

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 1

Day 1. Read Genesis 1.1-2.25; Matthew 1.1-2.12; Psalm 1; Proverbs 1.1-6

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: 1. God created you in his image and likeness (1.26-27) to have an intimate relationship with you forever. How does it change you and the way you think and act to know that you owe your being to a personal God? How would you think and act if you believed you were the result of mere accident or chance? 2. People were created for relationship with one another, to care for God's creation (1.26, 28; 2.15) and to fulfill one another (2.18). What would the world be like if everyone did that? What would my world (my part of God's kingdom that I have influence in for God) be like if I did that? Who are the most significant people in my life now?

Matthew: 1. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy, showing Christ's lineage as a human being. The list contains a number of surprising characters. What does Jesus' genealogy including Rahab (Joshua 6.22-25), Ruth (Ruth 1.4), Uriah's wife (2 Samuel 11.2-5) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21.1-) say about who God chooses and uses in his plan to redeem the world? 2. Joseph decides it is God's will to put Mary, his pregnant fiancée, aside quietly. How does God communicate his will more clearly? What must God do to get my attention to do his will everyday? 3. Foreigners from the East are the first to acclaim Jesus the Christ. What is God saying about who is acceptable to God? Why do I doubt that God would choose and use me?

Prayer: O God, your incomprehensible compassion alone caused you to choose me to be yours in Christ. Now use me also, I pray, to accomplish your life giving purposes in your world today. Amen.

Day 2. Read Genesis 3.1-4.26; Matthew 2.13-3.6;
Psalm 2.1-12; Proverbs 1.7-9

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: God's masterpiece of creation is maimed, his perfect plan torpedoed. Sin and death enter ironically as Satan tempts the first humans to "be like God, knowing good and

evil.” The result is, we are separated from our own innermost self (ashamed), from God (hiding from God) and one another (through faultfinding and blaming). 1. How do I play God in my daily relationships? How do I hide from God? How do I try to push God out of my life? 2. Animals are sacrificed to cover human nakedness with their skins, prefiguring Christ’s own sacrifice to take away the sin that blocks us from living with God. What does it mean to you that God gives something (or better, someone) so precious so you could live with him forever? Does it change your sense of your own value to God? Your actions for God? Who do you tend to devalue in your relationships? What can you do to show you value them as highly as God does?

Matthew: Jesus was a refugee, having had to flee to Egypt to escape death from Herod’s henchmen. What does it signify that death stalked Jesus from the beginning of his life, not just later as he went to the cross? Are you comfortably at home in the world, or have you, by following Christ, been made a refugee who is still seeking your true home? How does it change your thoughts and actions to know that the Kingdom of God, and not this world, is your true home?

Prayer: God, why do I hide from you, forget you, and fail to seek you, the source of my life? Why do I instantly find fault with others and overlook my own shortcomings and failures? Forgive me, restore me, lead me into your Kingdom of peace, hope and joy, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, even though following him makes me a stranger and a foreigner in this world. Amen.

Day 3. Read Genesis 5.1-7.24; Matthew 3.7-4.11; Psalm 3; Proverbs 1.10-19

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: The God who created the universe and people in his image, is a person, with feelings. God cares for his creation and especially how people treat one another, so much so that he considers starting all over. Why does God choose not to wipe out creation (6.8-9)? How does this pre-figure God sending his Son in order to save the world?

Matthew: 1. Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan with sinners. How is his baptism like his crucifixion? What has God done for you by baptizing you into Christ (Mt. 3.16-17)? How does that change the way you live every day? 2. The devil attacked Jesus at his weakest, when hungry and alone. How did Jesus fight the devil ((4.4, 4.7, 4.10)? How is God’s Word like a shield and a sword for you in your daily spiritual struggles with the evil one?

Prayer: Father, you have called me in Baptism to be your own, opening your Kingdom to me, giving me your Holy Spirit, and proclaiming to the whole world that I am your beloved child. Thanks and praise to you for your Word which protects me and fends off all the temptations and tricks of the evil one day be day. May I hold tightly to your

Word every- day. Amen.

Day 4. Read Genesis 8.1-10:32; Matthew 4.12-25; Psalm 4; Proverbs 1.20-23

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: After cleansing the earth with the waters of the flood and preserving life through an ark made of wood, God forms a covenant-a solemn, binding agreement- with people, by which he binds himself to a promise, without any stipulations or pre-requisites on the part of people themselves. God takes upon himself a more difficult way of renewing creation than simply wiping the slate clean and starting over. He chooses to redeem the world through one person-not Noah, but Jesus Christ. It's a good thing, because very soon Noah himself falls; and, yet, God continues his plan. What does the fact that God continues his plan to redeem the world even after Noah sins say about God's character? His compassion? His righteousness? What does my repeatedly sinning against God say about God's love for me personally?

Matthew: At Jesus' call to "Come, follow me" and with his promise "I will make you fishers of people," simple fishermen leave their nets and livelihood to follow Jesus. His call is not to rules, rituals or even religions really, but to a personal relationship with him. How does it change me to know I have been called personally by Jesus to have a close personal relationship with him? What does it do to my sense of purpose and importance to know that I am an important part of his plan to redeem the world? Whom is he calling me to fish for-to invite and bring into a living relationship with him?

