them: information we can use, inspiration to energize us, instructions on how to do something or other, entertainment to while away a rainy day, wisdom that will guide us into living better. These things can and do take place when reading the Bible, but the Bible is given to us in the first place simply to invite us to make ourselves at home in the world of God, God’s word and world, and become familiar with the way God speaks and the ways in which we answer him with our lives.



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

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

Some are also surprised that Bible reading does not introduce us to a “nicer” world. This biblical world is decidedly not an ideal world, the kind we see advertised in travel posters. Suffering and injustice and ugliness are not purged from the world in which God works and loves and saves. Nothing is glossed over. God works patiently and deeply, but often in hidden ways, in the mess of our humanity and history. Ours is not a neat and tidy world in which we are assured that we can get everything under our control. This takes considerable getting used to—there is mystery everywhere. The Bible does not give us a

predictable cause-effect world in which we can plan our careers and secure our futures. It is not a dream world in which everything works out according to our adolescent expectations—there is pain and poverty and abuse at which we cry out in indignation, “You can’t let this happen!” For most of us it takes years and years and years to exchange our dream world for this real world of grace and mercy, sacrifice and love, freedom and joy—the God-saved world.

Yet another surprise is that the Bible does not flatter us. It is not trying to sell us anything that promises to make life easier. It doesn’t offer secrets to what we often think of as prosperity or pleasure or high adventure. The reality that comes into focus as we read the Bible has to do with what God is doing in a saving love that includes us and everything we do. This is quite different from what our sin-stunted and culture-cluttered minds imagine. But our Bible reading does not give us access to a mail-order catalog of idols from which we can pick and choose to satisfy our fantasies. The Bible begins with God speaking creation and us into being. It continues with God entering into personalized and complex relationships with us, helping and blessing us, teaching and training us, correcting and disciplining us, loving and saving us. This is not an escape from reality but a plunge into more reality—a sacrificial but altogether better life all the way.

* * *

God doesn’t force any of this on us: God’s word is personal address, inviting, commanding, challenging, rebuking, judging, comforting, directing—but not forcing. Not coercing. We are given space and freedom to answer, to enter the conversation. For more than anything else the Bible invites our participation in the work and language of God.

As we read, we find that there is a connection between the Word Read and the Word Lived. Everything in this book is live-able. Many of us find that the most important question we ask as we read is not “What does it mean?” but “How can I live it?” So we read personally, not impersonally. We read in order to live our true selves, not just get information that we can use to raise our standard of living. Bible reading is a means of listening to and obeying God, not gathering religious data by which we can be our own gods.

You are going to hear stories in this book that will take you out of your preoccupation with yourself and into the spacious freedom in which God is working the world’s salvation. You are going to come across words and sentences that stab you awake to a beauty and hope that will connect you with your real life.

Be sure to answer.

Eugene H. Peterson

THE TRANSLATOR AND HIS FRIENDS

Eugene H. Peterson was a pastor, scholar, writer, and poet. After teaching at a seminary and then giving nearly thirty years to church ministry in the Baltimore area, he created The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language—a vibrant Bible translation that connects with today’s readers like no other. It took Eugene a full ten years to complete. He worked from the Greek and Hebrew texts to ensure authenticity. At the same time, his ear was always tuned to the cadence and energy of contemporary English.

Eugene wrote more than thirty books, including *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, *Run with the Horses*, and *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. For his work on *The Message*, he received the prestigious ECPA Gold Medallion Book Award.

Eugene served as Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, BC, retiring in 2006. He spent his final years in Montana with his beloved wife, Jan.

Translation Consultants

Peterson’s work has been thoroughly reviewed by the following team of recognized Old and New Testament scholars, who ensured that it is accurate as well as faithful to the original languages.

Old Testament Team

Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *North Park Theological Seminary* (chair)
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 Bryan E. Beyer, *Columbia International University*
 Lamar E. Cooper Sr., *Criswell College*
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LECTIO DIVINA: AN INTRODUCTION

“How do you read?”

LUKE 10:26

Reading the Bible, if we do not do it rightly, can get us into a lot of trouble. We pick up a Bible and find that we have God’s word in our hands—our hands. We can now handle it. It is easy enough to suppose that we are in control of it, that we can use it, that we are in charge of applying it wherever, whenever, and to whomever we wish without regard to appropriateness or conditions.

Those who don’t know the conditions implicit in the technology of the Bible are dangerous to themselves and others. And so, as we hand out Bibles and urge people to read them, it is imperative that we also say, *caveat lector*, let the reader beware.

The word of God is not my possession. The words printed on the pages of my Bible give witness to the living and active revelation of the God of creation and salvation, the God of love who became the Word made flesh in Jesus, and I had better not forget it. If in my Bible reading I lose touch with this livingness, if I fail to listen to this living Jesus, submit to this sovereignty, and respond to this love, I become arrogant in my knowing and impersonal in my behavior. An enormous amount of damage is done in the name of Christian living by bad Bible reading. *Caveat lector*, let the reader beware.

Lectio divina trains us in the discipline of reading Scripture rightly. At every turn of the page it poses Jesus’ question to us: “How do you read?”

Lectio divina is the deliberate and intentional practice of making the transition from a kind of reading that treats and handles, however reverently, Jesus dead to listening to, accompanying, and following Jesus alive. A word written is less than a word spoken—and sometimes not even the same thing at all. Which, of course, is why many of us prefer words written to words spoken. It is simpler, we are more in control, we don’t have to deal with the complexities of people. If we don’t like what we are reading we can shut the book and pick up another—or go shopping, or take a walk, or spend an hour or so in the garden.

But we do not read the Bible in order to reduce our lives to what is convenient

to us or manageable by us—we want to get in on the great invisibles of the Trinity, the soaring adorations of the angels, the quirky cragginess of the prophets, and . . . Jesus.

Lectio divina is a way of life that develops “according to the Scriptures.” It is not just a skill that we exercise when we have a Bible open before us but a life congruent with the Word made flesh to which the Scriptures give witness. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that the word of God originated when “going through a long line of prophets, God [spoke to] our ancestors in different ways for centuries. Recently he spoke to us directly through his Son. . . . It’s crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we’ve heard” (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1). These are spoken words delivered to us by “pioneers who blazed the way” (Hebrews 12:1) and now rewritten in our Holy Scriptures. It is the task of *lectio divina* to get those words heard and listened to, words written in ink now rewritten in blood.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eugene H. Peterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "E".

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BIBLE

God removes the veil and there they are—face-to-face! They suddenly recognize that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiseled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit . . . we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:16-18, *THE MESSAGE*

“The Bible is not only written about us but to us,” Eugene Peterson writes in the introduction to The Message. “In these pages we become insiders to a conversation in which God uses words to form and bless us, to teach and guide us, to forgive and save us.”

