

READ THE BIBLE FOR **LIFE**

READER'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE

Chronological Reading Plan

go God s
ys. in these last d
er of all things and
glory, be exact
word. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty
on high. So He became higher in rank than the angels, just as the name He inherited

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE

foreword by DAVID PLATT

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Chronological Reading Plan

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE

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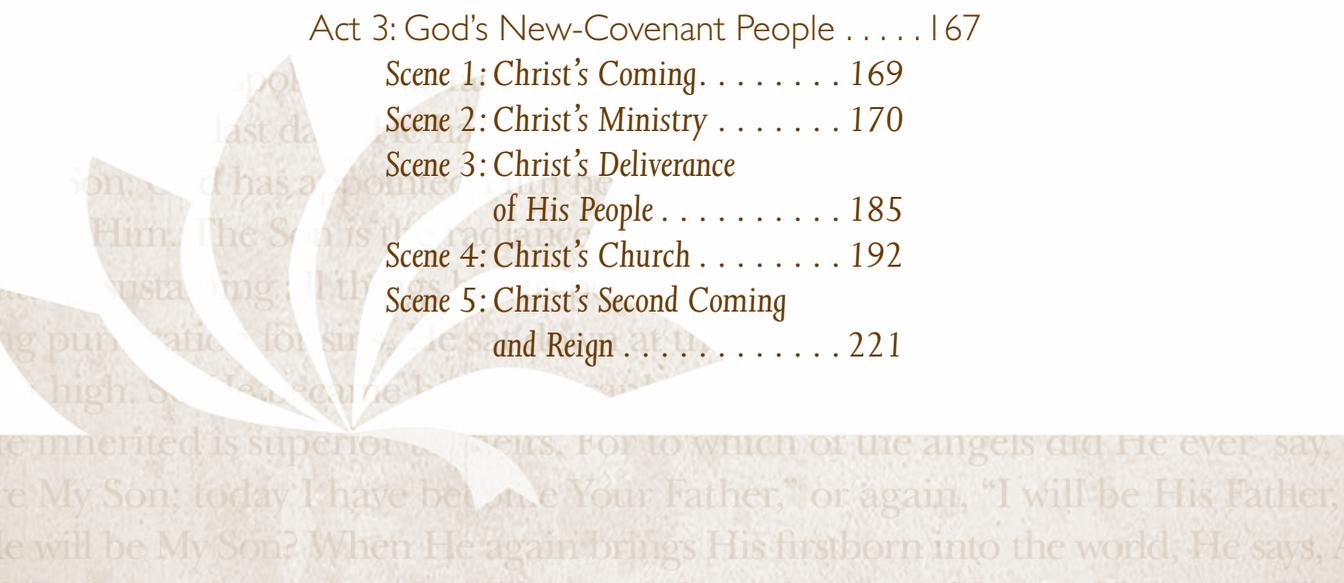
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The Author

George H. Guthrie serves as the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. A respected New Testament scholar and a deeply committed churchman, he is the author of numerous articles and several books, including *Hebrews in The NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan, 1998) and “James” in *Hebrews–Revelation, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 2006).

As the architect of the Read the Bible for Life biblical-literacy initiative, Guthrie has written or edited four tools, including this reader’s guide (LifeWay, 2011), the small-group study *Read the Bible for Life* (LifeWay, 2010), *Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide to Understanding and Living God’s Word* (B&H, 2011), and *Reading God’s Story: A Chronological Daily Bible* (B&H, 2011). Guthrie has participated in translation projects, such as the revision of the New Living Translation, and has served as a consultant on the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the New Century Version, and the English Standard Version. At Union University he led in the establishment of and serves as Senior Fellow in the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, which is committed to promoting sound Bible reading, study, and interpretation in local churches.

Guthrie holds PhD and MDiv degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a ThM from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He and his wife, Pat, live with their two children, Joshua and Anna, near Jackson, Tennessee. The family attends Northbrook Church, which Guthrie and his wife helped plant and which he copastored for 10 years.

Foreword

I was sitting across the lunch table from George Guthrie. “I’m considering leading our church to read through the Bible together next year,” I said.

“It’s interesting that you say that,” Dr. Guthrie responded. “I’m developing a plan to help people and entire churches walk through redemptive history chronologically so that they can see the power of God’s Word and understand how their individual stories fit in God’s story.”

By the next week we were finalizing details for how our church could field-test what you now hold in your hand, *Reader’s Guide to the Bible*, an intentional, devotional, systematic journey through the history of redemption in Scripture. During the next year, starting at Genesis 1, the members of our church journeyed from creation to new creation. For the first time many of them saw how the different books of the Bible come together to form one story. This journey through God’s Word dramatically transformed the lives of individual followers of Christ and radically revolutionized our church.

