

T H E S T O R Y

W O R K B O O K



ST. ANDREW'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“A Bible in Every Hand—God’s Story in Every Heart.”

This is the church’s vision for the next 12-18 months! We desire for everyone in our church to have a Bible, and to study God’s Word on a regular, consistent basis. By doing so, we allow God’s story to penetrate our hearts and our lives.

Therefore, we are inviting the entire St. Andrew’s Church family to explore God’s Story together by reading through the Narrative of Scripture in *The Story* during the next six months.

The Story is your opportunity to encounter God in his Word like never before. *The Story* is a collection of basic Bible stories that tell the whole story, beginning to end and, through that story you will receive a solid overview of the Bible.

This workbook is designed to help you understand and then respond to God’s word. We hope that in the next 22 weeks you will discover (or rediscover) God’s Story. It is our prayer that you will find your story woven into His grander story.

To use this workbook, read one or two chapters of *The Story* each week and be guided by its daily reflection questions. Each day, the questions in this workbook prompt you to “Consider” how each situation that is described in the reading impacted the lives of God’s people in Scripture as well as how the readings inform your own life. The “For Further Reading” section is optional but will provide a broader understanding of each day’s themes.

With great anticipation in Christ,



Richard Kannwischer

CHAPTER 1 – CREATION
WEEK 1: DAY ONE – READING

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

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Today’s reading: Read Chapter 1 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Genesis 1-4; 6-9

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

CHAPTER 1 – CREATION
WEEK 1: DAY TWO

Reflect on: The Story of Creation (Genesis 1-2)

Summary: God shows the incredible nature of his creative ability.

Consider:

What word would you use to describe the God who is revealed in the Creation narrative?

What is a place in creation that reveals God's glory to you and helps you connect with him?

How do you reflect the image of God?

For further reading: Psalm 148; John 1:1-18;
Colossians 1:15-20

Prayer: Father, indeed You are the creator of all things. Help me to see your hand in everything around me. Help me to marvel at your beauty and reflect on your wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 1 – CREATION
WEEK 1: DAY THREE

Reflect on: The Fall (Genesis 3-4)

Summary: By pursuing their story instead of God's story, Adam and Eve enter into sin.

Consider:

The story of the fall indicates that every part of God's good creation was fractured by Adam's and Eve's rebellion. As you observe our world, what evidence do you see that the world was created to be a good and beautiful place?

Where do you see evidence that it is broken by sin?

Adam and Eve rejected God's vision for their lives and declared that they wanted to run their own universe and be their own gods. How do you see that same sinful desire and behavior in your life?

For further reading: Isaiah 14:12-15; Ephesians 6:10-20;
1 Peter 5:8-9

Prayer: Father, help me remember that I live in the midst of a great battle. Help me to see this battle in the great and small choices placed before me every day. In these choices, help me to choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 1 – CREATION
WEEK 1: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: The Flood (Genesis 6-9)

Summary: Due to man’s complete rebellion, God chooses to start again.

Consider:

The flood is both an act of judgment and salvation. How do you see these two activities of God reflected in the story?

How do these themes differ from the “popular” picture of God that is often presented in this passage?

What do you need to do to live like Noah in the midst of dark times?

For further reading: Matthew 5:14-16; Romans 3:10-18; Hebrews 11:7

Prayer: Father, again today we live in dark times. Thank you for sending Jesus as the light. Use me to shine light in this world and make a difference for You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHAPTER 2 – GOD BUILDS A NATION
WEEK 2: DAY ONE – READING

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 2 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Genesis 12-13; 15-17; 21-22; 32-33; 35; Romans 4; Hebrews 11

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

**CHAPTER 2 – GOD BUILDS A NATION
WEEK 2: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: God's Faithfulness (Genesis 12-22)

Summary: God shows himself to be a faithful promise maker and Abraham's test proves he is fully committed to God.

Consider:

What sacrifices has God asked you to make recently? What would it cost you to obey?

God would like you to put away your personal feelings of inadequacy and simply follow. List several ways you can demonstrate your faith in God through obedience and sacrifice.

For further reading: Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19

Prayer: Heavenly Father, instill in me the same kind of faith that moved Abraham to obey when you called him to another place, and helped him follow your commands, even at great loss to himself. Help me to truly know your commands by reading your word and meditating on it. Let me not be deceived by false teachings and misleading instruction. Grant me discernment so I might know the truth from the lie and then give me the ability to follow truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 2 – GOD BUILDS A NATION
WEEK 2: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: God's Plans (Genesis 23-36)

Summary: God's plans will succeed in spite of our shortcomings.

Consider:

How long did Isaac and Rebekah wait for God to give them a child? (See Genesis 25:20 and 25:26) What have you been praying for that seems to be taking a long time to be fulfilled?

What might you do to hurry things along? Why is it better to wait on the Lord's timing?

What price did Jacob pay for his deceitfulness? What lesson can you learn from what he did to his brother and to Laban?

For further reading: Proverbs 19:21

Prayer: Heavenly Father, my timing is so different from yours. Please, help me to look at things as You do. Grant me patience without painful trials. Help me to trust You for the fulfillment of my prayers and not to become weary with waiting. Encourage me in some way. As a human, I need little gifts of encouragement so that I will not give up. Increase my faith so that I might truly trust You, not only with the present but also with my future. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 3 – JOSEPH: SLAVE TO DEPUTY PHARAOH
WEEK 2: DAY FOUR-READING**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 3 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Genesis 37; 39; 41-48; 50

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

**CHAPTER 3 – JOSEPH: SLAVE TO DEPUTY PHARAOH
WEEK 2: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Faithfulness and God's Provision (Genesis 37-49)

Summary: Joseph demonstrates faithfulness to God regardless of circumstances.

Consider:

Think back on your life and any time you were in a struggle between faithfulness and sin. Was there a time when you chose specifically one way or the other? What were the circumstances? How did it turn out? Did the experience bring you closer to God? Or did it place a wedge between the two of you?

While we are worrying and fretting over the concerns of our day-to-day tasks, God is working behind the scenes to take care of our needs. We cannot always see what he is doing. What worries do you have today that you can give to Him?

For further reading: Lamentations 3:22-24; Philippians 4:6-7,

Prayer: Father, thank you for proving your faithfulness to me every day. Help me to choose to be faithful to You, no matter my circumstances. Through the experiences in my life, may we create a history of faithfulness together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 3 – JOSEPH: SLAVE TO DEPUTY PHARAOH
WEEK 2: DAY 6**

Reflect on: Sovereignty (Genesis 50)

Summary: God is sovereign and is working out his plan.

Consider:

Do you have God on a shelf where you can reach him when you want him? Is he stuffed neatly in the closet where you can close the door to keep him from being heard at the wrong times? Or is God at the center of your life?

The Author of your story wants to write each chapter. He wants to watch your character develop in the image of his son. Are you willing to give him permission? God is in control. Will you rest in that?

For further reading: Romans 8:28, Jeremiah 29:11

Prayer: Almighty God, Loving Father, I am humbled by your majesty and might. I am humbled by your sovereignty. I am eternally grateful for your love for me. You always want what is best, and You always know what it is. You always know the best way that it should happen. I want to trust You to work out your will in your way in my life. Help me to do that Lord. Every day. Starting today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 4 – DELIVERANCE
WEEK 3: DAY ONE-READING**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 4 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Exodus 1-7; 10-17

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

CHAPTER 4 – DELIVERANCE
WEEK 3: DAY TWO

Reflect on: God's Choice (Exodus 1-4)

Summary: God chooses an unwilling and unqualified leader in the person of Moses.

Consider:

Because of his privileged Egyptian upbringing, Moses was not liked by the Hebrews. After committing murder, he was exiled from Egypt. By his own admission, he was a poor communicator. He hardly seemed a prime candidate to spearhead Israel's deliverance. Yet God chose Moses. What does that tell you about God's ability to know a person's true potential? What promise did God give Moses to bolster his self-confidence? (See Exodus 3:12)

Have you ever felt unwilling or unqualified to serve or to follow a calling from God? What promise does God give you?

For further reading: 1 Samuel 16:6-13; Isaiah 41:10-13; Acts 4:8-13; 1 Corinthians 12:4-12

Prayer: Holy Spirit, show me what You want me to do for your kingdom. Help me overcome my self-doubt. Give me confidence, knowing that You will be with me every step of the way. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4 – DELIVERANCE
WEEK 3: DAY THREE

Reflect on: God's Provision (Exodus 5-14; 15-17)

Summary: God's deliverance shows his authority over all things and all people. God meets our needs daily to keep us close to him.

