

WEEKS 1-13

Days 1-91

Series 2

Volume 1

# Reflections



Reading  
through  
the Bible  
in a year

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy  
Joshua  
Judges  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel

Michael Perry  
Reflections



This effort is dedicated to my wife Denise, the love of my life, who has been my constant morning companion in reading God's Word for 27 years.

To my assistant, Katie Witbeck, for transforming 365 blog entries into workable documents.

To Lynn Fischer, SpringHill Development Coordinator, along with my wife Denise, for their diligent and effective editing of 365 days of journal entries—thank you.

Special thanks to Mike Smith and his team at Designvox for their creative giftedness, encouragement and willingness to take on this project. Their work made the publication of these journal entries a reality and the life transformation of many more people possible.

Dear Friend,

Every year I set a number of personal goals. Sometimes they are lofty, but most often they are simple such as losing weight, reading a particular book or staying in better contact with friends. I have to admit, I do not always achieve my goals. Some years have been better than others. But there is one goal that I have set for myself annually every year since college that I have nearly always achieved: to read the Bible through from beginning to end. I committed to this annual goal because there is no other personal commitment I have ever made that has impacted every facet of my life more than this one simple practice—reading the Bible daily in its entirety.

Now, before you're tempted to think of me as super spiritual, please know this—it is an achievable goal for anyone and everyone. I am not a biblical scholar, but a regular person who, through the grace of God, has been able to make this commitment. As a result, I have benefited greatly from the incredible difference it makes. It requires no more than 15 to 20 minutes a day to achieve. What other 20-minute daily routine can make such a difference in one's life?

Because of the transforming nature of God's Word, I committed this past year to journal my reflections on each day's readings and then make them public, via blog posts. It was my hope to inspire others to make this personal practice a part of their daily faith walk. In addition, through the encouragement of others, I decided to publish these same posts in a four-volume journal as another way to provide people with an accessible tool to begin or continue this great personal practice. So please join me, and many others, in making God's Word the cornerstone of our lives. By the transformational power of the Word.



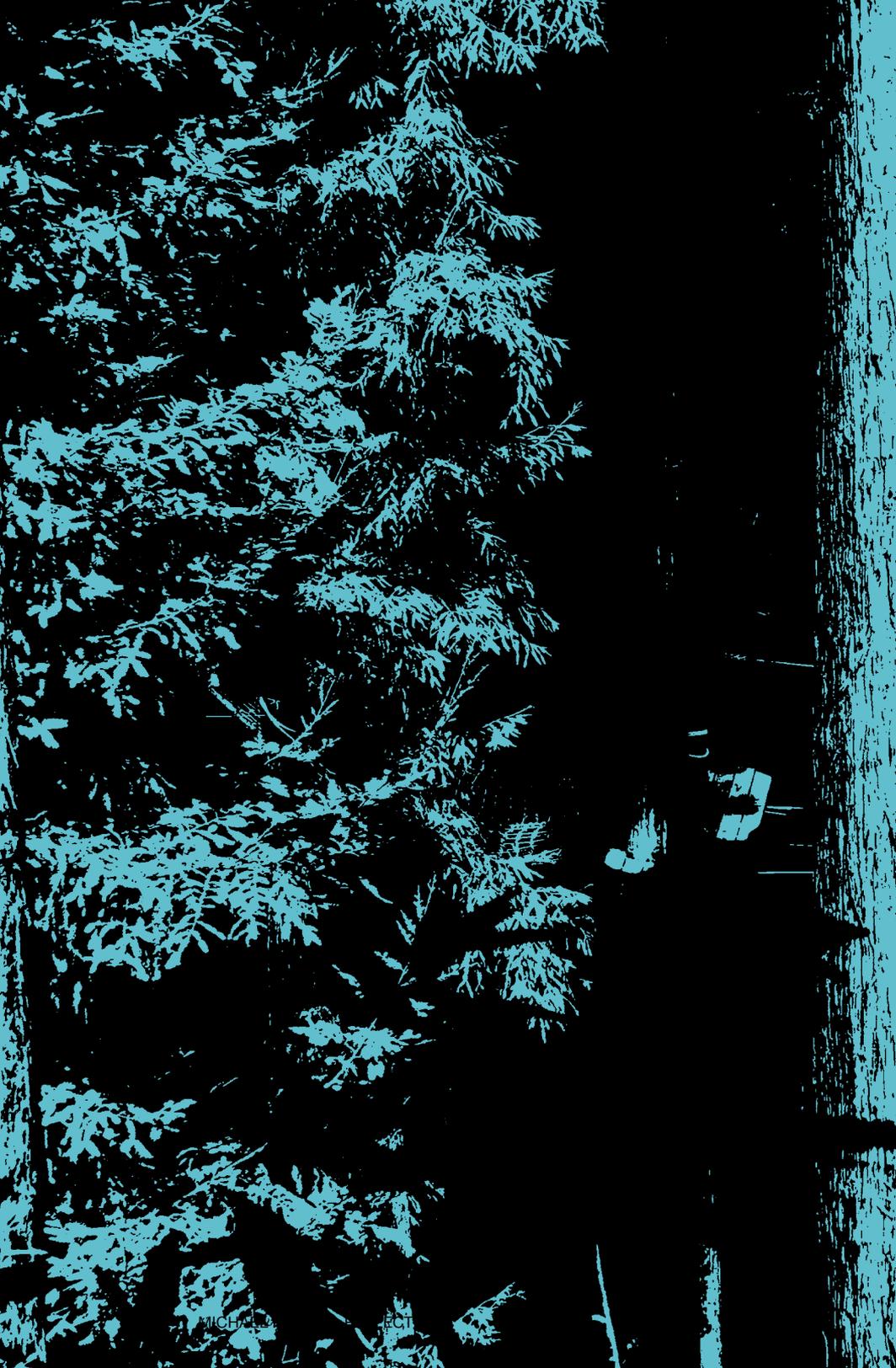
Michael Perry, President  
SpringHill Camps