This is not a new idea from Eugene, but rather his expression of the ancient Christian understanding of how we encounter God through Scripture. The spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* (“holy/sacred/divine reading”) has been a principal means for generations of Christians to experience this divine encounter through the pages of the Bible:

- pausing for a moment and preparing to encounter God (*silencio*, or “stop”)
- doing a first reading and then making observations about the text (*lectio*, or “read”)
- reflecting on what we observed in our reading of the text and in ourselves as we read (*meditatio*, or “ponder”)
- engaging in conversation with God inspired by the text (*oratio*, or “pray”)
- taking note of what this time with God has brought to the surface (*contemplatio*, or “reflect”), and finally,
- considering how this time with God translates into our lives with God (*incarnatio*, or “live”)

The Message Prayerful Reading Bible has been carefully curated to facilitate this holy reading experience for you. Through the uniquely readable language of *The Message* version of the Bible itself, the guided reflections designed to orient you to the practice, the structured journaling pages at the outset of each book of the Bible, and, finally, the wide-open spaces of the remaining journaling pages, our hope is for you to move quickly from *lectio divina* as a habit you are learning to *lectio divina* as a natural, automatic way of engaging with the Scriptures—in fact, in Eugene’s words, as “a way of life.”

Here, then, is a brief overview of the intent of each feature of the book.

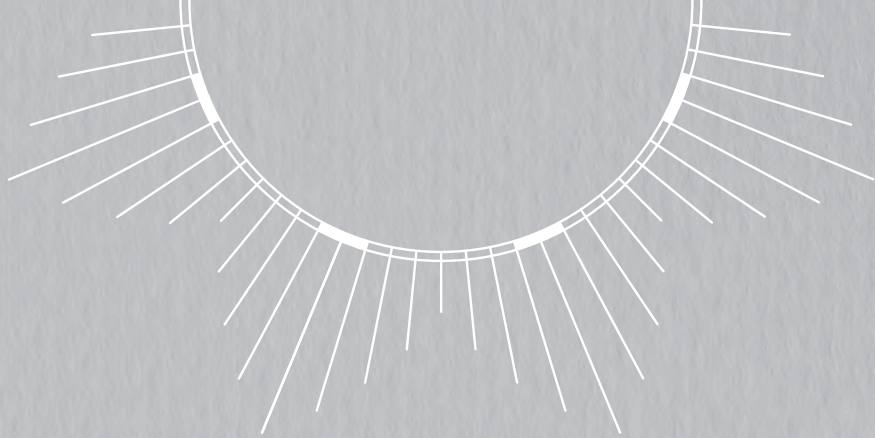
- **Lectio Divina: An Introduction.** If you’re like many of us, you may have skipped or skimmed Eugene’s overview of the idea of *lectio divina*. We hope you’ll flip back to it and take the time to read it. You are entering a way of life, and a little orientation goes a long way toward getting you settled.
- **Guided reflections.** Intermittently throughout this book, you’ll find guided reflections for your use. We’ve preselected passages of Scripture for you to interact with and provided touch points for each stage in the *lectio divina* process. These will be satisfying devotional experiences for you, but they will also help you get your feet wet in the *lectio divina* experience. Think of the instructions and questions in these guided reflections as stepping-off points: Feel free to adapt them as you are led. The point is for you to feel increasingly comfortable moving through this process in conversation with God.

A quick caveat: Please don’t skip any steps! *Lectio divina* is a holistic experience, and to bypass any part of the process is to rob yourself of a meaningful encounter with God. You’ll notice that each guided reflection begins (*Stop*) and ends (*Live*) simply with a brief passage of Scripture; even these are an essential aspect of the experience. Let yourself be led through each step of the process each time you come to the Scriptures.

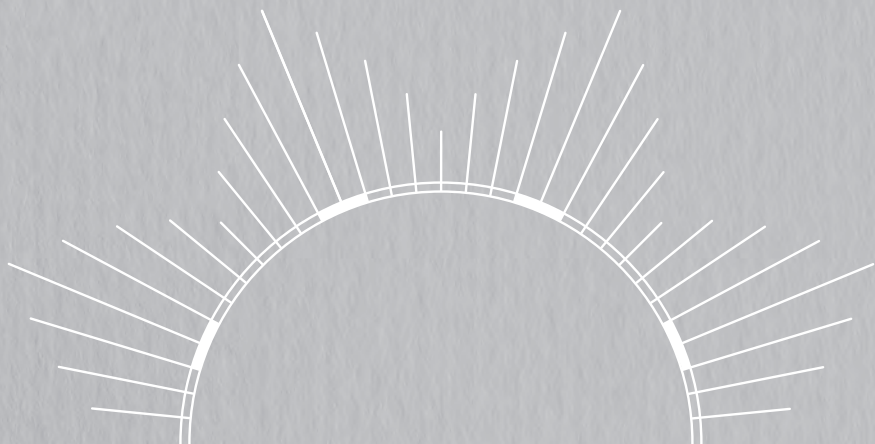
- **Structured pages.** At the beginning of each book of the Bible, you’ll find a page with minimal instructions for a prayerful reading experience. In these cases, you’re invited to select your own passage of Scripture and move through the *lectio divina* process at your own pace, with minimal direction. Our hope is that these pages will further assimilate you to the process of prayerful reading and give you greater confidence in the possibility embedded in each meeting you have with God and his Word. Again, don’t skip a step in the process, but give yourself freedom to engage with each step in a way that makes sense to you and God in the moment.
- **Journaling pages.** The rest of the book is simply this: you, the Scriptures, and space for you to meet with God. Turn through the pages and you’ll often find Bible text on one side and open journaling space on the other. We’ve included as a reminder the stages of *lectio divina*—*Stop, Read,*

Ponder, Pray, Reflect, Live—but we want you to feel at liberty to use this open space in whatever way will draw you deeper into life with God by way of the Scriptures. Draw, doodle, take notes, journal, or move through the prayerful reading process—whatever seems sensible to you and the Spirit.

The Bible is a gift to us from the God who loves us and desires for us to draw near to him—not just in chance encounters but in the normal outworking of our everyday lives. *The Message Prayerful Reading Bible* is meant to help you do just that, and in the process to find yourself settled deeply and contentedly in the palm of God's hand.



OLD TESTAMENT



GENESIS



Heaven and Earth

1 ¹⁻² First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

³⁻⁵ God spoke: "Light!"
And light appeared.
God saw that light was good
and separated light from dark.
God named the light Day,
he named the dark Night.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day One.

⁶⁻⁸ God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;
separate water from water!"
God made sky.
He separated the water under sky
from the water above sky.
And there it was:
he named sky the Heavens;
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Two.

⁹⁻¹⁰ God spoke: "Separate!
Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into
one place;
Land, appear!"
And there it was.
God named the land Earth.
He named the pooled water Ocean.
God saw that it was good.

¹¹⁻¹³ God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow
all varieties
of seed-bearing plants,
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."
And there it was.
Earth produced green seed-bearing
plants,
all varieties,

And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Three.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ God spoke: "Lights! Come out!
Shine in Heaven's sky!
Separate Day from Night.
Mark seasons and days and years,
Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to
Earth."
And there it was.

¹⁶⁻¹⁹ God made two big lights, the larger
to take charge of Day,
The smaller to be in charge of Night;
and he made the stars.
God placed them in the heavenly sky
to light up Earth
And oversee Day and Night,
to separate light and dark.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Four.

²⁰⁻²³ God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish
and all sea life!
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"
God created the huge whales,
all the swarm of life in the waters,
And every kind and species of flying
birds.
God saw that it was good.
God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce!
Fill Ocean!
Birds, reproduce on Earth!"
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Five.

²⁴⁻²⁵ God spoke: "Earth, generate life!
Every sort and kind:
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—
all kinds."
And there it was:
wild animals of every kind,

Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile
and bug.
God saw that it was good.