Consider

Doesn't it seem unfathomable that with all the miracles Pharaoh witnessed, he still would not concede to God's authority? Have there been times when you've doubted God's authority or questioned why certain things happen? How does this story affirm your belief that God is totally in charge?

It seems as if the Israelites constantly worried about their future, doubting God would provide. Each day the people gathered only enough manna for that day. What lesson was God trying to instill by not allowing them to stockpile? How has God graciously provided for your essential needs?

For further reading: Isaiah 55:8-11; Romans 8:28; Psalm 111; Matthew 6:25-34

Prayer: Sovereign God, thank you for being in charge of my life. I need You today. Help me surrender each moment to You. Amen.

**CHAPTER 5 – NEW COMMANDS & NEW COVENANT
WEEK 3: DAY FOUR-READING**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 5 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Exodus 19-20; 24-25; 32-34; 40

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 5 – NEW COMMANDS & NEW COVENANT
WEEK 3: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-32)

Summary: God's people respond to his commandments, but their obedience is short-lived.

Consider:

God has kept the Israelites through many tough times in Egypt and while escaping slavery. When God gives them his commandments, they respond in one voice saying, *"Everything the Lord has said we will do."* In what ways has God kept you through tough times and struggles? In what ways have you followed God into the unknown like the Israelites into the desert?

Why do you think the Israelites would continue to forget how God kept and protected them? Why would they have the most difficult time keeping the first and second commandments with worshipping idols and other gods?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17
Daniel 3:16-18; Isaiah 40:30-31; Psalm 61

Prayer: Lord, thank you for keeping me and sustaining me in tough times. I pray I will do anything You say and follow You into the unknown in the knowledge that You will protect me and bless me. In your name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 5 – NEW COMMANDS & NEW COVENANT
WEEK 3: DAY SIX**

This reading covers: God’s Presence (Exodus 33-40)

Summary: Moses expresses dependence upon the presence of God

Consider:

Moses proclaims God to be a *“compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”*

Where have you seen God exhibit these qualities in your own life?

Moses’ face is radiant because he has spoken with the Lord. After speaking with God, how has your life been changed? Can people see this change just as they could see Moses’ glowing face?

For further reading: Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your compassion and grace. Thank you for your love and faithfulness. Please take away my sin and help me to leave a legacy of righteousness to my children and grandchildren. Please have people see the radiance in my face after speaking to You. Please let them see the way You change me. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

**CHAPTER 6 – WANDERING
WEEK 4: DAY ONE-READING**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 6 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Numbers 10-14; 20-21; 25; 27; Deuteronomy 1-2; 4; 6; 8-9; 29-32; 34

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 6 – WANDERING
WEEK 4: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Ingratitude and rebellion (Numbers 10-25)

Summary: God's people continually complain about their circumstances and refuse to enter the Promised Land.

Consider:

The Israelites complained about the food, the journey, the lack of water. Miriam and Aaron complained about Moses and his Cushite wife. What do you continually complain about? What was God's reaction to the Israelites' complaints? What can you do to eliminate the complaints in your life?

Consider a time when you missed God's blessing because you doubted his word. Perhaps you are standing at a crossroads right now. If God is calling you to move, what's the delay?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Hebrews 11; 13:5-6

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for all You have given me: the blessings, because they are more than I ever could have imagined, and the afflictions, because they are less than I deserve. They have brought me closer to You. Whenever I start to complain, bring to my mind the example of the Israelites. Help me to be grateful in all situations and to bring honor to your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 6 – WANDERING
WEEK 4: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Moses' Final Days (Numbers 27 and Deuteronomy 1-34)

Summary: Moses reminds the people of what is before them; the choice of life or death.

Consider:

One of God's greatest reminders appears many times in Scripture. He focuses on the main reason we hesitate. Fear. He repeats over and over again in Scripture, "*Fear not.*" Are you up to the challenge? As you stand at the threshold, can you step ahead with confidence? Can you envision the blessing that awaits you on the other side?

For further reading: Numbers 14:1-9; Hebrews 10:35-39

Prayer: Heavenly Father, fear is my greatest enemy right now. It comes from within. That is where You must work – within me, to eliminate fear and to instill a boldness that will move me to obey You, no matter what the cost. Deal mercifully with me, Lord, as I choose to obey You. Pave the way. Make my paths straight. Grant me the assurance I need to continue on. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 7 – THE BATTLE BEGINS
WEEK 4: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 7 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Joshua 1-2; 6; 8; 10-11; 23-24

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you

**CHAPTER 7 – THE BATTLE BEGINS
WEEK: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: God's Reputation with Rahab (Joshua 1-2)

Summary: Rahab demonstrates that God is well-known for what he has done.

Consider:

How did Rahab know about the God of the Israelites? What specific details did she know?

What evidence of God do people around you see in your life? What can you do to help them see God as the Savior he is?

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 2:4-16

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are mighty to save. Thank you for witnessing in the lives of Christians. Like the children of Israel long ago, will You make yourself known through me to those around me? In Jesus' name, Amen

**CHAPTER 8 – A FEW GOOD MEN...AND WOMEN
WEEK 5: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: One Generation (Judges 2-3)

Summary: Our faith truly is only one generation away from extinction.

Consider: We read a startling revelation, *“After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”* What responsibility does God place on you to insure that the next generation grows up learning about Him?

Who did God place in your life to serve as a Christ-like model for you, and to whom are you an example?

For further reading: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Mark 10:13-16; 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for trusting me to be your hands and feet to others. By my teaching and by my example, help me foster in them a love for You that will last a lifetime. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 8 – A FEW GOOD MEN...AND WOMEN
WEEK 5: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: **Willing But Unqualified** (Judges 4-8; Judges 13-16)

Summary: God shows Himself strong when we allow Him to work through us. Although Samson was gifted by God, his heart was not fully devoted to Him.

Consider:

Take a moment to think about God's purpose for your life. Can you identify with Gideon, who asked for signs and proof before committing? Are there areas in your life where God is calling you to step out in faith?

What can we learn from seeing the results of Samson's sinful lifestyle? In the end, Samson was given his strength back, resulting in the defeat of Israel's enemy. What did Samson do to receive God's help?

For further reading: Proverbs 16:3; Isaiah 26:1-8; Mark 10:23-27; Hebrews 11

Prayer: God, today and every day use me for your purpose. Through your Spirit, give me confidence to know that with your help I can accomplish your goals. In Jesus name, I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 9 – THE FAITH OF A FOREIGN WOMAN
WEEK 5: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 9 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Ruth 1-4

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 9 – THE FAITH OF A FOREIGN WOMAN
WEEK 5: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Commitment (Ruth 1-4:13)

Summary: The book of Ruth paints a beautiful picture of absolute commitment. Boaz shows selflessness in carrying out his family responsibilities.

Consider:

Ruth does not leave Naomi during her darkest time. What does this show about Ruth's character? When was a seemingly hopeless time in your life that God showed up and did something surprising and unexpected?

How does Ruth's example challenge you to grow as a faithful follower of Jesus?

How does Boaz serve as an Old Testament picture of Jesus?

For Further Reading: Philippians 2:1-11; Romans 5:1-5

Prayer: Lord, please make me as faithful and consistent with my character as Ruth. Thank you for my friends and family who have this same level of commitment and love. Thank you in Jesus name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 9 – THE FAITH OF A FOREIGN WOMAN
WEEK 5: DAY SIX**

Reflect on: God’s Story (Ruth 4:13-22)

Summary: The end of Ruth’s story reminds us of the ongoing nature of *The Story*.

Consider:

Ruth and Boaz had a son named Obed who was the grandfather of David and an ancestor of the Messiah, Jesus. What does this blessing to Naomi tell you about what happens when God restores us?

Why do you think the eventual line of Jesus was born out of this story? Even Jesus had ancestors with tough times and famines in their life stories.

Can you recognize some similarities with your story and the story of Jesus’ family?

For Further Reading: Luke 1:26-33; Galatians 3:26-29

Prayer: Jesus, thank you that You can relate to the times of darkness in my life. Your family had tough times but God continued to give them a hope and a future. Help me see your light; that it would be a hope and a future in my times of struggle and darkness. Thank you for being intertwined in my story. Amen.

**CHAPTER 10 – STANDING TALL, FALLING HARD
WEEK 6: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 10 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 1-4; 8-13; 15

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 10 – STANDING TALL, FALLING HARD
WEEK 6: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Hearing God (1 Samuel 1-4)

Summary: Samuel needed help learning to hear the voice of God.

Consider:

Three times the Lord called on Samuel and three times the boy ran to Eli the priest. The fourth time, Samuel responded instead to God. How can we recognize when God is calling us to service, and what is our source of confirmation?