# Table of Contents

Day	Verses	Page	Day	Verses	Page
<b>WEEK 1</b>			<b>WEEK 4</b>		
1	Genesis 1-3	1	22	Exodus 13-15	22
2	Genesis 4-7	2	23	Exodus 16-18	23
3	Genesis 8-11	3	24	Exodus 19-21	24
4	Genesis 12-15	4	25	Exodus 22-24	25
5	Genesis 16-18	5	26	Exodus 25-27	26
6	Genesis 19-20	6	27	Exodus 28-29	27
7	Genesis 21-23	7	28	Exodus 30-32	28
<b>WEEK 2</b>			<b>WEEK 5</b>		
8	Genesis 24-25	8	29	Exodus 33-35	29
9	Genesis 26-28	9	30	Exodus 36-38	30
10	Genesis 29-30	10	31	Exodus 39-40	31
11	Genesis 31-32	11	32	Leviticus 1-4	32
12	Genesis 33-35	12	33	Leviticus 5-7	33
13	Genesis 36-38	13	34	Leviticus 8-9	34
14	Genesis 39-41	14	35	Leviticus 10-12	35
<b>WEEK 3</b>			<b>WEEK 6</b>		
15	Genesis 42-44	15	36	Leviticus 13	36
16	Genesis 45-47	16	37	Leviticus 14-15	37
17	Genesis 48-50	17	38	Leviticus 16-18	38
18	Exodus 1-3	18	39	Leviticus 19-20	39
19	Exodus 4-6	19	40	Leviticus 22-23	40
20	Exodus 7-9	20	41	Leviticus 24-25	41
21	Exodus 10-12	21	42	Leviticus 26-27	42

# Table of Contents

Day	Verses	Page	Day	Verses	Page
<b>WEEK 7</b>			<b>WEEK 10</b>		
43	Numbers 1-2	43	64	Deuteronomy 18-20	64
44	Numbers 3-4	44	65	Deuteronomy 21-23	65
45	Numbers 5-6	45	66	Deuteronomy 24-26	66
46	Numbers 7	46	67	Deuteronomy 27-28	67
47	Numbers 8-10	47	68	Deuteronomy 29-31	68
48	Numbers 11-13	48	69	Deuteronomy 32-34	69
49	Numbers 14-15	49	70	Joshua 1-4	70
<b>WEEK 8</b>			<b>WEEK 11</b>		
50	Numbers 16-18	50	71	Joshua 5-7	71
51	Numbers 19-21	51	72	Joshua 8-9	72
52	Numbers 22-24	52	73	Joshua 10-11	73
53	Numbers 25-26	53	74	Joshua 12-14	74
54	Numbers 27-29	54	75	Joshua 15-17	75
55	Numbers 30-31	55	76	Joshua 18-20	76
56	Numbers 32-33	56	77	Joshua 21-22	77
<b>WEEK 9</b>			<b>WEEK 12</b>		
57	Numbers 34-36	57	78	Joshua 23-24	78
58	Deuteronomy 1-2	58	79	Judges 1-3	79
59	Deuteronomy 3-4	59	80	Judges 4-6	80
60	Deuteronomy 5-7	60	81	Judges 7-8	81
61	Deuteronomy 8-10	61	82	Judges 9-10	82
62	Deuteronomy 11-13	62	83	Judges 11-13	83
63	Deuteronomy 14-17	63	84	Judges 14-16	84
			<b>WEEK 13</b>		
			85	Judges 17-19	85
			86	Judges 20-21	86
			87	Ruth 1-4	87
			88	I Samuel 1-3	88
			89	I Samuel 4-7	89
			90	I Samuel 8-10	90
			91	I Samuel 11-13	91



# Genesis 1-3

As we begin our journey through the Bible, we begin with some of the most important chapters in all of Scripture. They're important because they lay the foundation for the rest of the stories within the Bible as well as our understanding of God and us. There can be facts in these chapters that sincere and thoughtful people disagree upon, but the most foundational truths most Christians agree with include:

- God created all things in the universe and He created them good.
- God created people in His image and He said they're very good.
- The first people, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. The consequences for their choices have had a devastating effect not just on them, but on every person since.

Remembering these three fundamental truths will help us better grasp the rest of the Bible and help us understand God, people, and the world we live in.

## □ Notes



## Genesis 4-7

As we continue in Genesis we see the results and effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience. We read about the murder within their family that was a result of jealousy about religious acts between two brothers. It's amazing how quickly sin worked its way into the lives of Adam and Eve's family and the devastating results that followed.

The story moves to the time when earth becomes populated with more people. As the population grows, so does the sin and evil. It becomes so bad that God decides it's time to start clean. He calls the only righteous man, Noah, to build an ark. God decided to flood the earth wiping out all living things except the people and animals on Noah's ark. Later in the New Testament we'll see that the flood foreshadows baptism — both the symbolic act we take when we are baptized with water, but also the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

### □ Notes

# Genesis 8-11

As the flood happens and then recedes, we read about the covenant God made with Noah to never flood the earth again. God signifies the rainbow as the symbol which has reminded all people of this covenant and His promise. It is the end of a sad series of events in the history of the world.

We quickly see that the flood doesn't ultimately remove sin from the earth forever (another event recorded in the New Testament begins the accomplishment of this goal). One of Noah's sons, Ham, commits a sin which creates consequences he and his descendants would live with for a long time. This event transitions us to a list of descendants of Noah's three sons and sets the stage for the story of Abram, who's later to be called Abraham by God. He is the father of the Jewish and Christian faith, and we read about the circumstances that bring him into a covenant with God. This is the covenant that will change the course of history and to which the rest of the Bible speaks to.

## □ Notes



# Genesis 12-15

An important and foundational part of the redemptive story begins with the man named Abram. God calls Abram to leave his home and move to a land He promises to give his offspring. But it's the larger promise which follows this promise of land that's truly significant for the future of God's work in the world. God promises Abram (12:2-3) that He will:

1. Make Abram into a great nation, whose people will number greater than the dust of the earth (13:16) and the stars of the sky (15:5).
2. Bless Abram and make his name great.
3. Bless all people on the earth through Abram and his offspring.

As we now know, God fulfills these promises in Abram's offspring, Jesus Christ. In Christ, those who put their faith in Him — think Genesis 15:6 "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" — will become a member of God's family and subject of His Kingdom. And it's through God's Kingdom that the whole earth will be blessed.

## □ Notes

# Genesis 16-18

Though God promised Abram that his descendents would be greater in number than the “dust of the earth” and the “stars in the sky,” he and his wife, Sarai, had no children in their old age. So Sarai took the situation into her own hands and gave her maidservant, Hagar, to Abram for a wife. She does this so that, through Hagar, they might have children. Hagar became pregnant and had a son whom God promised would become the father of many people, kings and nations (17:20-22).