Prayer: God, you chose the harder way, bringing upon yourself all my pain and brokenness, and even the whole world's. Why would you call *me* to walk with you as your disciple? Why would you choose *me* to work beside you as your partner in redeeming this dying world? I accept your call. Help me to hear and heed your call every day above the busyness of the world, to leave behind all that hinders me, and to follow you. Open my eyes to the people you put in my life every day and strengthen my hands to help them have life with you. Amen.

Day 5. Read Genesis 11.1-13.4; Matthew 5.1-26; Psalm 5; Proverbs 1.24-28

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: Our fallen, human self-centeredness, mixed with our God-given creativity, causes people to grow even more dangerously independent of God. Our growing distance from God further endangers God's plan to redeem the world back to himself, so he sends the gift of confusion. Unable to speak one another's languages, people spread throughout the

world, setting the scene for God's great drama of redemption. His plan narrows down to Abraham and Sarah, through whom "all the nations of the world will bless one another."
Reflection Questions 1. When and how has God sent confusion and chaos into my life, that later turned out to be a blessing in disguise? 2. As God called Abraham and Sarah to leave their kindred, their home and country to follow him, what has God called me to leave behind in order to follow him? 3. Who will be blessed because I follow God now, even as Abraham and Sarah blessed me by following God so long ago?

Matthew: In the "Beatitudes," Jesus is not setting a new-and impossible- standard for us to strive toward so we might be acceptable to God. He is describing the new nature of a person redeemed through faith in him-his own nature now revealed in and through the believing disciple. All who follow him are to be salt (to influence the people around us) and light (to reveal him and the life he alone brings). **Reflection Questions** 1. Which of the beatitudes do I most reflect? Which do I least reflect? 2. Of the people around me, whose life does God want me to "spice up" with his love and presence? What one thing will I do this week to be light and salt for one person I know?

Prayer: God, make me new, according to the nature of Christ. Let my words and actions be salt and light, to bless those around me with Christ's presence and power for new life, this day, and every day. Amen.

Day 6. Read Genesis 13.5-15.21; Matthew 5.27-48; Psalm 6; Proverbs 1.29-33

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: God again promises Abraham and Sarah a son, though they are both well beyond the years of childbearing and Sarah is barren. Abraham "believed the Lord, and he counted it as righteousness to him." Abraham trusted that "with God all things are possible." God justifies those who have faith in him, regardless of what wrongs and failures we have had. Abraham is told he will have descendants in faith as numerous as the stars. **Reflection Questions:** 1. What in my life right now is causing me to doubt that "with God all things are possible?" How can I turn that over confidently to God? 2. Am I having children in faith by sharing the Good News with others, or am I barren? 3. How many descendants in faith will I leave as my legacy by believing and sharing God with others in my day?

Matthew: Jesus leads us beyond the letter of the law, to the spirit of it, raising the stakes beyond actions by focusing on the motives-the state of our heart before God. It is not enough to avoid acts of sexual impurity, we must have pure motives. It is not enough to love those who are like us or who like us (our "neighbor" as we understand them-the people who are neighborly to us), we are to love even our enemy. In so doing we are perfect like our Father, who sends blessings of rain and sun on just and unjust alike. **Reflection Questions** 1. Which of the Ten Commandments do I have the greatest struggle

with? 2. Who is on my “enemies list” now, and what can I do to show them God’s love this week?

Prayer: God, with you all things are possible! You will forgive me even for doubting your Word and your power to fulfill it. Form in me the very heart and mind of Christ, your Son, so I will want what you want. Like him, may I love even those, who in my fallen-ness, I count as my enemies, even as you love me when I am an enemy to you. Amen.

Day 7. Read Genesis 16.1-18.19; Matthew 6.1-24; Psalm 7; Proverbs 2.1-5

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Genesis: Abraham quavers. When Sarah seeks to force things, giving her servant to Abraham so she can adopt the child as her own, he acquiesces. God appears to him again, renewing his promise and giving a sign of the covenant he made. Circumcision becomes the outward sign of what is an inward, spiritual reality, for all who believe and follow God. The cutting away of the flesh is meant to signify the paring away from our lives and hearts of everything that separates us from God. Followers of God are set apart and made different from all others in the world, by following God’s Word. **Reflection Questions:** 1. How has following God made you different from others around you? 2. What signs are there in your life that God is active and working through you?

Matthew: Jesus warns us that motives are all important. We are not to do our actions to be seen and rewarded by people, but because we have God’s new nature and want to please him alone. Followers of God don’t require thanks or recognition. **Reflection Questions:** 1. When have I recently done something to please people instead of God? 2. What can I do this week simply to bring joy to God’s heart and please God, without concern for what others think or how they might respond? 3. What competes with God in my life now as my true treasure? Am I trying to serve something or someone else, rather than God, as my master?

Prayer: God, you alone are my treasure. You alone are my Lord and master. Forgive me for allowing others to compete with you for my love. Forgive me for listening to other competing calls for my time and attention. Let me listen to you and follow you first, foremost, and finally—forever! Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 1 **Sunday Worship Lessons**

First (Old Testament) Lesson: Genesis 1:1-3, 26-27; 3.1-12

Psalm: 1

Second Lesson (New Testament/Gospel): Matthew 4.1-11.

Theme: God’s Word, Power For Life