26-28 God spoke: “Let us make human
beings in our image, make them
reflecting our nature
So they can be responsible for the fish in
the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the
face of Earth.”

God created human beings;
he created them godlike,
Reflecting God’s nature.
He created them male and female.
God blessed them:
“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take
charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and
birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the
face of Earth.”

29-30 Then God said, “I’ve given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on
Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.
To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves and
breathes,
I give whatever grows out of the ground
for food.”
And there it was.

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

2 1 Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

2-4 By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day he rested from his
work,
all the creating God had done.

This is the story of how it all started,
of Heaven and Earth when they were
created.

Adam and Eve

5-7 At the time GOD made Earth and Heaven,
before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted
from the ground—GOD hadn’t yet sent rain on
Earth, nor was there anyone around to work
the ground (the whole Earth was watered by
underground springs)—GOD formed Man out
of dirt from the ground and blew into his nos-
trils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a
living soul!

8-9 Then GOD planted a garden in Eden, in
the east. He put the Man he had just made in
it. GOD made all kinds of trees grow from the
ground, trees beautiful to look at and good
to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of
the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-
Good-and-Evil.

10-14 A river flows out of Eden to water
the garden and from there divides into four
rivers. The first is named Pishon; it flows
through Havilah where there is gold. The gold
of this land is good. The land is also known
for a sweet-scented resin and the onyx stone.
The second river is named Gihon; it flows
through the land of Cush. The third river is
named Hiddekel and flows east of Assyria.
The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 GOD took the Man and set him down in
the Garden of Eden to work the ground and
keep it in order.

16-17 GOD commanded the Man, “You can
eat from any tree in the garden, except from
the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.
Don’t eat from it. The moment you eat from
that tree, you’re dead.”

18-20 GOD said, “It’s not good for the Man
to be alone; I’ll make him a helper, a com-
panion.” So GOD formed from the dirt of
the ground all the animals of the field and
all the birds of the air. He brought them to
the Man to see what he would name them.
Whatever the Man called each living cre-
ature, that was its name. The Man named the
cattle, named the birds of the air, named the
wild animals; but he didn’t find a suitable
companion.

21-22 GOD put the Man into a deep sleep.
As he slept he removed one of his ribs and
replaced it with flesh. GOD then used the
rib that he had taken from the Man to make
Woman and presented her to the Man.

STOP *“God is in this place—truly. . . Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God’s House. This is the Gate of Heaven.” (Genesis 28:16-17)*

READ Passage for Reflection:

Observations and Resonant Words and Phrases:

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PONDER What is this passage bringing to mind for you?

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PRAY Talk with God about what has come to mind.

REFLECT What are you taking with you from this time with God?

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LIVE *“Whatever he tells you, do it.” (John 2:5)*

WHERE ARE YOU? (Genesis 3:1-10)

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STOP *“God is in this place—truly. . . Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God’s House. This is the Gate of Heaven.” (Genesis 28:16-17)*

READ Read Genesis 3:1-10 slowly and attentively.

PONDER The first two chapters of Genesis speak of God’s amazing creation of the world and everything in it. Chapter 3 speaks of the rebellion of humankind. And the remainder of the Message details God’s intricate and loving plan to redeem, restore, and reconcile creation back to himself after what happened in Genesis 3. God’s plan hinges on what happened in the Garden.

How does this passage speak to your situation today?

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PRAY There is no better way to begin to understand God’s Message than to grasp our separation from him and our desperate need for him to reconcile our relationship. Take some time to confess those areas where you have deliberately separated yourself from God.

REFLECT Knowing that you and everyone else on earth have rebelled against God, what do you feel? In what ways does this knowledge affect the way you live your life?

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Reread verse 9. If God knows everything, why did he call out to Adam asking, “Where are you?”

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In verse 10, Adam responds to God’s question by saying, “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.” When are you most tempted to hide?

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LIVE *“Whatever he tells you, do it.” (John 2:5)*

23-25 The Man said,
 “Finally! Bone of my bone,
 flesh of my flesh!
 Name her Woman
 for she was made from Man.”
 Therefore a man leaves his father and
 mother and embraces his wife.
 They become one flesh.
 The two of them, the Man and his
 Wife, were naked, but they felt no
 shame.

3 1 The serpent was clever, more clever
 than any wild animal GOD had made.
 He spoke to the Woman: “Do I understand
 that God told you not to eat from any tree in
 the garden?”

2-3 The Woman said to the serpent, “Not at
 all. We can eat from the trees in the garden.
 It’s only about the tree in the middle of the
 garden that God said, ‘Don’t eat from it; don’t
 even touch it or you’ll die.’”

4-5 The serpent told the Woman, “You won’t
 die. God knows that the moment you eat from
 that tree, you’ll see what’s really going on.
 You’ll be just like God, knowing everything,
 ranging all the way from good to evil.”

6 When the Woman saw that the tree
 looked like good eating and realized what she
 would get out of it—she’d know everything!—
 she took and ate the fruit and then gave some
 to her husband, and he ate.

7 Immediately the two of them did “see
 what’s really going on”—saw themselves
 naked! They sewed fig leaves together as
 makeshift clothes for themselves.

8 When they heard the sound of GOD stroll-
 ing in the garden in the evening breeze, the
 Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the gar-
 den, hid from GOD.

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

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

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

12 The Man said, “The Woman you gave me
 as a companion, she gave me fruit from the
 tree, and, yes, I ate it.”

GOD said to the Woman, “What is this that
 you’ve done?”

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

14-15 GOD told the serpent:

“Because you’ve done this, you’re cursed,

cursed beyond all cattle and wild
 animals,
 Cursed to slink on your belly
 and eat dirt all your life.
 I’m declaring war between you and the
 Woman,
 between your offspring and hers.
 He’ll wound your head,
 you’ll wound his heel.”

16 He told the Woman:
 “I’ll multiply your pains in childbirth;
 you’ll give birth to your babies in pain.
 You’ll want to please your husband,
 but he’ll lord it over you.”

17-19 He told the Man:
 “Because you listened to your wife
 and ate from the tree
 That I commanded you not to eat from,
 ‘Don’t eat from this tree,’
 The very ground is cursed because of
 you;
 getting food from the ground
 Will be as painful as having babies is for
 your wife;
 you’ll be working in pain all your life
 long.
 The ground will sprout thorns and weeds,
 you’ll get your food the hard way,
 Planting and tilling and harvesting,
 sweating in the fields from dawn to
 dusk,
 Until you return to that ground yourself,
 dead and buried;
 you started out as dirt, you’ll end up
 dirt.”

20 The Man, known as Adam, named his
 wife Eve because she was the mother of all
 the living.

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

22 GOD said, “The Man has become like one
 of us, capable of knowing everything, rang-
 ing from good to evil. What if he now should
 reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life
 and eat, and live forever? Never—this cannot
 happen!”

23-24 So GOD expelled them from the Gar-
 den of Eden and sent them to work the
 ground, the same dirt out of which they’d
 been made. He threw them out of the garden
 and stationed angel-cherubim and a revol-
 ving sword of fire east of it, guarding the path
 to the Tree-of-Life.

4 ¹ Adam slept with Eve his wife. She conceived and had Cain. She said, "I've gotten a man, with God's help!"