However, God had a different plan — Sarai would have a child — a son whom He would choose to fulfill His promises of making Abram the father of a great nation. God confirms this covenant with Abram by instituting the practice of circumcision as well as giving Abram and Sarai new names — Abraham and Sarah. It would be through their offspring that God would fulfill His promises to Abraham and make their covenant together a reality.

## □ Notes

# Genesis 19-20

Yesterday's story of the angels appearing to Abraham continues. As you remember, Abraham pleads with his heavenly visitors for his nephew, Lot, after they share God's plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Today we read about how two of these angels traveled to Sodom and stayed with Lot. The visit turned out to dramatically show just how wicked the people of the plains of Jordan had become when the men of the city come to Lot's home, demanding he turn over the two angels so they could sexually abuse them. Genesis 19:14 states it was all the men of the city, young and old, demonstrating how thoroughly wicked they'd become. God, in His justice, brings complete destruction to this evil place and, in His mercy, saves Lot and his family.

After this event, Abraham moved away from the plains of Jordan to another region where he hid the fact that Sarah was his wife. Though Abraham's faith "had been credited to him as righteousness" (15:6) he still hadn't completely trusted God with his or his family's lives, but instead, trusted his own deceptive ways. This is a reminder of the fact that faith is not a one-time event but a way of life.

Notes

# Genesis 21-23

God delivers on His promise to Abraham and Sarah and she becomes pregnant and has a son named Isaac. This son will continue the line of God's chosen people. Abraham's first born, Ishmael, will also become a great nation as God promised, but not the father of God's chosen people. The focus of the story in the Bible moves to Isaac and his descendants as we'll see throughout the rest of the Scriptures.

Then God does something peculiar, something on the surface that's both strange and difficult to understand. He asks Abraham to take his son Isaac up to a mountain and offer his son up as a burnt offering. The most amazing part of the story is reading Abraham's obedience to this command. God obviously had a different plan that Abraham trusted would be revealed to him before the fateful event played out. God, after seeing Abraham's faithfulness, provides a ram for the sacrifice. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son foreshadows God's actual offering of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross for our sins. It also models for us how faith requires action and obedience just as Abraham demonstrated.

## □ Notes

# Genesis 24-25

As Abraham grows old and his son Isaac becomes a man, Abraham sets out to assure that his son marries a woman from his own family and clan and not a Canaanite. He sends out a servant to his home country to find a wife for Isaac. He does this because Abraham doesn't want his son to go himself. We don't know why, but a good guess is simply Abraham was afraid that Isaac might not return, but instead, settle back in with his in-laws. If Isaac did that it could nullify God's promise of Abraham's offspring taking possession of the Promised Land.

The hero in this part of the story, other than God Himself, is Abraham's unnamed servant who displays faith, prayer, integrity and forthrightness in doing Abraham's bidding. God assures this servant's mission comes to a successful completion when he meets Rebekah and her family. The answer to the servant and Abraham's prayer was so obvious that even Rebekah's brother acknowledged God's hand in this situation. So, without hesitation, Rebekah goes with the servant and becomes Isaac's wife.

## □ Notes

# Genesis 26-28

The story now moves from Isaac to his son Jacob. Jacob becomes the central figure because it's through his twelve sons that the twelve tribes of Israel will come into being, but there's more to the story before we get to that part. As we read yesterday, though Esau is Isaac's firstborn, it would be through Jacob that God would continue to fulfill His promise to Abraham that all nations and people would be blessed through him. Today, we read through the encouragement of his mother Rebekah that Jacob deceived his father and took the blessing intended for Esau.

It appears that Rebekah's motivation came from the fact that Esau married a Canaanite woman instead of a woman from his own clan. Rebekah didn't want the blessing to go to Esau, but instead, to her favorite son, Jacob. All this deceit was unnecessary because God intended Jacob to be the ruler over his brother as He communicated this to Rebekah when the boys were still in her womb. Rebekah didn't fully trust God and took the situation into her own hands. Faith always begins with believing God's Word, but also ends by obeying it.

## □ Notes

## Genesis 29-30

Deception must run in Isaac's family. As Rebekah sends Jacob back to her family to find a wife and to avoid conflict with Esau, Jacob found the deception he used to gain his father's blessings turned against him by his uncle. Jacob fell in love with his uncle's younger daughter, Rachel, but when he woke up from his wedding night he found, because of his uncle's deception, he married Rachel's older sister, Leah. After completing the wedding week he then marries his first love, Rachel. Jacob purchased both daughters with 14 years of work as a shepherd for his uncle.

At the end of these 14 years, we see deception being used once again by both Jacob and his uncle in their attempts to gain wealth over the other. Jacob assured he was paid with the best animals of the herd while his uncle received the weaker animals. Because of this, Jacob grew richer and more powerful than his uncle. This pattern of deception continues and will become a part of the life and character of Jacob's children reminding us of contagious nature of sin and deceit.

### □ Notes

## Genesis 31-32

Once again, Jacob's family relationships have deteriorated and he decides to leave his in-laws. God affirmed this decision by calling Jacob to return to his home country. But, because Jacob was afraid of what his uncle Laban may do to him and his family, he sneaks off without saying goodbye. This only made the situation worse when Laban found out about the trick and chases Jacob down and confronts him. God remained faithful even in the midst of Jacob's deceit and told Laban not to harm Jacob or his family.

We continue to see Jacob, whom God continues to communicate to and protect, trying to work things out under his own power and influence instead of trusting God. Jacob has yet to learn to put his faith in God and His promises as his grandfather Abraham did. It's this lack of faith that created much of the conflict and broken relationships in Jacob's life. As Jacob moved on from Laban, he found himself having to confront another broken relationship with his brother Esau.

### □ Notes

# Genesis 33-35

Jacob's children have learned the act of deception well from their father, mother and uncle. When one of Jacob's daughters is raped by a Canaanite who then wants to marry her, Jacob's sons set a trap so they can take revenge on this grievous act. The trap allowed the sons to murder all the men and plunder the city they lived near. This caused Jacob potential trouble because of the backlash by the other Canaanites against Jacob and his family.