Indeed, the Bible contains one grand story of one global God who is saving His people through one glorious gospel. *We need to know this story.* We need to see, understand, and comprehend how all of the pages of Scripture come together in one overarching plot. Such knowledge, penetrating both our hearts and our minds, is essential for growing in Christlikeness.

We need to experience this story. It’s not just about people thousands of years ago. It’s about you, me, and the people God is drawing to Himself all around us.

We need to tell this story. When we know and experience this story, we are compelled to give our lives to proclaiming this story to the ends of the earth.

Reader’s Guide is an invaluable tool for individual followers of Christ, small groups of Christians, and entire churches. Let this guide lead you to discover the boundless treasures contained in the Bible, God’s story, and let His Word change your life and your church for your great good and His great glory.

David Platt, Pastor
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham, Alabama

Introduction

Reader's Guide to the Bible gives you step-by-step guidance as you walk through the pages of God's Word day by day. This guide is laid out in a chronological reading plan and provides personal coaching in how to read the portion of Scripture suggested for each day. As you read, this guide will help you keep track of where you are in the story of Scripture and will provide help for reading the different kinds of literature found in the Bible. It will also help you understand especially difficult passages and will point to the significance of people, places, and events as they relate to the grand story of Scripture.

Here are some suggestions for getting the most from *Reader's Guide*.

1. *Read at a specific time and place each day until it becomes a habit.* If you miss a day, make it up and keep going.
2. *As you start each week, read the introduction to that week.* Then read the brief commentary for that day before reading the passages from the Bible.
3. *Always keep the big story in view.* *Reader's Guide* is laid out in three acts and 17 scenes to familiarize you with the framework of the Bible's story. The headings at the top of each page remind you where you are in the story. You can use *Reader's Guide* with any Bible translation, but you might want to consider *Reading God's Story: A Chronological Daily Bible* (HCSB translation).
4. *Fill in the names of important characters on the timelines each week.* Three biblical timelines are inserted in *Reader's Guide*. As you work your way through *Reader's Guide* each week, you will find directions for writing on the timelines the names of key people who appear in the Bible readings that week.
5. *Read in community with others.* Small-group discussion questions are provided at the end of each week.
6. *Acquire tools to help you read the Bible better.* You can find free study tools at the Web site www.mystudybible.com. A sound study Bible would also be helpful. Other support materials are available at www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife.

I want to thank David Platt and The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, who field-tested *Reader's Guide* and wrote the small-group discussion questions you will find at the end of each week. Also, in addition to many good study tools, I found special help in *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Zondervan, 2002) by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

I pray that as you work your way through *Reader's Guide to the Bible*, you will understand God's Word better and be changed by it forever.

ACT I

God's Plan for All People



...be
...a way... these
...has a point... of
...universe. He is the radiance
...and He sustains
...purification for sin... He sat down at the
...high. ... He sent the high
...inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did He ever
"You are My Son; today I have become Your Father," or again, "I will
be His Father, and He will be My Son?" When He again brings His firstborn
into the world, He says: "And all God's angels must worship Him"

WEEK I

In our first week of readings, we will cover all of act I in the story of the Bible. This act consists of three scenes:

1. The creation of the world, with human beings as the pinnacle of that creation
2. The fall into sin and its consequences
3. The flood, the first expression of God's judgment on the human race as a whole, as well as His desire to preserve the life He created

Act I is very brief in comparison to the other two acts in the biblical story, but theologically, it is very important. In numerous ways act I lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. In addition to the main events, we will see many expressions of God's desire to have a relationship with people and His grace when people sin. As you read, slow down and notice the details, including moments of tension and crisis, and how these are resolved. This segment of Scripture is packed with important themes that will continue throughout all of Scripture, including the central theme of covenant. As you read Genesis 1 and Psalms, allow the music of these passages to touch you and teach you things about God.



SCENE I: CREATION: THE GOD OF ALL LIFE

DAY 1 Genesis 1–2

Notice ways the days of creation relate to each other: day 1 to day 4, day 2 to day 5, and day 3 to day 6. Days 1, 2, and 3 tell of God's creation of settings to be inhabited, while days 4, 5, and 6 introduce the characters that inhabit those settings. God built both beauty and order into His creation. There was also a progression in creation, a process climaxing in the creation of human beings. According to Genesis 2:2-3, God rested on the seventh day, blessed that day, and declared it holy. In declaring one day of the week special, God built order and rhythm into the weekly human routine.

Identify the order and rhythm of rest in your weekly patterns.

In Genesis 2 the author took one aspect of the creation account in Genesis 1—the creation of man and woman—and expanded on it. When you read narrative passages in Scripture, remember that God is the hero of the story.

How is God the hero in Genesis 2?

