

the 5-Minute

Bible

Reading Plan
& Devotional

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



Printed in China.

Ed Strauss

the 5-Minute

Bible

Reading Plan
& Devotional

READ THE BIBLE IN
MINUTES A DAY

BARBOUR BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read the Bible from cover to cover? If you haven't, now is the perfect time to start. You may have been daunted by this task up till now. After all, the Bible is a big book. And you might have been tempted to think that it's mostly dull, dry history, unrelated to your life in the modern world.

God's Word is still relevant today, and it's well worth the effort to read it through, since it's wholly inspired by His Spirit. As such, it gives you an unparalleled look into the mind and heart of God. Even the sacrifices and rituals in Leviticus contain pertinent messages, as their fulfillment is found in Christ. And the recurring tales of disobedience in Judges and Kings are still relevant, since 1 Corinthians 10:11 states that these things happened to them as examples and were written for your benefit.

Don't put off reading the Bible a day longer. *The 5-Minute Bible Reading Plan and Devotional* breaks God's Word down into handy, bite-sized chunks, and you'll be able to read each devotional, together with the related portions of scripture, in just five minutes per sitting. You can either do your scripture reading daily or twice daily (morning and evening). However you do it, when you've completed this book, you'll also have read the entire Bible. And that's a major accomplishment!

GENESIS

God existed before the physical universe (Genesis 1:1). He creates it and everything in it simply by speaking. The first two people, Adam and Eve, live in perfection but ruin paradise by disobeying God. Then the world's first child, Cain, murders his brother Abel. People become so bad that God decides to flood the entire planet, saving only righteous Noah, his family, and an ark full of animals. Later, God chooses a man named Abraham as patriarch of a people called Israel after the new name of Abraham's grandson Jacob. Genesis ends with Jacob's son Joseph, ruling Egypt.

GENESIS 1-2

A Good Beginning

God began a good work in His creation. The same powerful God who scattered the stars across the heavens, started the earth on its orbit, and breathed life into His creation, also began a good work by creating you. That doesn't mean that God expects you to be perfect. The Bible tells you that everyone sins (Romans 3:23), but it also says that sinners are redeemed through Jesus' sacrifice (v. 24). Today, celebrate the fact that God created you, set you on a course, and made a way for you to live forever with Him—all for His glory.

GENESIS 3-5

Redeeming the Fall

Evil entered the perfect world God created, and humanity fell into sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate the forbidden fruit. As a result, all mankind died and the entire creation came under a curse and became corrupt. It may seem unfair that you were born into spiritual death and that all living things suffer for Adam and Eve's mistake. But God saved you, and one day He will completely renew you, giving you a powerful, glorious body that will live forever. And He will renew the whole earth, transforming it into a global paradise.

GENESIS 6-7

God in an Evil World

In Noah's day, all humanity was bent on doing evil. But fortunately, Noah, a righteous man, found favor with God, so He told him to build an ark to preserve his family and pairs of all animals. The world of Noah's day was similar to today's world. The earth was filled with crime and violence. Even though spiritual darkness covers the planet and you may wonder where God is at times, He's still caring and powerful. He hasn't forgotten you or abandoned you to the forces of evil. He's present to bless and watch over you.

GENESIS 8–9

Your Rainbow Promise

After the Flood, Noah opened up the ark, and all the animals raced out and disappeared. Noah and his family were excited too, but before setting out to start new lives, they paused to sacrifice to the Lord. In return, God set His bow in the heavens, a promise that He'd never flood the earth again. Before hurrying out to your day's work, pause a few moments to seek the Lord. Give Him first place in your life. He may give you a promise too. Or He may reveal a solution to a vexing problem.

GENESIS 10–12

The Difference One Life Makes

God created every person on earth and loves them all, but in His wisdom and foreknowledge, He planned the life of one outstanding man. He had His hand on Abram (Abraham). Though Abraham made mistakes, his life was a hinge upon which the massive doors of history would turn. God gives you many promises today, and like Abraham you need to believe God. You too can profoundly impact the world and change history. Do you want to make a difference for God's kingdom? Then yield to Him. He can use you mightily.

GENESIS 13-14

Thinking of Others

Abraham gave Lot first choice of the land, and Lot, thinking only of himself, chose the lush Jordan Valley. But the well-watered plains attracted other greedy people too, and soon Abraham had to rescue Lot from the armies of five invading kings. Those who put themselves first often end up last (Matthew 20:16). You can bring trouble on yourself by pushing to the front of the line, or by driving in life's fast lane and ignoring those lying wounded along the Jericho road. Think of others' needs as well, and God will bless you (Romans 12:10).