So Jacob moved his family. We read about three different deaths, first Rachel's nurse, Deborah, followed by Rachel herself and finally the death of Isaac, Jacob and Esau's father. These deaths paved the way for the rest of the story of Jacob and his sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel. It's Jacob and these sons who become the centerpiece to the story of the Jewish people and how God orchestrated their lives to fulfill His promise to Abraham.

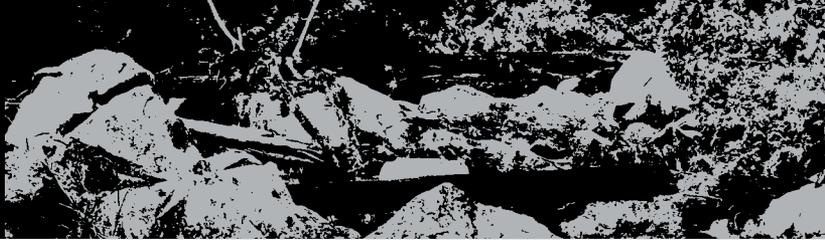
## □ Notes

## Genesis 36-38

We're now at a transitional point in the story of Jacob and his family where we begin to see the details of God's work to bring to fulfillment His promises to Abraham. Much of what we read helps to inform us of how God fulfilled His promises to Abraham by his offspring becoming the Jewish nation. Though the stories are full of moral and spiritual lessons, we can draw from it the bigger story of God directing the lives of this small band of people. These people eventually become a nation that will lay the groundwork for the coming of our Savior.

In the next chapters we want to learn from both the specific situations and the people of these stories, but even more importantly, understand the big picture of God working out all things for His glory. He does so by preparing the world for the coming of His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. These chapters prepare and point us to the climax of the bigger story — the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

### □ Notes



## Genesis 39-41

What more bad could happen to a person so full of integrity than what we see in Jacob's favorite son, Joseph? It's because of the incredible injustice that Joseph experienced and how he handled it that makes this story one of the most beloved and inspiring stories in all of Scriptures. The lessons taught and the examples set have helped generations of people through challenging times.

As we read about the birth of Joseph's first two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, we see there's another purpose for this story to be written. These two sons will become the fathers of the final two tribes of Israel. Jacob gives Joseph a double inheritance by giving each of Joseph's sons an inheritance equal to Jacob's other sons. In addition, we begin to see how God will use Joseph and his hardships to save both the world and Jacob's family — God's chosen people — during a severe and prolonged famine. It's another powerful reminder of God working all things out for the purpose of fulfilling His plans for the world.

### □ Notes

# Genesis 42-44

The plot thickens for Joseph and his brothers. Because of the famine, Jacob sends his sons, excluding Joseph's younger brother Benjamin, to buy grain in Egypt. Of course the only reason Egypt has grain is because of God's work through Joseph on behalf of Pharaoh. The interaction between the brothers creates a spell-binding story as we watch Joseph's dreams as a child come to reality. It's difficult to understand what's going through Joseph's mind, but it appears he's motivated to see if his brothers have changed, and to see his younger brother.

Once again it's important we see the story behind the story. At one level we're reading a story of a family, and in particular, brothers who have serious relationship issues. But at a deeper and more cosmic level it's a story of how God works through people, like Joseph, to fulfill His plans and promises of building a nation from the descendents of Abraham, through whom all people and nations will be blessed.

## □ Notes



## Genesis 45-47

The moment has come when Joseph makes himself known to his brothers. It's a remarkable moment and one that must have completely shocked Joseph's brothers. Yet Joseph sees all that has happened to him as directed by God for God's purposes. He doesn't allow his brothers to be afraid or to dwell on the past. In 45:5-8 we read some of the most important verses in all of Scriptures. They provide us an example of what a Godly perspective of our lives should look like. These verses also lay the foundation for the rest of the Biblical story.

Even Joseph didn't see what the rest of this story would look like. God used Joseph and the famine to bring Jacob's entire family to live in Egypt. It would be in Egypt, as God promised, that Abraham's descendents would multiply and become a great nation. The story of Joseph explains how God orchestrated the Jews coming and living in Egypt which lays the groundwork for the next great part of the Biblical story — the exodus of God's people from Egypt.

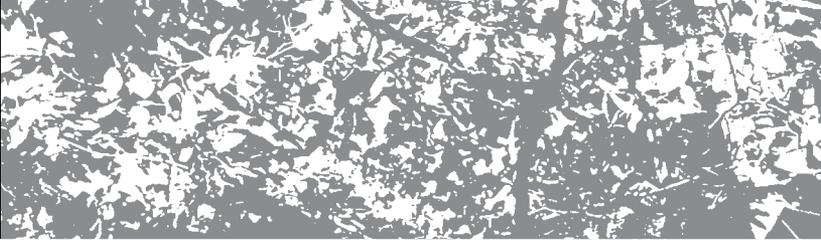
### □ Notes

# Genesis 48-50

Jacob realized he was near the end of his life and called his family together so he could give each son a blessing. Beginning with Joseph, his favorite son, Jacob claims Joseph's two sons — Ephraim and Manasseh — as his own, giving to Joseph a double portion of the blessing. Then Jacob blesses each of his other sons. Each blessing provides a hint to the future of the descendants (tribes) of each son and the role they'll play in the life of Israel. In particular, notice the blessing of Judah, both in its length and in what it says, as compared to the other sons. We see the foreshadowing of King David followed by Jesus Christ Himself.

After Jacob's death Joseph's brothers continue their deception by sending Joseph a message in an attempt to assure that Joseph doesn't take revenge for their evil. Joseph reminds them again that God used their evil for good by saving lives including Jacob's family. It also points out how God used the evil of the cross and Christ's death to save us from spiritual and everlasting death and giving us everlasting life.

## □ Notes



# Exodus 1-3

We now enter into the next great chapter of the story of God and the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham. In this chapter a man named Moses becomes the story's supporting character (God is always the main character in Scriptures). Moses became what scholars will call the "Father of Judaism". It's through Moses that God establishes Abraham's descendents as a nation and His people and He as their God. Before that happened, however, God brought the Jewish people to a place where they grew into a large nation living among the Egyptians—serving them as slaves.