² Then she had another baby, Abel. Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer.

³⁻⁵ Time passed. Cain brought an offering to God from the produce of his farm. Abel also brought an offering, but from the first-born animals of his herd, choice cuts of meat. God liked Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering didn't get his approval. Cain lost his temper and went into a sulk.

⁶⁻⁷ God spoke to Cain: "Why this tantrum? Why the sulking? If you do well, won't you be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin is lying in wait for you, ready to pounce; it's out to get you, you've got to master it."

⁸ Cain had words with his brother. They were out in the field; Cain came at Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ God said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

He said, "How should I know? Am I his babysitter?"

¹⁰⁻¹² God said, "What have you done! The voice of your brother's blood is calling to me from the ground. From now on you'll get nothing but curses from this ground; you'll be driven from this ground that has opened its arms to receive the blood of your murdered brother. You'll farm this ground, but it will no longer give you its best. You'll be a homeless wanderer on Earth."

¹³⁻¹⁴ Cain said to God, "My punishment is too much. I can't take it! You've thrown me off the land and I can never again face you. I'm a homeless wanderer on Earth and whoever finds me will kill me."

¹⁵ God told him, "No. Anyone who kills Cain will pay for it seven times over." God put a mark on Cain to protect him so that no one who met him would kill him.

¹⁶ Cain left the presence of God and lived in No-Man's-Land, east of Eden.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Cain slept with his wife. She conceived and had Enoch. He then built a city and named it after his son, Enoch.

Enoch had Irad,
Irad had Mehujael,
Mehujael had Methushael,
Methushael had Lamech.

¹⁹⁻²² Lamech married two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal, the ancestor of all who live in tents and herd cattle. His brother's name was Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the lyre and flute. Zillah gave birth

to Tubal-Cain, who worked at the forge making bronze and iron tools. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

²³⁻²⁴ Lamech said to his wives,
Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
you wives of Lamech, hear me out:
I killed a man for wounding me,
a young man who attacked me.
If Cain is avenged seven times,
for Lamech it's seventy-seven!

²⁵⁻²⁶ Adam slept with his wife again. She had a son whom she named Seth. She said, "God has given me another child in place of Abel whom Cain killed." And then Seth had a son whom he named Enosh.

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

The Family Tree of the Human Race

5 ¹⁻² This is the family tree of the human race: When God created the human race, he made it godlike, with a nature akin to God. He created both male and female and blessed them, the whole human race.

³⁻⁵ When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son who was just like him, his very spirit and image, and named him Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Adam lived a total of 930 years. And he died.

⁶⁻⁸ When Seth was 105 years old, he had Enosh. After Seth had Enosh, he lived another 807 years, having more sons and daughters. Seth lived a total of 912 years. And he died.

⁹⁻¹¹ When Enosh was ninety years old, he had Kenan. After he had Kenan, he lived another 815 years, having more sons and daughters. Enosh lived a total of 905 years. And he died.

¹²⁻¹⁴ When Kenan was seventy years old, he had Mahalalel. After he had Mahalalel, he lived another 840 years, having more sons and daughters. Kenan lived a total of 910 years. And he died.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he had Jared. After he had Jared, he lived another 830 years, having more sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years. And he died.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ When Jared was 162 years old, he had Enoch. After he had Enoch, he lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Jared lived a total of 962 years. And he died.

²¹⁻²³ When Enoch was sixty-five years old,

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

²⁴ Enoch walked steadily with God. And then one day he was simply gone: God took him.

²⁵⁻²⁷ When Methuselah was 187 years old, he had Lamech. After he had Lamech, he lived another 782 years. Methuselah lived a total of 969 years. And he died.

²⁸⁻³¹ When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son. He named him Noah, saying, “This one will give us a break from the hard work of farming the ground that God cursed.” After Lamech had Noah, he lived another 595 years, having more sons and daughters. Lamech lived a total of 777 years. And he died.

³² When Noah was 500 years old, he had Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Giants in the Land

6¹⁻² When the human race began to increase, with more and more daughters being born, the sons of God noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful. They looked them over and picked out wives for themselves.

³ Then God said, “I’m not going to breathe life into men and women endlessly. Eventually they’re going to die; from now on they can expect a life span of 120 years.”

⁴ This was back in the days (and also later) when there were giants in the land. The giants came from the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. These were the mighty men of ancient lore, the famous ones.

Noah and His Sons

⁵⁻⁷ God saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil—evil, evil, evil from morning to night. God was sorry that he had made the human race in the first place; it broke his heart. God said, “I’ll get rid of my ruined creation, make a clean sweep: people, animals, snakes and bugs, birds—the works. I’m sorry I made them.”

⁸ But Noah was different. God liked what he saw in Noah.

⁹⁻¹⁰ This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, a man of integrity in his community. Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹⁻¹² As far as God was concerned, the Earth had become a sewer; there was vio-

lence everywhere. God took one look and saw how bad it was, everyone corrupt and corrupting—life itself corrupt to the core.

¹³ God said to Noah, “It’s all over. It’s the end of the human race. The violence is everywhere; I’m making a clean sweep.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ “Build yourself a ship from teakwood. Make rooms in it. Coat it with pitch inside and out. Make it 450 feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. Build a roof for it and put in a window eighteen inches from the top; put in a door on the side of the ship; and make three decks, lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷ “I’m going to bring a flood on the Earth that will destroy everything alive under Heaven. Total destruction.

¹⁸⁻²¹ “But I’m going to establish a covenant with you: You’ll board the ship, and your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives will come on board with you. You are also to take two of each living creature, a male and a female, on board the ship, to preserve their lives with you: two of every species of bird, mammal, and reptile—two of everything so as to preserve their lives along with yours. Also get all the food you’ll need and store it up for you and them.”

²² Noah did everything God commanded him to do.

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

²⁻⁴ “Take on board with you seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and a female; one pair of every unclean animal, a male and a female; and seven pairs of every kind of bird, a male and a female, to insure their survival on Earth. In just seven days I will pour rain on Earth for forty days and forty nights. I’ll make a clean sweep of everything that I’ve made.”

⁵ Noah did everything God commanded him.

⁶⁻¹⁰ Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters covered the Earth. Noah and his wife and sons and their wives boarded the ship to escape the flood. Clean and unclean animals, birds, and all the crawling creatures came in pairs to Noah and to the ship, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. In seven days the floodwaters came.

¹¹⁻¹² It was the six-hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month that it happened: all the underground springs erupted and all

the windows of Heaven were thrown open. Rain poured for forty days and forty nights.

13-16 That's the day Noah and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, accompanied by his wife and his sons' wives, boarded the ship. And with them every kind of wild and domestic animal, right down to all the kinds of creatures that crawl and all kinds of birds and anything that flies. They came to Noah and to the ship in pairs—everything and anything that had the breath of life in it, male and female of every creature came just as God had commanded Noah. Then GOD shut the door behind him.

17-23 The flood continued forty days and the waters rose and lifted the ship high over the Earth. The waters kept rising, the flood deepened on the Earth, the ship floated on the surface. The flood got worse until all the highest mountains were covered—the high-water mark reached twenty feet above the crest of the mountains. Everything died. Anything that moved—dead. Birds, farm animals, wild animals, the entire teeming exuberance of life—dead. And all people—dead. Every living, breathing creature that lived on dry land died; he wiped out the whole works—people and animals, crawling creatures and flying birds, every last one of them, gone. Only Noah and his company on the ship lived.