GENESIS 15-17

Waiting for God's Promise

In Genesis 15, God promised Abraham that his own flesh-and-blood son would be his heir. In chapter 16, Abraham assumed Ishmael was that heir. But in chapter 17, God promised that a son named Isaac, born of Abraham's wife, Sarah, would be the one. God often makes promises to His people, promises which they sometimes try to fulfill by their own efforts. It's good to be proactive and to take definite steps—that's usually a necessary part of making dreams come true—but don't forget that this is, above all, God's work. Only He can bring it to pass.

God the Just Judge

More than a few people think the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a tale from God's wild and woolly days, before He reformed and became the God of love (1 John 4:8). But God is still the same. He declared that He is the Lord, and doesn't change (Malachi 3:6). God still becomes angry at willful sin and disobedience, and still avenges the oppressed when they suffer injustice. Read Revelation and you'll see how He plans to judge the world in the last days. That's a good reason for you to respect the Lord.

Dealings with Philistines

Like Abraham, you may dwell in the midst of unbelieving "Philistines," and may be forced to have daily dealings with the ignorant and the ungodly. Abraham learned the hard way over an incident with Sarah that it's best to be upfront and honest with people. Also, Abraham suffered in silence over a well that had been taken from him because he didn't want to bother the Philistine king. If you have a legitimate grievance, *tell* those in authority about it. Stand up. Insist on fair treatment. They may be unbelievers, but you still have rights.

GENESIS 22–23

The Lord Will Provide

When God Himself provided the lamb for Abraham to sacrifice in place of Isaac, this gave rise to a Hebrew proverb, that His people’s needs would be provided on the mountain of the Lord (Genesis 22:14). How does this apply to you? Well, when you’re “on the mountain of the Lord”—whether involved in Christian ministry or faithfully obeying God in your daily life—He will see to it that your needs are met. As Jesus said, if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

GENESIS 24

Romantic Tales

When you think about it, it’s rather amazing that this story—how God arranged the perfect wife for Isaac—has survived until today. Most of the surviving tablets and papyrus scraps from the rest of the ancient world are boring inventories of food and slaves and animal sacrifices. But God decided that this divine romance should be preserved for millennia in the scriptures. God cares for things that are important to you, your needs for love, romance, and physical intimacy. He hears your prayers for a companion. And He hears your prayers for a better marriage.

GENESIS 25–26

Value Your Birthright

Esau sold his entire birthright for one bowl of lentils and a chunk of bread. The flocks and herds that he stood to inherit from his father Isaac were worth—in today’s currency—tens of millions of dollars. He also traded away his rights to all the land of Canaan, some of the most expensive real estate on this planet. Thus, he became the very symbol of short-sighted, carnal, worldly people. Hebrews 12:16–17 warns against this. Be careful that you don’t despise the treasures and riches of God’s heavenly kingdom for a few temporary pleasures in this life.

GENESIS 27

The Stolen Blessing

Have you wondered why God allowed Jacob to deceive Isaac to receive his blessing, then sanctioned his deception by allowing him to keep it? It was because Jacob already *had* the birthright. Isaac’s blessing confirmed something that had already happened. But this is still a big lesson in trusting God. Are you ever tempted to make things happen by your own efforts? Are you sometimes willing to break God’s laws to produce a desired outcome? Be careful, or you might run the train off the tracks in your eagerness to get what you want.

GENESIS 28–29

God's Gate

When Jacob had a dream of God standing at the top of a wide flight of stairs, pronouncing blessings on him, he exclaimed that this spot was none other than the house of God, the very gate to heaven (Genesis 28:17). So he called it *Bethel* (“House of God”). Have you ever had an encounter with God, an experience that helped you realize His deep love and care for you? You probably haven’t seen Him like Jacob did, but if He revealed Himself to you in any manner, treasure that experience. Let it give you strength.

GENESIS 30; GENESIS 31:1–20

Contrary to Expectations

Jacob’s uncle Laban agreed that only speckled, spotted, or streaked sheep would be Jacob’s wages. Then he made sure that there were only sheep with white wool in Jacob’s care. But *still* they kept bearing speckled, spotted, and streaked lambs. God did miracles to make their recessive genes come out. God still does miracles contrary to natural expectations today. He can make the least-likely-to-succeed win. Is someone trying to defraud you? God can see to it that you’re blessed despite their efforts to curse you or shortchange you. (See also 2 Samuel 16:11–12.)