What can we learn about communicating with God as we see Samuel's story unfold?

For further reading: Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your word in Scripture. Help me to use it for guidance, for restoration and for praising You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 10 – STANDING TALL, FALLING HARD
WEEK 6: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Following the Crowd (1 Samuel 8-15)

Summary: God's people reject him as their leader so they can be like everyone else.

Consider:

The Israelites wanted to be like everyone else. They wanted a king to rule them instead of God. Think about a situation in which you made a choice to please others while your choice obviously would displease God.

Saul became afraid when Samuel didn't show up to make a sacrifice before a great battle, so he decided not to wait. He made the sacrifice, even though this was outside the Lord's will. Saul was acting out of impatience. Like Saul, we sometimes get ahead of God even though it is contrary to His word and His call. When have you done this?

God's desire is to reveal his presence, power, and plan to the world and thus restore people's relationship with him. How do you see God reveal these things in this chapter?

For further reading: Matthew 6:24; James 4:4-10

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is so easy to be a people pleaser. But so often that is a choice that leads us farther away from You. Help me draw near to You so that You will draw near to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 11 – FROM SHEPHERD TO KING
WEEK 6: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 11 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 16-18; 24; 31; 2 Samuel 6; 22; 1 Chronicles 17; Psalm 59

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 11 – FROM SHEPHERD TO KING
WEEK 6: DAY FIVE**

This reading covers: David Chosen (1 Samuel 16-17)

Summary: God looks into the heart and chooses David as the future king.

Consider:

God sees directly into our hearts and can judge our motives. Think of someone with whom you have a hard time. Perhaps you are angry at this person or persons and consider them to be an adversary at work or in the family. The best way to change our hearts toward another is to honestly and sincerely pray for that person. Not about that person, but for that person.

Make sure your prayer has nothing to do with changing the one with whom you struggle. In fact, it is a good thing to ask God to change you.

For further reading: Psalm 139

Prayer: Father today I want to pray for _____. I ask that You would bring great blessing into their life today. I pray for your peace upon them. I pray for a rich anointing for the job that they have to do. Rain grace down upon _____. Help me, Lord, to learn all I need to learn. Teach me how to see others through your eyes. Change my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 11 – FROM SHEPHERD TO KING
WEEK 6: DAY SIX**

Reflect on: David Honors God (1 Samuel 18, 19, 24, 31; 2 Samuel 6, 22; 1 Chronicles 17; Psalm 59)

Summary: David expresses his faith that God will protect him from Saul. David cares for the ark. God promises a son will succeed him.

Consider:

David had his share of struggles and sin. Through it all he was a man who sought after God’s heart. What are the things that tend to distract your heart and pull it away from God?

Many of God’s children had long seasons of waiting (often in tough times and sometimes in a desert). How can God use times of waiting and challenging seasons of life to prepare us for our future?

For further reading: Psalm 59; Esther 4:9-17; 2 Peter 3:8

Prayer: Father, help me to know when to act and when to wait. I want You to be in control, but sometimes I move ahead. Keep me from moving forward with things that need time. Keep me from getting ahead of You, Lord. Help me to have the faith I need that You will take care of me and the circumstances that surround me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 12 – TRIALS OF A KING
WEEK 7: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 12 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 2 Samuel 11-12; 18-19; 1 Chronicles 22; 29; Psalms 23; 32; 51

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 12 – TRIALS OF A KING
WEEK 7: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Repentance and Forgiveness (2 Samuel 11-12; 18; Psalm 32; 51)

Summary: David repents after realizing the depth of his sin and expresses gratitude for God's forgiveness (Psalm 32 & 51).

Consider:

What were some of the consequences of David's sins? Despite how our sin affects others, why is sin first and foremost an offense against God?

God used the prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin. What should our role be regarding accountability with fellow Christians?

Have you ever been negligent in expressing your thankfulness to God for his gifts of salvation and forgiveness? Spend some time thanking God for some specific ways he has forgiven you.

For further reading: Psalm 103; Isaiah 59:1-3; Matthew 18:21-35; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:1-3; 1 John 1:9-10

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I come before You acknowledging those things I have done that separate me from You. I am sorry. Through the death and resurrection of Your Son on my behalf, I ask for forgiveness. In His name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 12 – TRIALS OF A KING
WEEK 7: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Trust (1 Chronicles 22, 29; Psalm 23)

Summary: David communicates his trust in God (Psalm 23).

Consider:

Do you sense that as David's life was coming to an end, he felt closer to God than he ever had?

One way he showed his joy and trust in God was with generous giving. Do you have a generous heart when it comes to giving back to God?

How do the words of Psalm 23 reinforce your certainty of God's protection and provision every day?

For further reading: Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Prayer: God, thank you so much for the generous way in which You care for me. Like David, I trust You as my protector, shepherd and the provider of all my needs. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

**CHAPTER 13 – THE KING WHO HAD IT ALL
WEEK 7: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 13 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 1 Kings 1-8; 10-11; 2 Chronicles 5-7; Proverbs 1-3; 6; 20-21

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 13 – THE KING WHO HAD IT ALL
WEEK 7: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Solomon the Wise (1 Kings 1-4; 10-11; Proverbs 1-3, 6, 20-21)

Summary: Solomon chose wisdom and thought he had it all, though his heart turned away from God.

Consider:

When God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask him for anything, Solomon asked God to give him a discerning, understanding heart. What do you long for God to give you?

Solomon had it all, but foreign wives turned his heart from God. What has the potential of pulling you away from following God? What are you doing to keep that from happening?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Ephesians 1:15-17; James 1:5-8; 3:13-18

Prayer: Father, truly give me the gift of your wisdom. Help me to live each day with a discerning and understanding heart. Help me to keep my heart fully turned to You. Continue to guide and direct my steps. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 13 – THE KING WHO HAD IT ALL
WEEK 7: DAY FIVE**

This reading covers: God Fills His Temple (1 Kings 5-9;
2 Chronicles 5-7)

Summary: God comes to live among his people.

Consider:

The Bible says that fire came down and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. How would you have responded to this? How do you relate this to the New Testament understanding that we are the Temple of God?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:19-22

Prayer: Father, You chose to live among the people of Israel by residing in the Temple. Today, You choose to live among us by residing in our lives. Help me to honor your presence by the way I live. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 14 – KINGDOM TORN IN TWO
WEEK 8: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 14 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 1 Kings 12-16

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

**CHAPTER 14 – KINGDOM TORN IN TWO
WEEK 8: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: The Big Split (1 Kings 12-13)

Summary: Discord sets in and God's people turn against each other.

Consider:

In their wisdom, the elders told Rehoboam that if he served the nation, the people would gladly follow him. Jesus modeled this truth in the New Testament when he washed the disciples' feet (John 13). How can serving with a humble heart make a person a stronger leader?

Who is one person God is calling you to serve this week?

For further reading: Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-16

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I don't always see what is behind the decisions our leaders make. Help me to live up to the laws and ordinances, while always keeping in mind that I am to obey You first, then man. Bless our leaders in government. Help them to make righteous decisions that will protect our nation and help our citizens. Bless those who are leaders in the church. Guide their plans for expansion and outreach. Help me to be an effective part of the ministry. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 14 – KINGDOM TORN IN TWO
WEEK 8: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Fight to the Bottom (1 Kings 14-16)

Summary: Both Israel (northern tribes) and Judah turn their hearts away from God. How could two men (Asa of Judah and Ahab of Israel) be so different?

Consider:

Turning away from God can happen in two ways, through sins of "commission" and sins of "omission." What are some sins of "commission?" What are sins of "omission?"

Asa reigned forty-one years over Judah and did right before God, just as his ancestor David had. Next, Ahab became king over Israel for twenty-two years. He built an altar to Baal and took an evil, heathen wife named Jezebel. In your own life, when have you chosen to do things your own way? What have you learned from your experiences?

For further reading: Matthew 25:41-45; Colossians 3:5-10; 1 John 3:17-18

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make me aware of the various ways I can sin, either by commission or by omission. Help me to avoid the pitfalls. Give me discernment in areas that are not clear, always keeping me aware of what the Scriptures say about these areas. Give me strength to obey your word, to flee from sin, and make me aware of the needs of my fellow man. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 15 – GOD’S MESSENGERS
WEEK 8: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 15 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2; 4; 6; Hosea 4-5; 8-9; 14; Amos 1; 3-5; 9

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 15 – GOD’S MESSENGERS
WEEK 8: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Make a Choice (1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2; 4-6)

Summary: Elijah calls God’s people to choose who they will follow. Elijah demonstrates the power of God at a community-wide sacrifice. His intention is to bring the people to a once-and-for-all realization that God is God, and there is no other. Elisha prayed that his servant would see the power of God around him.