God uniquely prepared Moses to be the deliverer of His people. After growing up in Pharaoh's palace, Moses left Egypt to save his life only to be called by God to return and rescue His people from their bondage and bring them to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's the beginning of a very powerful and significant story in the formation of the Jewish people into a nation. It's a significant story because the Jewish people, their religious life, and their nation will be used by God to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ.

## □ Notes

# Exodus 4-6

God prepares Moses for one of the greatest assignments given to anyone in the Bible — the rescue of His people from slavery in Egypt. Moses showed reluctance in taking this assignment even though God assured him of success and provided him with tools that would demonstrate His power. Moses acknowledged his own shortcomings and the enormity of the job itself. God granted a partner for Moses — his brother Aaron. Yet, God's plan did not include immediate success which created doubt in both Moses and the Jewish people. We'll see the apparent failure at the beginning was really a part of God's plan to give Pharaoh a chance to acknowledge Him and obey His Word.

As we continue through this important Biblical story, we need to take note of both the details — because it's there we see God's work — and the big picture — because of the importance of these events in the history of God redeeming His people. The Exodus becomes a clear illustration in the New Testament of Christians being rescued from the slavery of sin and entering into the Promised Land — God's Kingdom — through Jesus Christ.

## □ Notes



## Exodus 7-9

The battle begins: Moses and Aaron vs. Pharaoh. But, in reality, it is Pharaoh waging a war he can never win, for it is against God Himself. Moses and Aaron make the request of Pharaoh to let the people go out to the wilderness for a few days to worship God, but Pharaoh refuses. So, a series of ten plagues come upon Pharaoh and Egypt—each one more devastating and extreme than the last. Notice what God is doing — He’s giving Pharaoh every opportunity to be obedient to His Will. In response to these opportunities, Pharaoh “hardens his heart” further.

The key words, found in verse 9:16, point out the ultimate purpose behind all that we’re reading. God used Pharaoh’s hardened heart and the resulting plagues to assure that the people not only were able to go to the wilderness to worship, but actually leave Egypt for good, plundering the Egyptians as they left. It’s often through evil circumstances, most spectacularly shown in the cross of Christ, that God brings about His perfect will for His people and glory to His Name.

### □ Notes

# Exodus 10-12

This battle between Pharaoh and Moses, which really is a battle between Pharaoh and God, comes to a critical point. Pharaoh's heart hardens and doesn't allow God's people to go out to the wilderness to worship until the tenth and final plague. This plague not only pushed Pharaoh over the edge, it becomes a significant annual time of worship on the Jewish calendar. To this day the Jews celebrate Passover each year to remind them of God miraculously rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.

Beyond a holiday of remembrance, the Passover actually becomes a foreshadowing, theological picture of Christ's death on the cross. Jesus Christ became the Sacrificial Lamb who dies, not just for the firstborn, but for all who have sinned. The New Testament is clear — Jesus Christ is our perfect and without blemish Passover Lamb. He invites us all to “paint the door posts of our hearts with His blood” so we too can be saved just as the Jewish firstborns were on that incredible night in Egypt long ago.

## □ Notes

## Exodus 13-15

As the Jews were leaving Egypt, God performed a final act against Pharaoh to assure His people's freedom. It's an incredible act that decisively shows God's protection of His people and His justice against Pharaoh and his hardened heart. God literally parts the Red Sea so that the Jews can cross and escape Pharaoh's army who had the people pinned against the shore. When the army pursues the Jews across the Red Sea, God performs His final act of justice and has the sea return to its natural place, covering Pharaoh's army and drowning all the men and horses. After witnessing this miraculous act, Moses breaks out in song, a song which the Jews have sang for generations since.

This miraculous escape illustrates how God, through Jesus Christ, creates a way for escape from our sinful life and its consequences to a life of freedom from the power of sin and restored fellowship with Him. Today we symbolize this escape and life transformation through the waters of baptism just as the Jews escaped through the waters of the Red Sea.

### □ Notes

# Exodus 16-18

God did amazing acts to assure that His people would finally escape Egypt. The acts He performed through Moses and Aaron were nothing short of miracles — miracles that have never been seen before or since. After 400 plus years of slavery, resulting in their petitions to God for their release from bondage, God freed them in the most dramatic fashion. And what happens? God's people begin to grumble against Moses, and more importantly, against God because of the apparent lack of food and water. These were clearly serious issues but the Jews did not respond appropriately.

The appropriate response should have been to go to God, who dramatically and miraculously rescued them from Egypt, and petition Him for their needs and to trust that He would provide. Why did they doubt? Didn't He already prove His ability and intentions to miraculously deliver on His promise of freeing them from their slavery? This will not be the last time we'll read about the Jews' lack of faith. Ultimately, faith isn't the result of seeing God's miracles, but in a transformed heart that trusts God in all circumstances.

## □ Notes

## Exodus 19-21

There were three significant acts that Moses did on behalf of God and through His power. The first act was rescuing the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The second was bringing the Jews to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The third, which we read about today, was to establish the Jewish nation as a theocracy — a nation where their religious worship integrated together with the government, society and family. The core of their nation was the special relationship to God as set forth in the covenants. The foundation of this relationship with God and their nation was God's revealed Will as expressed in His Laws for which the Ten Commandments were the overarching ones.

As you read these Ten Commandments ask yourself these two questions: Were the Ten Commandments given just for the ancient Jews or are they still applicable today? What is the spirit of each of these laws, in other words, what are the broad principles of each law? In answering this second question remember Jesus' instructions in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) where He tells us that there's more to the Laws than their literal meaning.

### □ Notes

# Exodus 22-24

Our reading today continues with God giving His people specific laws and regulations. God gave these regulations to help the Jews live together in peace and to become a nation that reflected their special relationship to God. Be prepared, this won't be the last daily reading that will be filled with a list of laws and regulations. It helps as you read through these lists to take them in even if they don't apply to our lives today. These lists help us see God's care and love for His people, including the very details of their lives. By structuring the life of the nation, God's intent was to assure they fulfilled their overarching purpose promised to Abraham — that through them all the nations would be blessed.

Notice one other item in our reading, one we'll see again and again; the holiness of God. Only Moses could come near to Him, the rest of the people had to stand far off. Yet, though they were far off, the people could see God's holiness in the cloud. It demonstrated both God's holiness/righteousness and His accessibility — qualities that made the Jewish God, THE only God.