24 The floodwaters took over for 150 days.

8 1-3 Then God turned his attention to Noah and all the wild animals and farm animals with him on the ship. God caused the wind to blow and the floodwaters began to go down. The underground springs were shut off, the windows of Heaven closed and the rain quit. Inch by inch the water lowered. After 150 days the worst was over.

4-6 On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ship landed on the Ararat mountain range. The water kept going down until the tenth month. On the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains came into view. After forty days Noah opened the window that he had built into the ship.

7-9 He sent out a raven; it flew back and forth waiting for the floodwaters to dry up. Then he sent a dove to check on the flood conditions, but it couldn't even find a place to perch—water still covered the Earth. Noah reached out and caught it, brought it back into the ship.

10-11 He waited seven more days and sent out the dove again. It came back in the eve-

ning with a freshly picked olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew that the flood was about finished.

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

13-14 In the six-hundred-first year of Noah's life, on the first day of the first month, the flood had dried up. Noah opened the hatch of the ship and saw dry ground. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the Earth was completely dry.

15-17 God spoke to Noah: "Leave the ship, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives. And take all the animals with you, the whole menagerie of birds and mammals and crawling creatures, all that swarming extravagance of life, so they can reproduce and flourish on the Earth."

18-19 Noah disembarked with his sons and wife and his sons' wives. Then all the animals, crawling creatures, birds—every creature on the face of the Earth—left the ship family by family.

20-21 Noah built an altar to GOD. He selected clean animals and birds from every species and offered them as burnt offerings on the altar. GOD smelled the sweet fragrance and thought to himself, "I'll never again curse the ground because of people. I know they have this bent toward evil from an early age, but I'll never again kill off everything living as I've just done.

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

9 1-4 God blessed Noah and his sons: He said, "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Every living creature—birds, animals, fish—will fall under your spell and be afraid of you. You're responsible for them. All living creatures are yours for food; just as I gave you the plants, now I give you everything else. Except for meat with its lifeblood still in it—don't eat that.

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

6-7 Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans let his blood be shed,
Because God made humans in his image
reflecting God's very nature.
You're here to bear fruit, reproduce,

lavish life on the Earth, live bountifully!"

8-11 Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: "I'm setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you—birds, farm animals, wild animals—that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth."

12-16 God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth."

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

18-19 The sons of Noah who came out of the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah; from these three the whole Earth was populated.

20-23 Noah, a farmer, was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank from its wine, got drunk and passed out, naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and told his two brothers who were outside the tent. Shem and Japheth took a cloak, held it between them from their shoulders, walked backward and covered their father's nakedness, keeping their faces turned away so they did not see their father's exposed body.

24-27 When Noah woke up with his hangover, he learned what his youngest son had done. He said,

Cursed be Canaan! A slave of slaves,
a slave to his brothers!
Blessed be GOD, the God of Shem,
but Canaan shall be his slave.

God prosper Japheth,
living spaciouly in the tents of Shem.
But Canaan shall be his slave.

28-29 Noah lived another 350 years following the flood. He lived a total of 950 years. And he died.

The Family Tree of Noah's Sons

10 ¹ This is the family tree of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood, they themselves had sons.

² The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras.

³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, Togarmah.

⁴⁻⁵ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, Rodanim. The seafaring peoples developed from these, each in its own place by family, each with its own language.

⁶ The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, Canaan.

⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, Sabteca.

The sons of Raamah: Sheba, Dedan.

⁸⁻¹² Cush also had Nimrod. He was the first great warrior on Earth. He was a great hunter before GOD. There was a saying, "Like Nimrod, a great hunter before GOD." His kingdom got its start with Babel; then Erech, Akkad, and Calneh in the country of Shinar. From there he went up to Asshur and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

¹³⁻¹⁴ Egypt was ancestor to the Ludim, the Anamim, the Lehabim, the Naphtuhim, the Pathrusim, the Casluhim (the origin of the Philistines), and the Kaphtorim.

¹⁵⁻¹⁹ Canaan had Sidon his firstborn, Heth, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Later the Canaanites spread out, going from Sidon toward Gerar, as far south as Gaza, and then east all the way over to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and on to Lasha.

²⁰ These are the descendants of Ham by family, language, country, and nation.

²¹ Shem, the older brother of Japheth, also had sons. Shem was ancestor to all the children of Eber.

²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, Meshech.

²⁴⁻²⁵ Arphaxad had Shelah and Shelah had Eber. Eber had two sons, Peleg (so named because in his days the human race divided) and Joktan.

²⁶⁻³⁰ Joktan had Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab—all sons of Joktan. Their land goes from Mesha toward Sephar as far as the mountain ranges in the east.

³¹ These are the descendants of Shem by family, language, country, and nation.

³² This is the family tree of the sons of Noah as they developed into nations. From them nations developed all across the Earth after the flood.

“God Turned Their Language into ‘Babble’”

11 ¹⁻² At one time, the whole Earth spoke the same language. It so happened that as they moved out of the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled down.

³ They said to one another, “Come, let’s make bricks and fire them well.” They used brick for stone and tar for mortar.

⁴ Then they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower that reaches Heaven. Let’s make ourselves famous so we won’t be scattered here and there across the Earth.”

⁵ GOD came down to look over the city and the tower those people had built.

⁶⁻⁹ GOD took one look and said, “One people, one language; why, this is only a first step. No telling what they’ll come up with next—they’ll stop at nothing! Come, we’ll go down and garble their speech so they won’t understand each other.” Then GOD scattered them from there all over the world. And they had to quit building the city. That’s how it came to be called Babel, because there GOD turned their language into “babble.” From there GOD scattered them all over the world.



¹⁰⁻¹¹ This is the story of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he had Arphaxad. It was two years after the flood. After he had Arphaxad, he lived 500 more years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²⁻¹³ When Arphaxad was thirty-five years old, he had Shelah. After Arphaxad had Shelah, he lived 403 more years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ When Shelah was thirty years old,

he had Eber. After Shelah had Eber, he lived 403 more years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ When Eber was thirty-four years old, he had Peleg. After Eber had Peleg, he lived 430 more years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ When Peleg was thirty years old, he had Reu. After he had Reu, he lived 209 more years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰⁻²¹ When Reu was thirty-two years old, he had Serug. After Reu had Serug, he lived 207 more years and had other sons and daughters.

²²⁻²³ When Serug was thirty years old, he had Nahor. After Serug had Nahor, he lived 200 more years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴⁻²⁵ When Nahor was twenty-nine years old, he had Terah. After Nahor had Terah, he lived 119 more years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶ When Terah was seventy years old, he had Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Family Tree of Terah

²⁷⁻²⁸ This is the story of Terah. Terah had Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Haran had Lot. Haran died before his father, Terah, in the country of his family, Ur of the Chaldees.

²⁹ Abram and Nahor each got married. Abram’s wife was Sarai; Nahor’s wife was Milcah, the daughter of his brother Haran. Haran had two daughters, Milcah and Iscah.

³⁰ Sarai was barren; she had no children.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran’s son), and Sarai his daughter-in-law (his son Abram’s wife) and set out with them from Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan. But when they got as far as Haran, they settled down there.