Consider:

Elijah’s demonstration is visually impacting. Does God have to toss a miracle into the mix from time to time to get your attention? Or do you hear Him in the gentle whisper as Elijah did?

Elisha not only desired to see God around him, he wanted others to see God through him. Whatever you are facing today is an opportunity to see God’s power and to reveal it to others. What do others discover about God by looking at you?

For further reading: 1 Kings 19:11-13; Ephesians 1:18-19

Prayer: Dear God, every day I have to make many choices. Today, when I am asked to choose, help me to choose You above all things. Give me wisdom and discernment, that I may hear You in the whispers of Your presence, even amid the noise of this world. Help me to cultivate that quiet time with You. Help me to recognize your voice. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 15 – GOD’S MESSENGERS
WEEK 8: DAY SIX**

Reflect on: Unheeded Words (Amos; Hosea)

Summary: God sends prophets calling his people to repent; but they don’t listen.

Consider:

Maybe you are still wondering about this journey of faith and considering the first step of your walk with Christ. Maybe you are brand new, taking baby steps with this first-time study of the Word of God. Or you could be a seasoned believer, challenging yourself with a daily time with God. No matter your place on the path, your journey has involved others. Write below the people who have impacted your walk with the Lord and the people you hope to impact. Spend some time praying for those you listed.

For further reading: Romans 10:9-13

Prayer: Father I am so grateful that so many of your followers are not quiet about You. I am thankful that someone talked to me. I pray today that You would give me a loving boldness to speak of You to others. I ask that I would have the courage to proclaim You in this dark world, and to encourage those who need You. Help me to see opportunity and to not pass it up. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 16 – THE BEGINNING OF THE END
WEEK 9: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 16 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 2 Kings 17-19; Isaiah 3; 6; 13-14; 49; 53

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

**CHAPTER 16 – THE BEGINNING OF THE END
WEEK 9: DAY TWO**

This reading covers: Captivity and God's Battle (2 Kings 17-19)

Summary: Captivity begins as a result of the continued unfaithfulness of God's people. Hezekiah sees the threat against him but allows God to fight his battles.

Consider:

Idol worship was Israel's downfall. A definition of idolatry is excessive devotion to, or worship of, an object or ideal. What are some false gods people worship today?

The king of Assyria blasphemed God (with dire consequences) and taunted the people of Judah about their trust in him. Think about what it means to live for Christ. Defeat seemed certain for King Hezekiah, but instead of surrendering to the enemy he surrendered himself to God, the only one who could help him. What lessons can we take from Hezekiah as we face life's problems?

For further reading: 1 John 2:15-17; Psalm 25:16-22; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:16-18; 1 Peter 4:12-16

Prayer: Father God, help me make You the core of my life – to always try to do right in your eyes. I ask this in your Son's name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 16 – THE BEGINNING OF THE END
WEEK 9: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Words to Live By (Isaiah 3, 6, 14, 49, 53)

Summary: Through Isaiah, God speaks words of judgment, hope and salvation.

Consider:

The prophet Isaiah spoke to the people of Judah who lived between 740 and 680 BC, but many of his poetic words are as relevant as ever. How did the people of that time react to his words of warning and promise? What can we learn from them today?

Underline a verse or two from today's reading that speaks to you. Have you ever thought about the fact that God planned for Christ's death as a means of salvation thousands of years before it happened? How does reading the prophecies of Isaiah confirm that truth?

For Further Reading: 2 Peter 1:12-21

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me your words of hope and salvation spoken through the prophet Isaiah. Thank you for the Savior that he announced. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 17 – THE KINGDOM’S FALL
WEEK 9: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 17 of *The Story*

This reading covers: 2 Kings 21; 23-25; 2 Chronicles 33; 36; Jeremiah 1-2; 4-5; 13; 21; Lamentations 1-3; 5; Ezekiel 1-2; 6-7; 36-37

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you:

**CHAPTER 17 – THE KINGDOM’S FALL
WEEK 9: DAY FIVE**

This reading covers: Rebellious to the End (2 Kings 21-25; 2 Chronicles 33; 36; Ezekiel 1-2, 6-7; Jeremiah 1-5, 13, 21)

Summary: God’s people refuse to return to him. All hope is lost as God’s judgment comes to pass on his people.

Consider:

What is it about us that keeps us from turning to God? Why do we continue down the path of rebellion, even when we know the consequences?

In what area of your life do you need to change direction?

For further reading: Deuteronomy 31:24-29; Psalm 25:4-7; Ezekiel 2; Matthew 12:33-37; Revelation 20:11-15

Prayer: Father, point out any rebellion toward You in my life. Allow me to hear your words of correction and challenge. Thank you for providing a way for me to return to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 17 – THE KINGDOM’ FALL
WEEK 9: DAY SIX**

Reflect on: Future Hope (Lamentations; Ezekiel 36-37)

Summary: Even as God’s judgment is carried out, his prophets bring words of restoration.

Consider:

Even after He punishes His people, God reaches out to them and promises to restore them. He is still pursuing them for a relationship. God pursues you with the same passion and determination. How have you experienced His pursuit of you?

How do the themes addressed in the prophetic passages confront the church in America?

For further reading: Psalm 30:1-5

Prayer: Father, how incredible it is to realize the extent of your love for me. How amazing to recognize how much You pursue me. Thank you! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 18 – DANIEL IN EXILE
WEEK 10: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 18 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Daniel 1-3; 6; Jeremiah 29-31

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 18 – DANIEL IN EXILE
WEEK 10: DAY TWO**

This reading covers: Position & Faithfulness (Daniel 1-6)

Summary: God shows his sovereignty by placing his people where he wants them to be. Four of God's chosen ones show faithfulness regardless of circumstances

Consider:

When Daniel and his three friends became prisoners of war, they were pressured to change many things as part of their "training" process. What concessions were they willing to make and where did they draw the line? Why did they draw the line where they did?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came through the fire as though not burned. How does God say we'll be after our own fiery trials? What events in your own life have created an opportunity for taking a stand?

For further reading: Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 43:1-4

Prayer: Father, thank you for your place above all things. You truly are working out your plan for all time. I know I can defer my ways to your ways. Help me to be bold and follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 18 – DANIEL IN EXILE
WEEK 10: DAY THREE**

This reading covers: Restoration (Jeremiah 29-31)

Summary: Even as his people experience captivity, God sends words of hope.

Consider:

Captivity can take different forms. It doesn't have to involve exile in a foreign land. Nor does it have to be a prison with physical bars and locks. It can be an exile into the recesses of one's own heart. And the bonds that keep us there can be just as strong as real-life chains.

Name a form of captivity that has imprisoned you at one time or another. How long were you held captive? How did God's Word help to release you from bondage? What other resources did you have?

For further reading: Acts 12:5-10; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1

Prayer: Father, You have made it possible for me to be free because of Jesus Christ. Thank you for this incredible truth. Help me to live with joy in this new life that You have given me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 19 – THE RETURN HOME
WEEK 10: DAY FOUR**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 19 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Ezra 1-6; Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1; 8

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 19 – THE RETURN HOME
WEEK 10: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Time to Return (Ezra 1-6)

Summary: God uses a pagan king to call his people to return to their homeland. With the help of a foreign king, the temple is completed.

Consider:

King Cyrus was not a believer in God. In your journey with God or toward God, can you recall people or circumstances that profoundly impacted your journey, even though the people were not believers, nor the circumstances joyful? Thank God for his plan and his presence even in the difficult circumstances.

The difficult, costly, time-consuming task of rebuilding the temple King Solomon first erected was completed, and a celebration was planned. What do you need to celebrate today?

For further reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Romans 8:28

Prayer: Heavenly Father I am so grateful once again. I know that You see the big picture of my story long before I see the end of a chapter. I thank you for the people and circumstances You have allowed in my life to draw me closer to You, even when it doesn't seem good at the time. I want to trust You with your purpose and your will. Strengthen my faith and grow my trust. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 20 – THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY & COURAGE
WEEK 11: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Made to be Queen (Esther 1-2)

Summary: God's sovereignty puts Esther on the throne.

Consider:

What were some of the seemingly "chance" circumstances that led to Esther becoming queen?

Have there been circumstances in your life that at the time seemed inconsequential? Did they turn out to be pivotal in your growth as a Christian or your opportunity to advance God's kingdom?

Think about the places where you currently connect with others – in the work place, your neighborhood, your church, your circle of friends, even your family. Are you open and willing to be used by God for His purpose?