What does the passage say about the nature and beauty of marriage as God designed it?

TIMELINE

Old Testament Timeline, Part I: write *Adam* on line 1 and *Eve* on line 2 in act 1, scene 1.

DAY 2 Psalms 8; 104; John 1:1-3

Psalm 8, a reflection on Genesis 1–2, describes our worth and responsibility as human beings. Think about what this psalm means for us as modern believers. Notice the first and last verses of the psalm; God is the real focus here.

Meditate on the description of God in Psalm 104:1–9 and notice how the psalmist responds to God in verses 33–35. The psalms often use rich word pictures to communicate truth.

How did the author paint a picture using word pictures?

Notice how the words of John 1:1–3, which speak of Jesus as the Word, echo Genesis 1:1.

Read Genesis 1:1 again in light of John 1:1–3 and take a moment to worship Jesus as the Creator of all that is.



SCENE 2: THE FALL: REJECTING GOD'S VISION FOR LIFE

DAY 3 Genesis 3–5

Watch for the patterns of human sin depicted in Genesis 3–4:

- Temptation to question God's Word: "Did God really say ... ?" (3:1).
- The false promise of desire
- The experience of shame and consequences of sin

Also notice the attempt to blame others for sin, the refusal to take responsibility for sinful actions. Finally, notice that in chapter 4 the problem was not just with Cain's offering but with Cain himself; this is a key to understanding the story.

How do these stories reflect your own battle with temptation?

TIMELINE

Old Testament Timeline, Part I: write *Cain* on line 1 and *Abel* on line 2 in act 1, scene 2.



SCENE 3: THE FLOOD: GOD JUDGES AND MAKES A COVENANT TO PRESERVE LIFE

DAY 4 Genesis 6–7

Watch for details as you read today. Also keep the big picture in mind: the pervasiveness of sin and its devastating consequences. Notice what we learn about God in the first eight verses of Genesis 6, keeping in mind that He is the main actor in the story. Watch for expressions of God's grace and His desire to preserve life in the midst of judgment. Also notice what we learn about Noah as the story continues: he was a righteous man and walked with God. Noah's responses called for a great deal of trust in God in the face of cataclysmic events, yet at times it is difficult for us to trust God in minor events of everyday life. Perhaps Noah's walk with God was the key.

How might you express your trust in God today and learn to walk with God every day?

TIMELINE

Old Testament Timeline, Part I: write *Noah* on line 1 in act 1, scene 3.

DAY 5 Genesis 8–9; Psalm 12

Read Genesis 8:15–9:7, discerning how these verses echo the first three chapters of Genesis.

Why might the author have included these echoes?

Now read chapter 9 and notice the differences from Genesis 1–3.

How do these differences develop the overall story of Genesis?

A covenant with God is often at the heart of the story of the Old Testament. A covenant is basically an agreement between two parties. God established a covenant with the Jewish people, first through Abraham, and then renewed it with various leaders throughout the Old Testament. The covenant stated that if the people kept God's law, He would be their God, and they would be His people.

What role does the covenant play in Genesis 9?

Reflect especially on verse 5 of Psalm 12. Worship God as One who rises up to help those burdened by evil people, providing a safe place for them. If you are being hurt by wickedness, cry out to God for help even as you worship.

DAY 6 Genesis 10–11

Genealogies in the Bible strike some readers as uninteresting. However, these are part of God's Word, and we can learn from them. Among other things, the genealogies give us a sense of the passing of time, moving the story along. We also get a picture of the connectedness of people and events in the Bible's narrative. This is not a patchwork of loosely connected stories but one story God is writing on the world. Meditate on the contrasts you find in Genesis 11:1-9. Now read the passage in light of Acts 2:1-21, noticing both the contrasts and the parallels with that passage. One problem reflected in Genesis 11 is that these people had an arrogant disregard for God's mandate to "fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1). Think about how that mandate was ultimately fulfilled through the church in Acts as it advanced the kingdom of God in the world.

How are you called to participate in God's mandate to "fill the earth" by sharing the good news with others?

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. List several big stories of the Old Testament that are often taught to children.
2. Describe a time you began to watch a movie in the middle. How did it affect the way you understood the plot? How might a lack of information about the beginning of God's story affect how we understand Scripture?
3. List all God created in the six days of creation. What does that account reveal about God's character? How should that revelation affect the way we live each day?
4. Read Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7. How is God's authority acknowledged and rejected in these events? Why did God bring judgment on Adam and Eve?
5. How does North American culture try to convince us that we have no judge? How do we think and act as if we were our own judges?
6. How did God show both judgment and compassion to Adam and Eve?
7. How do our need for redemption and God's compassion toward His people through Adam and Eve's story set the stage for God's acts throughout history?
8. Why is God's plan to redeem humanity the only one that has power to work?