God Fights for You

When Jacob left Haran, he took his family and flocks and left without telling Laban. He knew he had to do that, or Laban would send him away emptyhanded. Laban finally caught up to Jacob, but God had rebuked him the night before, telling him to watch what he said to his son-in-law. God is able to reprimand your adversaries as well. Don't think that your coming out on top depends on you having clever strategies, perfect arguments, or having lots of friends to back you. God is on your side, and He will fight for you.

Wrestling with God

Jacob once wrestled with God—who appeared in human form—all night long. That was some exhausting match! Finally, God dislocated Jacob's hip so he couldn't wrestle any more. But even that didn't stop Jacob. He simply clung to God and refused to let go until He blessed him. Christians today are sometimes said to “wrestle in prayer,” but don't get the idea that you stand a chance of pinning the Almighty to the mat and forcing Him to give you what you want. Instead, simply throw your arms around Him and hang on to Him.

GENESIS 35–36

Cleaning House

One day, Jacob found out that his wife, Rachel, had taken her father's idols (Genesis 31:30–34). Soon Jacob became aware that *many* of his herdsmen and servants secretly worshipped idols. So when great trouble struck and he desperately needed God's help, Jacob insisted that everyone ditch their gods (35:1–4). You cry out to God in your day of trouble, but often the first thing He does is to remind you of idols stashed in the corners of your life. They can be anything that competes with Him for your devotion, so clean house today.

GENESIS 37–38

Prepared for Greatness

God had an astonishing plan for Joseph's life. God wanted to mightily exalt him, making him one of the most powerful men on this planet. But to accomplish that, God had to first test Joseph in the furnace of affliction—not only to see his motives, but to humble him. God often does the same in your life by allowing you to suffer setbacks, calamities, and misunderstandings. You may wonder, “Why isn't God blessing me or protecting me?” He may be doing a special work in you, preparing you for service in His kingdom.

GENESIS 39–40

Beware Alluring Voices

Joseph was the slave of a ranking Egyptian official named Potiphar, and as a young man, Joseph was well-built and handsome. This caused Potiphar's wanton wife to constantly entice him to come to bed with her. But Joseph knew that would ruin his life, so he steadfastly resisted. Is there someone speaking enticing words to you, trying to seduce you? Beware! They may be as alluring as the sirens of Greek myth, but they seek to bring you to ruin on destructive reefs (1 Timothy 1:19). Turn away from them, and don't yield.

GENESIS 41

Making Yourself Vulnerable

One night, Pharaoh had troubling dreams, and none of his wise men could interpret them. His cupbearer immediately thought of Joseph—but to mention him, the cupbearer had to bring up the subject of his own fall from favor two years earlier. He bravely chose to speak up. Has that ever happened in your life? To give context to a piece of information, have you had to talk about your own past mistakes? It's called making yourself vulnerable, and there's a measure of risk involved. But if you love others, you'll step up to the plate and do it.

GENESIS 42

God Sees and Hears

When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, he recognized them, but accused them of being spies. Not realizing who this "Egyptian lord" was, the ten brothers began speaking in Hebrew about how they had mistreated Joseph. Joseph, of course, understood them. God also hears your hidden thoughts and sees your secret deeds. The Lord's eyes are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good (Proverbs 15:3). So watch what you say and think! Be prayerful about what you do. You'll one day have to give an account to Him.

GENESIS 43-44

Deeply-Buried Love

After Jacob was led to believe that Joseph was dead, Judah was so disturbed by his father's grieving that he moved away from home (Genesis 37:31-35; 38:1). Now, to spare his father new pain, Judah offered to become Joseph's slave—proving he truly loved his father (44:16-34). Past strife may have also led you to put space between you and your family. But may love—often deeply-buried love—move you to do the right thing in due time, reconcile with your loved ones, and let go of old offenses and forgive.

GENESIS 45-46

Moved to Tears

One of the most emotional parts of the Bible is when Joseph broke down and wept, revealing to his family that he was their long-lost brother. You may sometimes complain, like Jacob, that your life has been painful and difficult (Genesis 47:9), but may you experience a happy ending that moves you to tears. Like Joseph, you may have endured abuse and bullying at the hands of family members, but know this: God desires times of sincere forgiveness and reconciliation as well. It may cost you to take the first step, but it's so worth it.