## □ Notes

## Exodus 25-27

Beyond the Law and its regulations, God also provided Moses with details about the design, building of the Tabernacle, all its furnishings and the instruments to be used in it. Once again, we can be tempted to push through the details because they can seem unimportant or not applicable to us today. But there's one verse that provides perspective to the importance of these details as well as a glimpse into our future Messiah — Jesus Christ. In verse 25:8 God says the Tabernacle will be the place He'll dwell on earth — a tangible and physical sign of His daily presence in the life of the Jews.

But more than that, the God who created all things, who is also present in all places at all times, is at the same time uniquely and especially present in one place — His Tabernacle. His Tabernacle, and later the Temple, becomes a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus Christ, who being fully God — present in all places at all times — also becomes fully man thus uniquely and especially present in our midst. John says in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt for a while among us."

### □ Notes

# Exodus 28-29

From details about the design of the Tabernacle, God moves Moses to details about the dress and preparation of Aaron and his sons as priests. In the Jewish worship system, God is setting up the priests and their roles as central. The priests become the mediators between a holy and righteous God and His sinful and often rebellious people. This role required the priests to offer, on behalf of the people, the daily and annual sacrifices. To do this, the priests had to stand before God and seek forgiveness first for themselves then for the people. Thus, the need for the consecration and the purity of the priest we read about today.

As we read these important details, we should also be keeping an eye on Jesus Christ. Why? Because the priest and their roles prepare us for the coming of the final High Priest who will make one final and lasting sacrifice for all people — Jesus Christ. Jesus, dressed as a common carpenter, consecrated in baptism though He was perfect and blameless, makes the one and final sacrifice on our behalf.

## □ Notes



## Exodus 30-32

As Moses, with his young aid Joshua, are on the mountain receiving the details of the covenant God will have with His people (the Law and it's regulations are the conditions of this covenant) the people quickly turn from God in dramatic fashion. It's amazing to ponder how people who have just witnessed, and benefited from miracle after miracle, could turn so quickly from the God who performed these miracles. What made the situation worse was, Aaron, Moses brother and partner in leading the Jews to freedom, coordinated the efforts of the people to create their own gods.

The answer to the question, "How could this have happened?" is found in verse 32:22. The hearts of the people tend towards evil and sin. This is a spiritual reality not just for the ancient Jews but for all people, including us today. That's why Paul wrote in Romans 3:10-18, quoting the Old Testament, "None is righteous, no not one... " The Law Moses brings down from the mountain does not change our evil-leaning hearts. Instead, it drives home the point that our hearts are incapable of inclination to God. We need a Savior who can give us new hearts.

### □ Notes

# Exodus 33-35

The Lord gives His people another opportunity to confirm His covenant with Him. Moses goes back to the mountain and receives new tablets with the Law written on them. Once back down the mountain, Moses shares the Law and the commandments of God with all the people. What is the response to this “Word of the Lord”? The people are moved to make contributions to the construction of the Tabernacle. Notice the words in chapter 35 that describe the change in the people — “hearts stirred” (vs. 21, 22), “spirit moved” (vs. 21), “willing heart” (vs. 26) and “hearts moved” (vs. 29).

How do people whose hearts are intent on evil (as we read yesterday) become people with hearts inclined towards God? It’s through hearing God’s Word, which is the Spirit of God (Ephesians 6:17), that God moves the hearts of His people. This is why the Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 4:12, “The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

## □ Notes



## Exodus 36-38

Yesterday, we read about the Word of God and how it moved the hearts of the people to give towards the construction of the Tabernacle. Today we read about the conclusion of this “capital campaign”. The results were incredible; people gave in abundance and continued to do so “every morning” (36:3) until Moses made a proclamation to the people, commanding them to stop their giving. When has a capital campaign ever ended in this way? Never! Yet, it’s a powerful reminder of the power of God’s Word in the lives of people. It can create extraordinary results.

Jesus said, in Matthew 6:21, that “where our treasure is, there our heart will be as well.” This is why giving is so important — because, as we have seen with the ancient Jews, it aligns our hearts and lives with the things of God. When our hearts are moved, then our actions and behaviors match the purposes of God, and the results are truly beyond all that we can hope for or imagine.

### □ Notes

# Exodus 39-40

The conclusion of this important project — the construction of the Tabernacle — ends with a final affirmation from God that the work was well done. With the Tabernacle completed and fully furnished, God’s glory descended on it and filled it. Thus, the Tabernacle became the place where God dwelt in the midst of His people. In this tent, the people would worship and offer sacrifices and from this tent, God would lead His people into the Promised Land. As a result, this tent becomes the center of Jewish life.

The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, were merely foreshadows of the eternal Tabernacle — Jesus Christ. John 1:14 tells us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we’ve seen the glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Greek word for “dwelt” means to “pitch a tent”. In other words, Jesus “pitched His tent” among us. That’s why John could say, as the ancient Jews saw in the Tabernacle, the glory of God, the place He resided among His people.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 1-4

Leviticus outlines in further detail the requirements of the Jewish worship system as given by God to Moses. There's a temptation to think that all these regulations are needed by God. But God, being God, needs nothing outside Himself. The reality is that these worship regulations are needed by the Jews and were given for two reasons:

First, is to help the Israelites understand and focus on their relationship with God. Each offering puts this relationship into its proper context.

Secondly, and more importantly, this system of worship with its sacrifices prepared the Jews and prepares us for the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfills all these offerings by being the only perfect and final offering for sin by His sacrifice on the cross. This system prepares us for Jesus' coming by making our need for atonement for our sins crystal clear — a need that only Jesus Christ can meet.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 5-7

Moses, the author of Leviticus, continues to describe in detail the different offerings the Jews were to make. At this point, it would be easy to skip ahead and move to more interesting reading; but let me encourage you to stay with Leviticus even if only to gain an appreciation for the significance of the worship system, to our understanding, of Jesus Christ. What we are to take from the detail of these specific offerings is an understanding of the necessity and importance of the payment of blood for our sins. There is no other acceptable payment. The shortcoming of this system was also its point for being — offerings needed to be repeated for every sin committed, both known and unknown. But God's greater purpose for this repetition was to strongly remind the Jews, and us, of our sin and this necessity of blood for its payment. All of which as mentioned previously, God used to prepare us for seeing our absolute need for a Savior, Jesus Christ.