For further reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

Prayer: Lord, help me take notice of relationships and events You place before me. Help me discern if circumstances are indeed opportunities for your purpose. Help me see your hand in everything I do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 20 – THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY & COURAGE
WEEK 11: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Enemy (Esther 3-4)

Summary: Haman sets out to destroy God's people.

Consider:

Mordecai refused to bow down to (worship) anyone or anything besides the God of Israel. What are some situations today that might call for you to make a public declaration of your faith?

What were some of the cultural norms and laws that came into play in this chapter of *The Story* (for Vashti, Haman, the Jews) and why is it important for believers today to understand our culture as we seek to be God's presence in the world?

For further reading: Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Peter 3:13-17

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the never ending love and protection You give to those who call you Lord. Give us the conviction of Mordecai to stand firm in our faith. Help us to be a church of compassionate believers striving to make a difference. We ask this in the name of Christ our Savior, Amen.

**CHAPTER 20 – THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY & COURAGE
WEEK 11: DAY FOUR**

Reflect On: A Time as This (Esther 5-9)

Summary: Esther's courage results in the salvation of her people.

Consider:

Have you ever wondered why God might select you to accomplish His will? Does the success story of Esther – who had the disadvantage of being a female at a time in history when females had little importance, was an orphan and a Jew living in exile in a foreign land – make you reconsider?

God chose Esther to save an entire nation, and He still uses the weak and the insignificant, armed with His strength and protection, to change the world. What are you facing right now that demands courage?

For further reading: Psalm 121; Isaiah 41:8-13; Acts 4:1-13

Prayer: Dear Father, You know my fears, my weaknesses and my worries. I don't know how I can face these obstacles alone. Please be with me. Make me brave. Even though I feel insignificant, use me for your purpose. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 20 – THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY & COURAGE
WEEK 11: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Themes of Esther (Esther 1-10)

Summary: As our story of Esther unfolds, we see anti-Semitism in its worst form. But we also see God's amazing provision for His people.

Consider:

Spend some time meditating on this passage. Commit this verse to memory:

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. John 16:33

How often have you used prayer and fasting when faced with a crisis? Consider an issue in your life that God may be prompting you to surrender to Him. Would you be willing to fast about it? Who might hold you accountable to doing this?

For further reading: Romans 8:35, 37; Matthew 5:21-22; John 15:18-19

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that You are so much more powerful than the powers of darkness in this world. Give me the courage to fast and pray when fear overwhelms me. In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHAPTER 21 – REBUILDING THE WALLS
WEEK 12: DAY ONE

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 21 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Ezra 7; Nehemiah 1-2; 4; 6-8; Malachi 1-4

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

CHAPTER 21 – REBUILDING THE WALLS
WEEK 12: DAY TWO

Reflect on: A Heart for God (Ezra 7; Nehemiah 1-2)

Summary: God uses a foreign king and the heart of Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem.

Consider:

Ezra had devoted himself to studying God's Word and following what it teaches. How did Ezra's commitment to God's Word shape his life and ministry?

Why is it so important that we do more than just know the content of the Bible but actually obey what the Bible teaches?

For further reading: Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Jeremiah 18:1-4; Romans 12:1-2

Prayer: Father, turn my heart towards You. I want to be available to You to respond according to your will. Use me for your purposes. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 21 – REBUILDING THE WALLS
WEEK 12: DAY THREE

Reflect on: Committed to Completion (Nehemiah 4-6)

Summary: In spite of opposition, the people stay focused on the task before them.

Consider:

God wants to use you to accomplish his purposes, but the path ahead won't always be easy. How do you respond when things don't go as planned?

How quickly do you give up when there are obstacles in your way?

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; Philippians 3:12-14

Prayer: Father, how incredible to realize that You invite me to be part of what You are doing. Help me stay focused on your plans and give me the courage and determination to see things through to the end. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 21 – REBUILDING THE WALLS
WEEK 12: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: Rebuilding Hearts (Nehemiah 7-8; Malachi 1-4)

Summary: The walls were completed, but the people's hearts were in disrepair.

Consider:

God's people took care of the Temple and the walls, but their hearts were still in bad shape. When it comes to the internal issues of the heart, we must learn we are dependent on God's help. How does your life look – "together" on the outside but broken on the inside?

Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament. He challenged the people to give God their first and best, not their last and leftovers. What are some ways you give God your leftovers?

For further reading: Psalm 51:7-12; Ezekiel 36:24-27; Matthew 9:4-8

Prayer: Father, take my heart and make it fully yours. Continue to mold and shape me, from the inside out, into the person You want me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 22 – THE BIRTH OF THE KING
WEEK 13: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: God from the Beginning (Matthew 1; Luke 1-2; John 1)

Summary: Though He is God from the beginning, Jesus comes to us by a very humble birth.

Consider:

The dichotomy of Christ: He is God and was involved in creation. He humbled himself and came to earth as a human baby, frail and subject to all the trials and tribulations we experience. How does this example humble you so that you can worship Him as He deserves?

Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). In what situation do you need to be reminded that God is with you?

For further reading: John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Luke 1:30-31; Philippians 2:6-8

Prayer: Read aloud Mary's prayer of praise to God seen in Luke 1:46-55. Use this as your closing prayer.

**CHAPTER 22 – THE BIRTH OF THE KING
WEEK 13: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Another King? (Matthew 2)

Summary: Jesus' birth caused quite a stir in the Roman world.

Consider:

In what ways did Jesus' birth create a stir in your life?

How did His entrance into your world drastically change your life?

What detail of the birth of Christ has always particularly captured you?

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Galatians 2:20-21

Prayer: Jesus' coming into my world has changed everything! Thank you for giving me a sense of peace and purpose. Thank you for your strength and presence. I pray I will never be the same! In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 22 – THE BIRTH OF THE KING
WEEK 13: DAY FOUR**

This reading covers: Jesus as a Boy (Luke 2)

Summary: The Bible gives us a brief glimpse into Jesus' childhood.

Consider:

Read Philippians 2:5-8. Jesus was with God and chose to come to earth. But He didn't come as the King of kings and Lord of lords. How did He come to earth? What role did He assume? How far did He go in being obedient to God?

What does this communicate regarding the way we are to live our lives? (See Philippians 2:1-4)

For further reading: John 21:24-25

Prayer: Father, I'm grateful that Jesus experienced all of life from birth to death. Because of this, I know He knows what I'm going through. Thank you for loving me so much. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 22 – THE BIRTH OF THE KING
WEEK 13: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: Themes from Chapter 22

Summary: Jesus comes from eternity to earth and He comes as one of us.

Consider:

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What is an important difference between Jesus and you?

What benefit is there to our knowing that Jesus came the way He did? How does reflecting upon the nature of his coming change the way you identify with Him?

Prayer: Thank you so much for coming to live among us. As I come to You, I have full confidence that You understand what I am going through. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 23 – JESUS’ MINISTRY BEGINS
WEEK 14: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 23 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Matthew 3-4; 11; Mark 1-3; Luke 8; John 1-4

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 23 – JESUS’ MINISTRY BEGINS
WEEK 14: DAY TWO**

This reading covers: Lamb of God (Matthew 3-4; John 1-2)

Summary: John the Baptist reveals Jesus to the world. John the Baptist called Jesus “*The Lamb of God*” as a picture of the sacrificial system God had ordained so long ago. Jesus, the Lamb of God, would be sacrificed once and for all.

Consider:

From the following list, choose one name for Jesus that speaks to you today. How do you need Him to minister to you today? How has He shown himself to you in the past?

Names for Jesus: *Word, Living Water, Bread of Life, Shepherd, Savior, Prince of Peace, Light of the World, Lord, Alpha and Omega, Redeemer, Master, Friend, Messiah.*

For further reading: Use the concordance found in the back of many traditional Bibles, or go to **biblegateway.com** to find some verses where that name appears. Look up your chosen name for Jesus by typing it into the search bar on the Web page. Verses will appear that contain this name. Reading some of the verses will make this aspect of Christ’s character more alive to you.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you today that you are my _____. (fill in the blank with the name you have chosen) Reveal this aspect of who You are to me today and help me show You to others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 23 – JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS
WEEK 14: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: A New Birth (John 3)

Summary: Jesus' radical message about being born again. This portion of our reading contains one of the most frequently quoted Bible verses in all of scripture (John 3:16).

Consider:

Being born again is a personal experience. Look up John 3:16 and make it personal in your journal. It will look something like this: *"For God so loved me that He gave his only son, that if I believe in Him I shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Who introduced you to Jesus? Did they talk to you about Christ first, or did you notice something about them that drew you nearer to them and through them opened your eyes to Christ?