GENESIS 47-48

Stay on Your Knees

Joseph respected the prophetic anointing his father had, so when he brought his two sons to Jacob to be blessed, he bowed down (Genesis 48:12). But when Jacob placed his right hand on the younger son's head, Joseph arose and took his father's hand to move it (v. 17). Are you sometimes like that? Do you tell God you desire to yield to His will and obey Him—yet when what He does displeases you, do you attempt to move God's hands and make Him do things *your* way? It's best to stay on your knees.

Next. . . Number Four

Why did God promise that the ruler's scepter would not depart from Judah (Genesis 49:10) when Reuben was Jacob's firstborn? Why were Israel's kings from Judah? Well, Reuben sinned grievously (35:22), so he was out of the running. Levi and Simeon disqualified themselves by a bloody massacre (34:25). So Judah, the fourth-oldest, was chosen. God has plans for you too, but if you fail or refuse to fulfill your mission, He will look for someone else who will obey. Are *you* willing to stay obedient to God so He can use you?

EXODUS

After Joseph dies, a new pharaoh sees the Hebrews as a threat, and makes them his slaves. God speaks to Moses through a burning bush, and sends him to demand the Israelites' release from Egypt. To break Pharaoh's will, God sends ten plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh finally allows the Israelites to leave and God parts the Red Sea for them. At Mount Sinai, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and His Law, but the people worship a golden calf, bringing judgment on themselves. Exodus ends with the people continuing their journey to the promised land of Canaan.

EXODUS 1-2

It's Not All about You

The Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in another land, but that after four hundred years, they'd be delivered (Genesis 15:13-14). When Prince Moses came along, he concluded that he was that deliverer. He assumed his fellow Israelites would realize God had sent him (Acts 7:23-25). When God has given you outstanding talents and gifts, you too may feel assured that He has a mighty calling on your life. He may well have. But remember, to succeed you must depend on God's strength and wisdom, not your own charisma and abilities.

EXODUS 3-4

He Feels Your Pain

God was aware of the suffering of the Hebrews, and told Moses that He knew their sorrows (Exodus 3:7). The Lord knows every bit of your suffering too, and sees every tear you shed. Jesus was called a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). He knows when you experience sorrow and He feels your pain. In all His people's suffering, He also suffers (63:9). You may cry out, wondering why God doesn't act immediately. But wait on Him. In His time, He will act. In the meantime, He's right beside you.

EXODUS 5–6

No More Straw

When ordered to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh made their lives even more miserable. From that day on, the Egyptians didn't supply the straw they needed to make bricks. The Israelites had hoped for imminent deliverance; instead, their bondage increased. You may be implementing new time-saving methods at work, only to find the steep learning curve makes your job even harder. Or you may be praying for better finances, only to be hit with another bill. Have patience. Give God time and space to work. He will eventually bring good results (see Hebrews 10:36).

EXODUS 7–8

Plagues upon Egypt

Despite God sending one nationwide plague after another on Egypt, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let the Israelites go. But God knew he'd react this way. In fact, God had counted on it, as this gave Him opportunities to prove that He alone was God, that He had power over nature, and that the gods of Egypt were powerless before Him. Even today, you can get a sense of awe of the Almighty during a thunderstorm, while watching a glorious sunset spread across the sky, or in exploring the wonders of His creation in a nature video.

EXODUS 9-10

Natural but Supernatural

Scholars note that the first nine plagues of Egypt were events that naturally occurred there from late summer to spring. For example, hailstorms happened in January/February. The difference? God warned that He would send the *worst* hailstorm that had ever fallen on Egypt (Exodus 9:18). God often uses natural events today, amplifying them in a miraculous way to bring about His will. If you're paying attention, you'll see God at work. But you might sometimes wonder if it was really a miracle. Rest assured that God's fingerprints are on even the "natural" things of life.

EXODUS 11-12

The Meaning of Passover

The Feast of Passover began when the Hebrews living in Egypt smeared the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. When God saw the blood, He *passed over* the house, sparing the firstborn within. But He slew all the firstborn Egyptians. The New Testament tells us that Jesus is the ultimate Passover lamb, and He shed His blood so you might live (1 Corinthians 5:7). When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he told his disciples to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Are you glad that *your* sins are forgiven?