## □ Notes



## Leviticus 8-9

Once the details of the worship system were laid out by Moses, the next step was to install Aaron and his sons into the priestly office. This happened through a process of consecration that purified them for their work and followed by Aaron and his sons actually offering an acceptable sacrifice for them and for the people. These details layout the special role of the priests who were the mediators between God and His people. The priests were the only ones who had direct access to God in the Tabernacle.

God gave this priestly office as a model and a foreshadowing of the coming of the final and greatest High Priest, Jesus Christ. He not only offered up the perfect sacrifice once and for all for our sins, as we saw in our earlier readings, but now sits at the right hand of the Father as the final Mediator between us and the Father. He continually intercedes with the Father on our behalf.

### □ Notes

# Leviticus 10-12

After the detailed instructions, training and consecration of Aaron and his sons in the acceptable way to worship God and offer sacrifices to Him, Aaron's sons for some inexplicable reason decide to worship contrary to God's ways. We can only speculate to why Nadab and Abihu would do something contrary to the instructions of God, but the results (losing their lives) indicate both the act and their motives must have been seriously out of line. We're given an indication of the nature of things and why their trespasses were so serious in verse 10:10. God tells Aaron that some things and actions are "common" and some are "holy". It's this difference that Aaron's sons did not fully appreciate.

The New Testament reduces what the Old Testament calls holy to just a few actions — baptism, communion and hearing God's Word. It's in these few holy actions that God sets aside for all His people, not just a few as in the Old Testament, to do in their act of worship of God and where He provides us His special grace.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 13

The first reaction we may have while reading Leviticus 13 is: What does this have to do with us today? It's a natural response to such a detailed account about how to deal with a person or thing that has a contagious disease. Today, medical science has allowed us to handle these situations differently. However, there's something significantly important in the reason why God has given these instructions to the ancient Jews and why they continue to be in His Word.

In ancient days a contagious disease could have wiped out all people resulting literally in the end of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their offspring would inherit the Promised Land, become a great nation, and ultimately become a blessing — through Jesus Christ — to all people and nations. God works in the smallest details of our lives to assure that His plans and His Will are accomplished. This truth should provide us comfort and encouragement in our faith life.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 14-15

As we continue to work our way through the instructions Moses gave the people (when dealing with uncleanness), it's helpful to remember the most serious form of uncleanness — sin. These regulations helped keep the Israelites healthy and reminded them (and us) of the serious nature of sin. If these are all required steps to deal with naturally occurring uncleanness, then what are the steps to be taken to address sin which is deeply rooted within our nature?

The Old Testament answer included an integral system of animal sacrifices which, as we reviewed, prepares the world for the One who provided the ultimate solution to the ultimate uncleanness. No uncleanness is too dirty and no sin is so severe that Jesus Christ's sacrifice cannot clean and wash it away. Christ's sacrifice is even better than just making us clean. Through the blood of His sacrifice we not only become clean, and white as snow, we become new. We begin the process of becoming new creations (II Corinthians 5:17) and with us the entire earth will one day be remade new again without any uncleanness.

## □ Notes

## Leviticus 16-18

Many of us are familiar with the term “scapegoat” and today we read about its origin. In chapter 16 we read about the all important Day of Atonement where the Jews brought two goats before the Lord in the Tabernacle. Chosen by lots, one of the goats became the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people while the second goat was set free. Before being set free, the High Priest transferred all the sins of the people onto its head — in other words all the sins of the people fell to the goat — the scapegoat. Then they set the goat free in the wilderness to carry the sins of the people away.

The fulfillment of this Day of Atonement happened perfectly, once and for all, on Good Friday when Jesus Christ became both the atoning sacrifice for our sins as well as the scapegoat. As scapegoat, He carried the cross — this symbolizes Him taking our sins out of the city. Then He died on the cross as our atoning sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins.

### □ Notes

# Leviticus 19-20

The major theme of today's reading, one which is also a foundational truth about God and our relationships to Him, is the concept of holiness. To be holy means a couple of different but related ideas. First, as God says in verse 20:7, we are to be holy because God is holy. God's holiness comes from the fact that He is different from us in His being — He's Creator, we're creatures. Therefore, He's separate from us — what theologians call "transcendent". Secondly, God is different not just in His being, but also ethically (being perfect and righteous, while His creation is not).

If we are to be holy as God, it implies two things for us: First, we're to be different from the world in terms of our relationship to God. We're to see and live in the reality of who He is and what He's done, and will do, in our lives and in the world. Secondly, we're to live ethically and morally different from the world and align our lives with God's standards of living. So to be holy doesn't mean we're to separate ourselves from the world, but we are to be different from it even while living in it.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 22-23

In chapter 23 we are introduced to the annual calendar of holy days appointed by the Lord, or holidays as we call them today. Each of these holidays represents a significant event or annual milestones in the life of the Jewish nation. Notice the details about each holiday and the forms in which the ritual should take place. In many ways it's similar to the Christian holiday calendar we observe each year in remembrance of significant events in redemptive history.

This detailed and strict observance of these holy days provided the Jews the communal memory of all that God had done and continues to do for them. The Jewish and Christian faiths are "historic" faiths, meaning they're rooted in historic events. God, as CS Lewis says, interferes in history to assure that His Will and plans become reality. We celebrate and remember these events because it's one of the ways in which God reveals Himself to us and they remind us of whom we are as God's people and what He's done for us.

## □ Notes

# Leviticus 24-25

The regulations continue in our readings today. As you read through them see if you can connect them to one of the Ten Commandments. It's helpful to think of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 as the Jewish "constitution" and all the other regulations that follow as laws and court rulings that fit under or interrupt the constitution. Many of these regulations, much like our laws today, were given to address specific situations faced by the ancient Jews. The intent was to assure the people lived aligned with the "constitution" in the most common life situations. The result being that the specific regulations at times were more civic in nature than religious.

We can be thankful that we live under the New Covenant in Jesus Christ and we don't have to remember, nor apply, all of these regulations to our lives. Instead, as Jeremiah 31:33 says, the New Covenant assures the Law is in our minds and written on our hearts. They have become a part of who we are and not just external regulations. This means we can respond to any situation, and with the Spirit's guidance, handle it consistently with God's Law.