For further reading: Matthew 16:24-26

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your son. Thank you for getting personal with me, so that I might understand my need, and your great gift. Please give me the opportunity to share with someone how they can be born again. Help me to be bold with your message of salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 23 – JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS
WEEK 14: DAY FOUR**

Reflect on: Among the People (Matthew 4, 11; Mark 1-3; John 4)

Summary: Reading Jesus' story reminds us that ministry happens among the people.

Consider:

Jesus' power, compassion and love are shown through his people. What can you do today, this weekend, to help someone else? Where do you serve? If you don't serve, it is time to put feet to your heart.

Read Matthew 4:18-21. Whom did Jesus call? Who were these men? What did they do? And how did they react when Jesus told them to come? Now read Mark 2:13-14. Who else did Jesus call? And what was Levi's job? Does it surprise you that Jesus chose such ordinary men?

For further reading: Matthew 20:20-28; John 13:34-35; Philippians 4:9

Prayer: Father, thank you for those who serve me. I pray that You would help me to be a servant to others. Make me aware of opportunities, and give me a boldness to step out in obedience to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 23 – JESUS’ MINISTRY BEGINS
WEEK 14: DAY FIVE

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 23

Summary: John the Baptist reveals Jesus to the world and Jesus starts his ministry by caring for people. He calls his disciples to follow Him and learn his ways.

Consider:

In the culture of the day, fishermen and tax collectors were not expected to learn much. Does it surprise you that all these men followed Jesus without question? Why do you think they did?

What challenges have you faced in learning to follow Jesus?

Prayer: Thank you God for your indescribable gift and for your grace, given freely, that I might know Jesus. Help me to know Him better. Help me to reveal Him more to others. Give me opportunities to serve and share, the wisdom to recognize those opportunities when they come, and the boldness to do as you ask. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHAPTER 24 – NO ORDINARY MAN
WEEK 15: DAY ONE

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today’s reading: Read Chapter 24 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Matthew 5-7; 9; 14; Mark 4-6; Luke 10; 15; John 6

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

CHAPTER 24 – NO ORDINARY MAN
WEEK 15: DAY TWO

Reflect on: Teacher (Matthew 5-7; Mark 4; Luke 10, 15)

Summary: Jesus teaches in everyday language so people can understand.

Consider:

Jesus' parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son all convey one truth: God seeks after what is lost. Why would this have been such a radical concept to those religious leaders schooled in the law?

When asked how to pray, Jesus gave his disciples a succinct example. What themes does Jesus call us to include in our prayers and how can his words move us to a deeper place of prayer?

For further reading: Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 4:2-6

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I love You. I thank you for the spiritual truths you so clearly give to all *“who would have ears to hear.”* Help me love my neighbor. Thank you for the privilege of being able to talk to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 24 – NO ORDINARY MAN
WEEK 15: DAY THREE

Reflect on: Miracle Man (Matthew 9, 14; Mark 4-6)

Summary: Jesus performs miracles that show who He is.

Consider:

What is your definition of the word miracle?

Besides healing, what other benefits did the recipients of Jesus' miracles receive?

What benefits can you receive from reading about Jesus' miracles?

For further reading: Psalm 77; John 10:22-30; Acts 2:22-24

Prayer: Savior King, I stand amazed at the miracles You performed while You were here on earth. Thank you for the miracles You still perform today in and around my life. Thank you for rescuing me from my sin. Amen.

**CHAPTER 24 – NO ORDINARY MAN
WEEK 15: DAY FOUR**

Reflect on: Hard Teaching (John 6)

Summary: The crowds followed because of food, but Jesus is the bread of life.

Consider:

For some, Jesus was merely entertainment or someone they hoped would become an earthly king. He astounded them with his interpretations of the law and his miracles, but they somehow missed the big picture: He was the Messiah! Why did Jesus compare himself to the manna of his listeners' ancestors?

What do Jesus' symbolic words, "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,*" mean to you? What significance does the Lord's Supper hold for every Christ-follower?

For further reading: Deuteronomy 8:1-5; Luke 4:1-4

Prayer: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that You are the Holy One of God.*" I hunger and thirst for You, dear Jesus. Fulfill me and sustain me as I grow in my relationship with You. Amen.

**CHAPTER 24 – NO ORDINARY MAN
WEEK 15: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: The Themes from Chapter 24

Summary: The teachings and miracles of Jesus changed forever the people who personally encountered Him. Some walked away empty, but many others received the gift of eternal life.

Consider:

Jesus taught using real-life situations as occasions to communicate deep spiritual truths. Why is this an effective way to teach?

Jesus is the Master Teacher and that makes every Christian a student. What is one area of your life in which you feel God wants you to become a humble student and learn from Him?

Prayer: Father God, thank so much for all your Son came to earth to give us: a fulfilled life now, and an eternity of unimaginable joy with You to come. Give me insight as I study the teachings of our Rabbi Jesus' life. May I always hunger and thirst for your Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 25 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD
WEEK 16: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 25 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Matthew 17; 21; Mark 8-12; 14; Luke 9; 22; John 7-8; 11-12

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 25 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD
WEEK 16: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: You are the Christ (Matthew 16-17; Mark 8-9; John 7-8)

Summary: Peter's words clearly express the truth about who Jesus is.

Consider:

In an encounter with Peter, Jesus gave a description of the Son of Man (Mark 8:31-33). What things did Jesus say He would do? How did Peter respond?

Jesus' response to Peter was very strong! What had Peter done wrong, and how was Jesus' response an act of love?

For further reading: John 1:29-34; 11:21-27

Prayer: Father, thank you for Peter's clear declaration of Jesus. Help me to stand and state clearly that Jesus is the Christ! In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 25 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD
WEEK 16: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: True Life (Mark 10; John 11)

Summary: Life is not the absence of death, but the presence of Jesus.

Consider:

Lazarus had died and Jesus raised him from the dead. In this encounter Jesus declared that He was “the resurrection and life.” What was Jesus claiming about himself and why did it matter at that time?

In what ways have you experienced the deep and lasting life that Jesus offered?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58;
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Prayer: Father, thank you for making true life available to me through Jesus Christ. Help me to see the temporary nature of all that is around me, and help me to focus on things that are eternal. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 25 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD
WEEK 16: DAY FOUR**

Reflect on: Clear Purpose (Matthew 21; Mark 11-14; Luke 22; John 12)

Summary: Jesus came for one reason.

Consider:

Jesus knew his purpose and He lived it out to the fullest. For many, these questions about purpose remain unanswered for a lifetime. What’s your purpose? How would you define the reason you are here?

For further reading: Matthew 16:21-23; 20:17-19;
Luke 18:31-34

Prayer: Father, I’m grateful Jesus lived out his purpose perfectly. Help me to walk close to You so I can understand and live out my purpose. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 25 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD
WEEK 16: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 25

Summary: Jesus' clear expression of who He was gave rise to the anger of the religious leaders. However, this also gave rise to great faith among those who believed.

Consider:

C.S. Lewis commented about Jesus:

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

How does this chapter of *The Story* validate this quote from Lewis?

Prayer: Father, Thank you for the truth about who Jesus is. Help me to know clearly what I believe. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 26 – THE HOUR OF DARKNESS
WEEK 17: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 26 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 13-14; 16-19

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 26 – THE HOUR OF DARKNESS
WEEK 17: DAY TWO**

This reading covers: Final Moments (Matthew 26; John 14-17)

Summary: Jesus models service and comforts his followers in their final time together.

Consider:

Preparation. Service. Submission. This was the pattern Jesus followed during his last hours.

Preparation: Jesus chose the place, the time and the guests. What preparations do you make when you read God's word? How do you prepare yourself to be with the Lord?

Service: Jesus washed his disciples' feet. How do you wash the feet of others?

Submission: Jesus asked the Father to remove the cup, but then added, *Not my will but thine be done*. How have you submitted to the Father's will?

For further reading: Philippians 2:1-11

Prayer: Thank you for showing me clearly the way You intend for me to live. Jesus, perfectly modeled a life pleasing to You right up to the very end. Help me now to live like Jesus. In your name I pray, Amen.

**CHAPTER 26 – THE HOUR OF DARKNESS
WEEK 17: DAY THREE**

This reading covers: Not My Will (Matthew 26-27; Luke 22; John 18)

Summary: From a peaceful garden to a noisy palace, Jesus follows God's plan.

Consider:

Right before his arrest, Jesus took three of his friends and went to a garden to pray (Matthew 26:36). What do you learn about the love and power of God, contrasted with the weakness and need of people in this passage?

Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, vigorously denied three times that he even knew the Lord (Luke 22:54). How must Jesus have felt about this? What ways do we deny Jesus and act like we don't know Him?