³² Terah lived 205 years. He died in Haran.

Abram and Sarai

12 ¹ GOD told Abram: “Leave your country, your family, and your father’s home for a land that I will show you.

²⁻³ I’ll make you a great nation and bless you.

I’ll make you famous; you’ll be a blessing.

I’ll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I’ll curse.

All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you.”

COME, LET'S BUILD (Genesis 11:1-9)

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STOP *“God is in this place—truly. . . Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God’s House. This is the Gate of Heaven.” (Genesis 28:16-17)*

READ Read Genesis 11:1-9 twice slowly. Then read verses 6-9 aloud.

PONDER Picture yourself as part of this large group of people. What rationale can you offer for their plan to build a tower that reaches heaven?

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Why would God be concerned with such a plan? What do you think God wants for these people?

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PRAY Reflect back on some times when your plans and God’s plans have seemed to be at odds with each other. Ask God to help you understand his desires for you during those times. Ask God to illuminate his desires for you right now, in your current context.

REFLECT When have you felt scattered by God? What came of that experience? What good outcomes can you identify?

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LIVE *“Whatever he tells you, do it.” (John 2:5)*

my hands; look at my feet—it's really me. Touch me. Look me over from head to toe. A ghost doesn't have muscle and bone like this." As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. They still couldn't believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true.

41-43 He asked, "Do you have any food here?" They gave him a piece of leftover fish they had cooked. He took it and ate it right before their eyes.

You're the Witnesses

44 Then he said, "Everything I told you while I was with you comes to this: All the things written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms have to be fulfilled."

45-49 He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them

how to read their Bibles this way. He said, "You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You're the first to hear and see it. You're the witnesses. What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so stay here in the city until he arrives, until you're equipped with power from on high."

50-51 He then led them out of the city over to Bethany. Raising his hands he blessed them, and while blessing them, made his exit, being carried up to heaven.

52-53 And they were on their knees, worshipping him. They returned to Jerusalem bursting with joy. They spent all their time in the Temple praising God. Yes.

JOHN

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The Life-Light

1¹⁻² The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God,
in readiness for God from day one.

3-5 Everything was created through him;
nothing—not one thing!—
came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out.

6-8 There once was a man, his name John,
sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

9-13 The Life-Light was the real thing:
Every person entering Life
he brings into Light.
He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.

He came to his own people,
but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.
These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten,
not flesh-begotten,
not sex-begotten.

14 The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.

15 John pointed him out and called, "This is the One! The One I told you was coming after me but in fact was ahead of me. He has always been ahead of me, has always had the first word."

16-18 We all live off his generous abundance,
gift after gift after gift.

We got the basics from Moses,
 and then this exuberant giving and
 receiving,
 This endless knowing and
 understanding—
 all this came through Jesus, the
 Messiah.
 No one has ever seen God,
 not so much as a glimpse.
 This one-of-a-kind God-Expression,
 who exists at the very heart of the
 Father,
 has made him plain as day.

Thunder in the Desert

19-20 When Jews from Jerusalem sent a group of priests and officials to ask John who he was, he was completely honest. He didn't evade the question. He told the plain truth: "I am not the Messiah."

21 They pressed him, "Who, then? Elijah?"
 "I am not."
 "The Prophet?"
 "No."

22 Exasperated, they said, "Who, then? We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something—anything!—about yourself."

23 "I'm thunder in the desert: 'Make the road straight for God!' I'm doing what the prophet Isaiah preached."

24-25 Those sent to question him were from the Pharisee party. Now they had a question of their own: "If you're neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?"

26-27 John answered, "I only baptize using water. A person you don't recognize has taken his stand in your midst. He comes after me, but he is not in second place to me. I'm not even worthy to hold his coat for him."

28 These conversations took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing at the time.

The God-Revealer

29-31 The very next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, "Here he is, God's Passover Lamb! He forgives the sins of the world! This is the man I've been talking about, 'the One who comes after me but is really ahead of me.' I knew nothing about who he was—only this: that my task has been to get Israel ready to recognize him as the God-Revealer. That is why I came here baptizing with water, giving you a good bath and scrubbing sins from your life so you can get a fresh start with God."

32-34 John clinched his witness with this: "I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. I repeat, I know nothing about him except this: The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' That's exactly what I saw happen, and I'm telling you, there's no question about it: *This is the Son of God.*"

Come, See for Yourself

35-36 The next day John was back at his post with two disciples, who were watching. He looked up, saw Jesus walking nearby, and said, "Here he is, God's Passover Lamb."

37-38 The two disciples heard him and went after Jesus. Jesus looked over his shoulder and said to them, "What are you after?"

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

39 He replied, "Come along and see for yourself."

They came, saw where he was living, and ended up staying with him for the day. It was late afternoon when this happened.

40-42 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John's witness and followed Jesus. The first thing he did after finding where Jesus lived was find his own brother, Simon, telling him, "We've found the Messiah" (that is, "Christ"). He immediately led him to Jesus.

Jesus took one look up and said, "You're John's son, Simon? From now on your name is Cephas" (or Peter, which means "Rock").

43-44 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. When he got there, he ran across Philip and said, "Come, follow me." (Philip's hometown was Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter.)

45-46 Philip went and found Nathanael and told him, "We've found the One Moses wrote of in the Law, the One preached by the prophets. It's *Jesus*, Joseph's son, the one from Nazareth!" Nathanael said, "Nazareth? You've got to be kidding."

But Philip said, "Come, see for yourself."

47 When Jesus saw him coming he said, "There's a real Israelite, not a false bone in his body."

48 Nathanael said, "Where did you get that idea? You don't know me."

Jesus answered, "One day, long before Philip called you here, I saw you under the fig tree."

49 Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi! You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!”

50-51 Jesus said, “You’ve become a believer simply because I say I saw you one day sitting under the fig tree? You haven’t seen anything yet! Before this is over you’re going to see heaven open and God’s angels descending to the Son of Man and ascending again.”

From Water to Wine

2 1-3 Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus’ mother told him, “They’re just about out of wine.”

4 Jesus said, “Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn’t my time. Don’t push me.”

5 She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, “Whatever he tells you, do it.”

6-7 Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, “Fill the pots with water.” And they filled them to the brim.

8 “Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host,” Jesus said, and they did.

9-10 When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn’t know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, “Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you’ve saved the best till now!”

11 This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum along with his mother, brothers, and disciples, and stayed several days.

Tear Down This Temple . . .

13-14 When the Passover Feast, celebrated each spring by the Jews, was about to take place, Jesus traveled up to Jerusalem. He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength.

15-17 Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, “Get your things out of here! Stop turning my

Father’s house into a shopping mall!” That’s when his disciples remembered the Scripture, “Zeal for your house consumes me.”

18-19 But the Jews were upset. They asked, “What credentials can you present to justify this?” Jesus answered, “Tear down this Temple and in three days I’ll put it back together.”

20-22 They were indignant: “It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you’re going to rebuild it in three days?” But Jesus was talking about his body as the Temple. Later, after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this. They then put two and two together and believed both what was written in Scripture and what Jesus had said.

23-25 During the time he was in Jerusalem, those days of the Passover Feast, many people noticed the signs he was displaying and, seeing they pointed straight to God, entrusted their lives to him. But Jesus didn’t entrust his life to them. He knew them inside and out, knew how untrustworthy they were. He didn’t need any help in seeing right through them.