For further reading: Romans 5:1-11

Prayer: It makes me sad to know that I was counted among those who would have denied You. But I am so thankful that You made it possible for us to be friends. Thank you, Jesus, for following God's plan all the way to the cross. I pray in your name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 26 – THE HOUR OF DARKNESS
WEEK 17: DAY FOUR**

Reflect on: The End? (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)

Summary: As the crucifixion takes place, it seems all hope is lost.

Consider:

Spend time reviewing the suffering of Christ. If you had been in the crowd, what role would you have played?

Imagine yourself as a Roman soldier. Would you have been the one who drove the nails, or the one who said, “Surely this was the Son of God?”

Imagine yourself as one of those who passed by. Would you have hurled insults at Him, or would you have wept hopelessly?

Imagine yourself as one of the thieves crucified on either side of Christ. Would you have been the one who cursed, or the one who asked for mercy?

Imagine yourself among the family and friends. Would you have stood far off, or remained at the foot of the cross?

For further reading: Isaiah 53

Prayer: It is hard to imagine the scene at the cross. But as I look back over what happened, I respond with great sadness and great joy. Jesus, thank you for dying for me. I pray in your name. Amen.

**CHAPTER 26 – THE HOUR OF DARKNESS
WEEK 17: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 26

Summary: As the crucifixion takes place, it seems all hope is lost.

Consider:

Perhaps the greatest example Jesus gives us happens when he dies. Read John 13:34-34. “Love one another” is certainly not a new command, but this is how Jesus refers to it. Why? What new aspect of love does Jesus want us to see?

What is the example he calls us to follow? (See John 3:16)

For further reading: Isaiah 53

Prayer: Jesus, You taught me how to live. You showed me how to love. Now, help me to live the way You did. I pray in your name, Amen.

CHAPTER 27 – RESURRECTION
WEEK 17: DAY ONE

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 27 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Matthew 27-28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 19-21

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

CHAPTER 27 – RESURRECTION
WEEK 17: DAY TWO

Reflect on: Resurrection (Matthew 27-28; Mark 16; John 20)

Summary: Jesus rose from the dead, just as he said he would.

When Jesus died it appeared evil had finally won. But just as He promised, Jesus rose from the dead. With that one act, He secured his identity as the Son of God and proved that He could be trusted to do whatever He said He would do. In the end, Jesus' victory was not just over evil. It was victory over death itself.

Consider:

What in your life do you need Jesus' power to overcome?

In what ways are you withholding your trust from God in that area?

For further reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 John 5:1-5

Prayer: Jesus, thank you that You are who You say You are. Thank you that You can do what You say You can do. Thank you that, because You have overcome the world, I can have peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 27 – RESURRECTION
WEEK 17: DAY THREE

Reflect on: Back to Fishing (Luke 24; John 20-21)

Summary: The disciples figured it was time to fish or cut bait. It's what they knew. It's what was comfortable. They thought they'd lost their identity as Christ-followers when they no longer had Christ, so they picked up where they had left off in life – as fishermen. But Jesus did not leave them where they were. Jesus never wants to leave us where we are.

As believers we have a new identity. We are a new creation.

Consider:

Our goal is not to know more *of* Jesus, but to be more *like* Him. Since surrendering your life to Christ, describe how you have become a “new creation”?

For further reading: Romans 8:28-30; 2 Corinthians 5:17;
1 Peter 1:13-16

Prayer: Jesus, help me to know You better in order to be more like You. Conform me to your image. In your name, Amen.

CHAPTER 27 – RESURRECTION
WEEK 17: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: What's Next (Matthew 28; John 20-21)

Summary: Jesus gives his followers direction for the future.

Spiritual growth is all about taking next steps. The surest way to make zero progress in our lives is to stay right where we are; the same mistakes, the same habits, the same hurts. The surest way to move ahead into a life of victory is to take the next step on our journey with Christ.

Consider:

The risen Jesus met the disciples while they were out fishing (John 21:1-19). At the end of Jesus' interaction with Peter, He said, “Follow me!” the same words He spoke when He first called Peter. How has Jesus called you to follow Him?

How are you living out His calling in your life?

For further reading: Romans 12:1-2

Prayer: Dear Father, help me to take my next step with You. Challenge me to move ahead in my journey with You. I know it is not always easy, but You promised to be with me always. And I can do all things through You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 28 – NEW BEGINNINGS
WEEK 18: DAY TWO

Reflect on: Power (Acts 1-5)

Summary: When the Holy Spirit came, the world was changed.

Consider:

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus told his disciples they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. How do you see God using you, your church, and the church at large to share the life-saving message of Jesus in your neighborhood and around the world?

How can you contribute to instilling “Acts 2” vitality (devotion to teachings, fellowship, prayer and sharing) in your church?

For further reading: John 14:15-31; Galatians 5:16-26

Prayer: Holy Spirit, I invite you into my heart. Convict me, intercede on my behalf, produce godly attributes in me, encourage, strengthen and empower me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHAPTER 28 – NEW BEGINNINGS
WEEK 18: DAY THREE

Reflect on: Radical Conversion (Acts 6-9)

Summary: Saul’s life is radically changed when he meets Jesus.

Consider:

To say that Saul was set in his ways before his conversion would be an understatement. Likewise, Ananias was certainly hesitant to reach out to someone known to be his enemy. But when God showed up, they listened and obeyed.

Are you listening and obeying God’s directive for your life? Is there a calling He has placed in your life that is particularly difficult or challenging for you?

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Prayer: Lord, I am astounded at your gift of grace -- how You run after even those who ignore You. Open my heart that I may hear your plan for my life and, like Saul, turn me around to be your servant. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 28 – NEW BEGINNINGS
WEEK 18: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: Message for All (Acts 10-12)

Summary: Peter helps the early church learn an important lesson about the gospel.

Consider:

Why did Jesus' disciples have to abandon old thinking?

In what ways had Jesus already demonstrated that He had come to redeem everyone?

What is the only standard for inclusion into God's family?

As a Christ-follower how do you defeat prejudices you might inwardly hold as well as make a stand against prejudices displayed by others?

For further reading: Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Prayer: Father God, thank you for your love. Please keep my thoughts and actions free from anything that hurts or degrades others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 28 – NEW BEGINNINGS
WEEK 18: DAY FIVE

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 28

Summary: Peter helps the early church learn an important lesson about the gospel.

Consider:

In Acts 2:38-39, we learn that the Holy Spirit resides in every believer. Read the following verses and discuss the role of the Holy Spirit mentioned: John 14:26; John 16:7-11; Romans 8:26-27; Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 3:16-20.

Where in your life have you experienced the activity of the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Christ Jesus, I stand amazed at the courage, compassion and zeal of those who first came to know You as their Savior. Help me imitate them as I continue their pursuit of expanding your kingdom. In your name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 29 – PAUL'S MISSION
WEEK 20: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 29 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Acts 13-14; 16-20; Romans 1; 3-6; Romans 8; 12; 15; 1 Corinthians 1; 3; 5-6; 10; 12-13; 15-16; Galatians 1; 3; 5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1-5

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 29 – PAUL'S MISSION
WEEK 20: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Difficult Mission (Acts 13-18)

Summary: Misunderstood and jailed; God promises to be with Paul.

Consider:

Paul's sufferings brought great ministry, and his ministry came with great sufferings. Note the sufferings of Paul as he continued on his missionary journeys.

What does Paul say helped him endure? What suffering(s) have you faced in your journey with the Lord and how is Paul an encouragement to you?

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 11:23-28;
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Prayer: Father, I know that life is not going to be easy. I understand that there will be difficult times. But thank you that You will be with me through all things. Use difficult situations to help me grow. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 29 – PAUL'S MISSION
WEEK 20: DAY THREE

Reflect on: Living and Waiting (Acts 18-19;
1 Thessalonians 1-5)

Summary: 1 Thessalonians helps us know how to live today as we wait for Jesus' return.

Consider:

The church of the Thessalonians was a baby church but already had displayed itself as a model for others. What main points did Paul bring out in his praises of this church?

How can we emulate those same qualities in our own ministry?

What words of Paul comfort you when he speaks of the return of Christ?

What are the various instructions Paul gives as we await Christ's return?

For further reading: 2 Peter 3:10-18

Prayer: Thank you for your Word. Thank you that it shows me how to live day-to-day. Give me a desire for your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 29 – PAUL'S MISSION
WEEK 20: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: The Teacher (Romans; 1 Corinthians; Galatians)

Summary: Paul was a great teacher who God used to help his people know how to live.

Consider:

As Paul addressed each church, he focused on different areas that needed instruction or encouragement. Consider the following themes in his writings and relate them to your own life and service in the church:

- Flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- Find your gift and use it (Romans 12:4-8)
- Be wary of those preaching another gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)
- Stand firm in your faith (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)
- Be led by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:16-26)
- Offer yourself as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)

For further reading: Colossians 3:15-17

Prayer: Jesus, use your Word to change my life. Keep me close to You as I spend time in the Bible. May your truth sink deeply into my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 29 – PAUL'S MISSION
WEEK 20: DAY FIVE

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 29

Summary: Even though Paul faced difficulties and obstacles on a regular basis, he continued to faithfully teach God's people how to live.

Consider:

As Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, he addressed the problem of division in the church (1 Corinth. 1:10-13; 3:1-11). What was the issue there and how can the church today guard against similar issues?

We have the incredible privilege and tremendous responsibility of being part of the spiritual lives of those around us. Are there people you are investing in now – in helping to guide their faith steps?

Prayer: Father, help me to see how we can make an impact on those You have placed in my life. Keep me strong in my faith as I journey with You so I can be used by You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 30 – PAUL'S FINAL DAYS
WEEK 21: DAY ONE

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 30 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Acts 20-23; 27-28, Ephesians 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

CHAPTER 30 – PAUL'S FINAL DAYS
WEEK 21: DAY TWO

Reflect on: Heading into Trouble (Acts 20-22)

Summary: Because God sent him, Paul goes to Jerusalem knowing trouble awaits him there.

Paul was a follower of Christ. His devotion to Jesus was his defining role. When God made it clear that Paul was to go to Jerusalem, he went despite certain persecution.

Consider:

We hear the term “blind faith” all the time. Real faith is not blind at all. Faith is being sure. Faith is being certain. Faith involves a supernatural confidence. When was a time you felt God call you to a new level of commitment and growth in your faith? How did you respond?

For further reading: Hebrews 11

Prayer: Father, you never ask me to do anything that You are not willing to do with me. I am so grateful that I do not live this life alone. Thank you for your presence as I walk the journey of faith here on earth. Give me the confidence I need to have in You. Give me faith to be sure and be certain that what You have in store for me is exactly what I need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 30 – PAUL'S FINAL DAYS
WEEK 21: DAY THREE

Reflect on: God's Grace (Acts 27-28; Ephesians 1-6)

Summary: Even in prison, Paul shares about the incredible grace of God. We know Paul's background and what he had done against the name of Christ. We know what he deserved from God, and it wasn't grace. Paul was keenly aware of God's tremendous gift of grace. He spent the rest of his life preaching in the name of Christ and offering Christ's grace to anyone who would listen to him, including us.

Consider:

Mercy is being saved from something, and grace is getting a gift of something. Every believer is saved from hell and given heaven. For each of us, mercy and grace looks a little different in our daily lives. How is your life different because of God's mercy and grace? What have you been saved from? What did you receive?

For further reading: Galatians 2:20-21; Ephesians 1:3-10; Ephesians 2:1-10; Hebrews 4:15-16

Prayer: Father, thank you for your grace. Thank you for sending Jesus. Because of Him, I can approach your throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy from You and grace to help me in my time of need. I deserve neither, and yet You give me both. Thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 30 – PAUL'S FINAL DAYS
WEEK 21: DAY FOUR

Reflect on: Faithful Until the End (2 Timothy 1-4)

Summary: As Paul nears death, he encourages the next generation of Christian leaders.

Consider:

Read 2 Timothy 1:7. To be a good example, what kind of help do we get? Where do we get this help?

Read 2 Timothy 2:15. For Timothy, what do you think the word of truth was? For us, what is the word of truth?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16. For training ourselves, for coaching others, for learning and for teaching, what is our tool?

Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Paul's race is coming to an end. Does he sound like he has any regrets? What is his final encouragement to us?

Prayer: Father God, Paul was such a man of faith. I can count on his encouragement to build my own faith and equip me to help others build theirs. Help me to live with your presence pervading my every move here, and give me the promise of a well-earned reward when I see You in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 30 – PAUL'S FINAL DAYS
WEEK 21: DAY FIVE

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 30

Summary: Paul faithfully follows God's plan to the end while writing words of encouragement and challenge all along the way.

Consider:

We know what a zealous unbeliever Paul was before his conversion. We know he became a passionate Christ-follower after meeting Jesus. As you think about how you will invest the rest of your life, name one thing you really want to do for Jesus and one step you can take to move closer to this goal.

For further reading:

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- Philippians 4:13
- Hebrews 13:7
- Hebrews 6:12
- 1 Corinthians 4:16
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the example of men like Paul, who were faithful to the end. Thank you for his words which give me faith in my journey and hope for the prize at the end. Our rewards are the same, Paul's and mine. Help me to be faithful to the end, in word and deed. I want to be an example for someone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 31 – THE END OF TIME
WEEK 22: DAY ONE**

Find a quiet place, free from distraction (as much as possible). Sit quietly with *The Story* or your Bible. Make an offering to Jesus of this time, and commend to Him all the worries, obligations and hassles of the day.

Read the chapter or passage attentively. Note the themes that emerge and listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God speaks to you. Reflect on why God might highlight this for you today. In the space provided below, write down the words or phrases that leap out at you.

Today's reading: Read Chapter 31 of *The Story*

This reading covers: Revelation 1-5; 19-22

Capture below the words or phrases meaningful to you.

**CHAPTER 31 – THE END OF TIME
WEEK 22: DAY TWO**

Reflect on: Jesus Revealed (Revelation 1-3)

Summary: Jesus himself is revealed to John.

Consider:

Imagine getting the opportunity to talk physics with Albert Einstein. How about discussing music with Beethoven or baseball with Babe Ruth? While each of these people would have amazing insights into their fields, we would miss something tremendous if we only talked shop with them.

If we are not careful, this is what could happen in our relationship with Jesus. Sure, John's revelation contained incredible images of future events and he learned much about what was to come. But more than anything, there was Jesus.

Are you content meeting with Jesus without an agenda? Do you ever come into his presence simply to spend time with Him and not to have Him answer all your requests? How long could you sit still before Him and just be amazed?

For further reading: Hebrews 1:1-4

Prayer: Help me to be quiet right now and enjoy who You are. *Spend some time in silence. Be aware of Jesus' presence with you. Breathe deeply acknowledging your need for God is as crucial as your need for the air you breathe.*

**CHAPTER 31 – THE END OF TIME
WEEK 22: DAY THREE**

Reflect on: Praise (Revelation 4, 5, 19)

Summary: Praise is the focus in heaven.

Consider:

In John's vision, he got glimpses of heavenly worship. What do you learn from these scenes about worship, and how might this shape the way we engage and enter into praising God?

How can we live lives of praise every moment of our days?
Consider what Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2. What does a life lived as a "living sacrifice" look like?

For further reading: Romans 12:1-2

Prayer: Father, you are worthy of my best, my time, my resources, my hopes, my future; everything I am and have. I offer it all to You because of who You are. I praise You, in Jesus' name. Amen!

**CHAPTER 31 – THE END OF TIME
WEEK 22: DAY FOUR**

Reflect on: God Makes All Things New (Revelation 20, 21)

Summary: A new heaven and a new earth await the followers of Jesus Christ

Consider:

John offers us a vision of what heaven will be like. In his vision, what stands out to you? What longing do you have as you read his vision?

Read John 14:1-6. How would having heaven on our minds make a difference as we go about our daily lives?

For further reading: John 14:1-6; Romans 8:18-25

Prayer: Jesus, I can only imagine what You have prepared for me. I pray that You would give me glimpses of heaven so I don't get too attached to the earth. Help me to see that I'm not home yet. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**CHAPTER 31 – THE END OF TIME
WEEK 22: DAY FIVE**

Reflect on: The themes from Chapter 31

Summary: Jesus reveals himself to John and shows what awaits those who trust in Him.

Consider:

As you read through the letters to the churches in Asia Minor, what themes emerged that are especially relevant to the American church?

How does the reality and hope of heaven inspire you to share God's story and your story?

Prayer: Father, thank you for my journey though *The Story*. Thank you for words of hope and encouragement. Thank you for showing me how to live. Thank you for making it possible for me to know You. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

AFTERWORD

Thank you for journeying through *The Story* with us. It has been our great joy to have guided your steps during these days together. It is our hope that you will continue to spend time with God in his Word each and every day.

During our time together you have discovered that the Bible is a book you can understand, learn from, and even love. You now have a sense of the big picture and have seen that all of God's Word is really telling one story – *The Story*. We also hope you have come to find out more about your story in the pages of the Bible.

The heart and soul behind all of this is a bedrock belief that God has revealed Himself to us through his Son and his Word. We firmly believe that your life will be changed as you meet with God in the pages of the Bible.