Born from Above

3 1-2 There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we all know you’re a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren’t in on it.”

3 Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to—to God’s kingdom.”

4 “How can anyone,” said Nicodemus, “be born who has already been born and grown up? You can’t re-enter your mother’s womb and be born again. What are you saying with this ‘born-from-above’ talk?”

5-6 Jesus said, “You’re not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the ‘wind-hovering-over-the-water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. When you look at a baby, it’s just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

7-8 “So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’—out

of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God."

9 Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

10-12 Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing second-hand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

13-15 "No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

16-18 "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

19-21 "This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."

The Bridegroom's Friend

22-26 After this conversation, Jesus went on with his disciples into the Judean countryside and relaxed with them there. He was also baptizing. At the same time, John was baptizing over at Aenon near Salim, where water was abundant. This was before John was thrown into jail. John's disciples got into an argument with the establishment Jews over the nature of baptism. They came to John and said, "Rabbi, you know the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan? The one you authorized with your witness? Well, he's now competing with us. He's baptizing, too, and everyone's going to him instead of us."

27-29 John answered, "It's not possible for a person to succeed—I'm talking about *eternal* success—without heaven's help. You yourselves were there when I made it public that I was not the Messiah but simply the one sent ahead of him to get things ready. The one who gets the bride is, by definition, the bridegroom. And the bridegroom's friend, his 'best man'—that's me—in place at his side where he can hear every word, is genuinely happy. How could he be jealous when he knows that the wedding is finished and the marriage is off to a good start?"

29-30 "That's why my cup is running over. This is the assigned moment for him to move into the center, while I slip off to the sidelines.

31-33 "The One who comes from above is head and shoulders over other messengers from God. The earthborn is earthbound and speaks earth language; the heavenborn is in a league of his own. He sets out the evidence of what he saw and heard in heaven. No one wants to deal with these facts. But anyone who examines this evidence will come to stake his life on this: that God himself is the truth.

34-36 "The One that God sent speaks God's words. And don't think he rations out the Spirit in bits and pieces. The Father loves the Son extravagantly. He turned everything over to him so he could give it away—a lavish distribution of gifts. That is why whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever! And that is also why the person who avoids and distrusts the Son is in the dark and doesn't see life. All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that."

TRUSTING AND EXPECTANT (John 3:13-21)

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STOP *“Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage.” (Matthew 6:6)*

READ Read John 3:13-21 twice slowly. Write down words and phrases that are particularly striking to you.

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PONDER Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, a prominent member of the Pharisees, a group of people who were publicly suspicious of Jesus and his teaching. What about what Jesus is saying here do you think would make people suspicious? Why?

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What in this passage do you find particularly appealing about Jesus and his teaching? Why?

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PRAY Any talk of the spiritual realities that underlie our everyday existence can be confusing and even troubling. Spend some time in prayer with God, identifying the aspects of your faith that are challenging to you. Ask him to guide you into deeper understanding. Be quiet with him for a while.

REFLECT Imagine Nicodemus going home after this conversation with Jesus. What aspects of Jesus’ teaching here do you think stayed in his mind the longest? Why?

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LIVE *“Whatever he tells you, do it.” (John 2:5)*

THE MAKING OF THE MESSAGE

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

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

I didn't start out as a pastor. I began my vocational life as a teacher and for several years taught the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek in a theological seminary. I expected to live the rest of my life as a professor and scholar, teaching and writing and studying. But then my life took a sudden vocational turn to pastoring in a congregation.

I was now plunged into quite a different world. The first noticeable difference was that nobody seemed to care much about the Bible, which so recently people had been paying me to teach them. Many of the people I worked with now knew virtually nothing about it, had never read it, and weren't interested in learning. Many others had spent years reading it but for them it had gone flat through familiarity, reduced to clichés. Bored, they dropped it. And there weren't many people in between. Very few were interested in what I considered my primary work, getting the words of the Bible into their heads and hearts, getting the message lived. They found newspapers and magazines, videos and pulp fiction more to their taste.

Meanwhile I had taken on as my life's work the responsibility of getting these very people to listen, really listen, to the message in this book. I knew I had my work cut out for me.

I lived in two language worlds, the world of the Bible and the world of Today. I had always assumed they were the same world. But these people didn't see it that way. So out of necessity I became a "translator" (although I wouldn't have called it that then), daily standing on the border between two worlds, getting the language of the Bible that God uses to create and save us, heal and bless us, judge and rule over us, into the language of Today that we use to gossip and tell stories, give directions and do business, sing songs and talk to our children.

And all the time those old biblical languages, those powerful and vivid Hebrew and Greek originals, kept working their way underground in my speech, giving energy and sharpness to words and phrases, expanding the imagination of the people with whom I was working to hear the language of the Bible in the language of Today and the language of Today in the language of the Bible.

I did that for thirty years in one congregation. And then one day (it was April 30, 1990) I got a letter from an editor asking me to work on a new version of the Bible along the lines of what I had been doing as a pastor. I agreed. The next ten years was harvest time. *The Message* is the result.

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

Eugene H. Peterson

INDEX OF GUIDED REFLECTIONS

The Message Prayerful Reading Bible includes 150 guided reflections to get you started in the practice of *lectio divina*. In a daily rhythm, that's roughly five months of devotional readings. They are spread throughout the Scriptures and listed here in canonical order. Consider checking off each entry in this list as you complete it so you have a record of those you've already done.

- Genesis 3:1-10—*Where Are You?*
- Genesis 11:1-9—*Come, Let's Build*
- Genesis 21:9-21—*God Has Heard*
- Genesis 32:22-32—*Wrestling in the Night*
- Genesis 41:38-46—*The Inside Story*

- Exodus 3:1-6—*Learning to Pay Attention*
- Exodus 10:1-2—*Like a Cat with a Mouse*
- Exodus 16:9-16—*The Bread God Has Given*
- Exodus 20:1-20—*God Spoke All These Words*
- Exodus 32:7-14—*Think Twice*
- Exodus 36:2-7—*Enough and More Than Enough*

- Leviticus 4:32-35—*The Necessity of Sacrifice*
- Leviticus 10:1-3—*Strange Fire*
- Leviticus 22:1-8—*My Holy Name*

- Numbers 9:4-5, 9-12—*Don't Forget*
- Numbers 19:22—*Unclean*
- Numbers 27:15-23—*Commissioned*
- Numbers 35:9-15—*God of the Asylum-City*

- Deuteronomy 6:1-9—*Listen!*
- Deuteronomy 15:7-11—*Don't Count the Cost*
- Deuteronomy 24:10-15, 17-22—*You Were Once Slaves*
- Deuteronomy 31:1-8—*Moses*

- Joshua 9:3-16—*Slow Down and Inquire*
- Joshua 18:1-9—*Survey the Land*
- Joshua 24:16-24—*An Unqualified Yes*

- Judges 7:1-7—*When You Can't Take the Credit*
- Judges 16:25-30—*Let Me Be Avenged*
- Judges 21:25—*Whatever*

- Ruth 3—*Welcoming the Outsider*

- 1 Samuel 3:8-10—*Recognizing God's Voice*
- 1 Samuel 10:17-25—*Baggage*
- 1 Samuel 17:31-40—*"GOD Help You!"*
- 1 Samuel 28:3-6—*God Didn't Answer*

- 2 Samuel 7:18-29—*"This Is What Makes You So Great"*
- 2 Samuel 18:31-33—*Absalom*
- 2 Samuel 24:13-17, 25—*God Feels the Pain*

- 1 Kings 5:1-12—*A Dream Fulfilled*
- 1 Kings 17:7-16—*When Trusting God Is a Handful*

- 2 Kings 4:20, 24-29—*False Hopes?*
- 2 Kings 11:17-12:2—*Investing in People*
- 2 Kings 24:10-17—*The Next Thing to Happen*

- 1 Chronicles 11:10-12:15—*Linking Arms*
- 1 Chronicles 22:7-16—*To Build a Sanctuary*
- 1 Chronicles 29:10-19—*Our Lives Are Mere Shadows*

- 2 Chronicles 6:12-18—*Dedication Ceremonies*
- 2 Chronicles 16:7-9—*Fully Rely on God*
- 2 Chronicles 20:14-26—*Watch God's Saving Work for You*
- 2 Chronicles 35:20-25—*Spoiling for a Fight*

- Ezra 9:10-15—*What Can We Say for Ourselves?*

- Nehemiah 5:6-11—*Burden for the Suffering*
- Nehemiah 13:6-13—*Zeal for Righteousness*

- Esther 4:4-14—*Just Such a Time*
- Esther 7:3-10—*Justice Served*

- Job 5:17-26—*Giving Comfort*
- Job 19:13-27—*Talking Transparently with God*
- Job 30:20-31—*What Did I Do to Deserve This?*
- Job 42:7-13—*God Can Handle You*

- Psalm 8—*God, Brilliant Lord*
- Psalm 28—*Rescued from the Pit*
- Psalm 46—*A Safe Place to Hide*
- Psalm 62—*Solid Rock under My Feet*
- Psalm 75—*The Posture of Gratitude*

- Psalm 85:10-13—*Right Living*
- Psalm 96—*When the Rocks Cry Out*
- Psalm 106—*Spiritual History Lessons*
- Psalm 121—*Confidence in God*
- Psalm 139—*I'm an Open Book to You*
- Psalm 148—*Praise Him, Sun and Moon*

- Proverbs 2—*Make Insight Your Priority*
- Proverbs 8:1-11—*Wisdom Is Better*
- Proverbs 14—*Wisdom on Your Doorstep*
- Proverbs 20:27—*God Is in Charge*
- Proverbs 28—*Word to the Wise*

- Ecclesiastes 4:7-12—*Don't Go It Alone*
- Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8—*Make the Most of Your Youth*

- Song of Songs 4:8-15—*God Has Eyes for You*

- Isaiah 6:1-8—*Burning Off Sin*
- Isaiah 27:1-5—*A Strong God*
- Isaiah 43:1-4—*You're Mine*
- Isaiah 62:2-5—*God's Delight in You*

- Jeremiah 8:18-9:11—*A Time to Grieve*
- Jeremiah 20:7-10—*Telling God What We Really Think*
- Jeremiah 33:2-3—*I Will Answer You*
- Jeremiah 51:1-5—*God's Deep Commitment*

- Lamentations 3:19-30—*When Disappointment Comes*

- Ezekiel 3:1-11—*A Mouthful*
- Ezekiel 18:14-17—*Learn from the Worst*
- Ezekiel 34:10-16—*The Shepherd and Me*

- Daniel 3:16-27—*Not a Scorch Mark*
- Daniel 6:6-10—*Doing the Right Thing*
- Daniel 9:1-19—*Confessing for Your Community*
- Daniel 11:33-35—*The Testing*

- Hosea 3:1-5—*Love Again*
- Hosea 10:11-12—*Digging In with God*

- Joel 2:12-14—*Come Back to Me*

- Amos 2:6-8—*The God of Justice*
- Amos 5:7-15—*Seeking Good*
- Amos 8:11-12—*Hoping to Hear God's Word*

- Micah 4:1-4—*He Will Teach Us How to Live*
- Micah 7:18-20—*Our God*

- Habakkuk 3:1-6—*Holy Judge, Remember Mercy*
- Zephaniah 3:9-13—*At Home in God*
- Haggai 2:1-9—*Handing Out Wholeness and Holiness*
- Zechariah 2—*God Is Proactive*
- Zechariah 7:4-10—*Treat One Another Justly*
- Zechariah 11:4-17—*Breaking the Beautiful Covenant*
- Malachi 3:1-4—*Fit and Pleasing to God*
- Matthew 6:5-13—*Pray with Simplicity*
- Matthew 11:28-30—*Walk with Me*
- Matthew 12:46-50—*Thicker Than Blood*
- Matthew 15:21-28—*Your Faith Is Something Else*
- Matthew 21:12-17—*Jesus Threw Them Out*
- Matthew 27:45-54—*“My God, Why?”*
- Mark 5:25-34—*Telling Your Whole Story*
- Mark 10:17-22—*Heartstrings*
- Mark 14:66-72—*Denying Jesus*
- Luke 3:16-20—*The Stagehand and the Main Character*
- Luke 7:36-47—*“Do You See This Woman?”*
- Luke 10:38-42—*Sitting before the Master*
- Luke 17:11-19—*Returning to Say Thank You*
- Luke 22:47-53—*A Dark Hour*
- John 3:13-21—*Trusting and Expectant*
- John 10:1-18—*Knowing the Good Shepherd*
- John 17:13-23—*One Heart and Mind*
- Acts 4:23-31—*Fearless Confidence*
- Acts 12:1-16—*The Miraculous Release*
- Acts 19:11-16—*Not a Game*
- Acts 26:12-18—*Handpicked*
- Romans 4:16-25—*Trusting When It’s Hopeless*
- Romans 10:8-13—*Embrace God*
- Romans 15:1-6—*Strength Is for Service*
- 1 Corinthians 3:9-17—*You Are a Temple*
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-10—*Remember Our History*
- 2 Corinthians 4:5-12—*Our Ordinary Lives*
- 2 Corinthians 12:19-21—*God Is the Jury*
- Galatians 4:1-7—*Access to the Inheritance*

- Ephesians 4:1-6—*Permeated with Oneness*
- Philippians 4:6-9—*Shaping Worries into Prayers*
- Colossians 4:2-6—*Stay Alert*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11—*Sons of Light, Daughters of Day*
- 1 Timothy 4:11-16—*Get the Word Out*
- 2 Timothy 4:1-5—*Keep the Message Alive*
- Hebrews 4:12-13—*God Means What He Says*
- Hebrews 12:7-11—*Well-Trained*
- James 4:7-10—*Purify Your Inner Life*
- 1 Peter 3:13-18—*In Adoration*
- 1 John 5:1-3—*God-Born*
- Revelation 4:2-8—*Before the Throne*
- Revelation 7:9-12—*To God on His Throne*
- Revelation 21:1-12—*New-Created*

As valuable as these guided reflections are, they are meant as appetizers, warming up your palate for the main course: your own self-directed prayerful reading of God's Word. We hope these guided reflections will help get you started on a lifetime practice of *lectio divina* and that God will meet you in these prayerful readings to draw you more deeply into life in him.