## □ Notes

## Leviticus 26-27

As the book of Leviticus comes to a close, God summarizes the covenant He has made with His people. Chapter 26 outlines the conditions of the covenant as well as the consequences the people should experience by being faithful to it. God also outlines the consequences they'll experience if they do not live up to their end of the covenant. The details of both provide a strong message, as well as motivation, of the importance of the covenant and their relationship with God.

As we continue through the Old Testament (and we've already seen glimpses of), we'll see the Jewish people's inability to live up to their end of the covenant. As a result, we'll read about many of the consequences listed in chapter 26 including the deportation to foreign lands and living under the rule of foreign kings. The Jewish history of falling short on their relationship with God and the corresponding consequences sets the stage for the coming of the One who perfectly fulfills this covenant on Israel's behalf — Jesus Christ.

### □ Notes

# Numbers 1-2

As we begin a new book — Numbers — don't let the title mislead you about the contents. Yes, there are records of two censuses with long lists of numbers, but there's more to this part of the Jewish history. It's really a book that records the story of the Jewish time between receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai and arriving on the borders of the Promised Land. In this part of history there are a number of memorable events and unforgettable characters that play a significant role in the life of Israel, which will also be referred to in the New Testament. As you read, take note of these events and characters because you'll be reading about them again.

In these first two chapters we find that the people were obedient to the directives God has given (1:54, 2:34). Unfortunately, it's not a pattern that will continue through the rest of the book. In the minor commands — take a census and the ordering of the camp — the people were obedient. Later on we'll read how, at crucial moments when the people needed faith and trust in God, they fell short.

## □ Notes

## Numbers 3-4

Now that the Israelites have received their instructions for worship, the design and construction of the Tabernacle (as we read about in Leviticus), God gives them directions about the service and care for all these areas. Because Israel had not entered into the Promised Land, and were still moving around, they had an additional responsibility of tearing down, carrying and re-assembling the Tabernacle. God appoints three Levite families to the particular responsibility of carrying the Tabernacle as the Israelites moved from place to place.

The picture of a portable Tabernacle, the place where God dwelt among His people as they traveled to the Promised Land, foreshadows the day when Christ, through the Holy Spirit, would live in our midst as we travel through this life towards our Promised Land — the new heaven and new earth. Just as the Israelites traveled in the company of God, we too have the promise of Christ being with us wherever we go. Christ dwells not in a tabernacle, but in the Church and in our lives as Paul says in Colossians 1.27... “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

### □ Notes

## Numbers 5-6

As the Jewish people begin to grow into a nation the need also grows to have laws that address the invariable issues that arise between people and communities. One such issue is the jealousy that can happen between a husband and a wife. We read about the prescribed way to deal with such a situation so that jealousy doesn't linger nor lead to more destructive behavior — especially if the jealousy turns out to be unfounded. These laws become important so that people can live together in a way that honors God and is a testimony to the nations around them.

Our reading ends with a blessing the priests were to give all the people, typically called the Aaronic Benediction. Reread this verse because it's a blessing not just for the ancient Jews, but for us today. This benediction finds its perfect fulfillment in our lives through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who is now interceding for us and blessing us from His seat at the right hand of the throne of our Father in the true Holy of Holies — heaven.

### □ Notes

## Numbers 7

The Tabernacle's complete; the work assignments for its assembly, maintenance, tear-down and daily operations were made, and the last step was to celebrate its completion. God directed the Israelites to have a twelve-day celebration, like the twelve days of Christmas, in which each day a different tribe presented their offerings to Moses for the use of the Tabernacle. The celebration acknowledged both the importance of each tribe as well as the central place the Tabernacle would have in the life of their nation.

The entire scene is a wonderful reminder of the importance of worship and celebration in the life of Christian communities and especially in the local church. It also highlights the reality that giving isn't just an individual act done just between God and the individual, but also a communal act, one done together and in public. What other reality deserves such public and communal celebration and worship than the reality of God dwelling in our midst through Jesus Christ?

### □ Notes

# Numbers 8-10

The idea of a theocracy is that God, and the worship of Him, is to be central to the government and life of the people. We've seen how the position of the Tabernacle in the middle of camp symbolized the central place of God and His worship in the lives of the Israelites. From this central spot, we see God leading the people towards the Promised Land. This happened when the glory — represented by a cloud during the day and fire at night — rose up from the Tabernacle and moved to a new location. The Israelites were to follow this movement in an orderly way. Thereby, through God's direct leadership, He moved them towards their new home.

God provides His leadership to us today through the Holy Spirit. It requires the same obedience as the ancient Jews on our part. When God leads us we are to follow. The theocracy is now in our hearts and in the Church until Christ returns to consummate His Kingdom on the new earth.

## □ Notes



## Numbers 11-13

It's hard to believe that after all that God has done for the Israelites, after their hearts moved to give above and beyond to the construction of the Tabernacle, after God's glory filled the Tabernacle and then led them day - by - day towards the Promised Land, that we now read the unthinkable. The Israelites had become completely unthankful and unfaithful. The complaining and negative attitudes culminate in scouts returning from their mission in the Promised Land only to report how it will be impossible for Israel to settle there.

Before we become too quick to judge and wonder how these people could quickly turn from God, we need to see that we have the potential to be more like them than not. Unfortunately, Israel's attitude and behavior are not unique to them, but common to all people from all places. These stories should stand as a warning to all of us of how easy it is to lose sight of God and what He's done for us and, instead, turn our focus on ourselves.

### □ Notes

# Numbers 14-15

The lack of faith by the men who spied out the land God promised to Israel turns into full rebellion by the entire community. The rebellion is so complete that the people want to pick a new leader to take them back to Egypt, back to slavery. When confronted by the two spies, Joshua and Caleb, who opposed the general opinion of the rest of the spies that they couldn't conquer the land, the people turn to stone these two faithful men. God steps in on the scene before their rebellion turns into murder.

This rebellion is the result of the people's heart being inclined to evil. This inclination toward sin and slavery wasn't a condition just of the ancient Israelites, but a condition of the hearts of every person who has ever lived, including us today. Apart from the transformational work of God's Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, we will always be inclined to return to that which enslaves us. The remedy to this inclination is found in the same faith displayed by Joshua and Caleb, a faith in God that rests in Jesus Christ.

## □ Notes

## Numbers 16-18

As you read, take a moment to reflect on the series of rebellions by the people of Israel since their miraculous rescue from slavery in Egypt. With each act of rebellion, it becomes harder and harder to fathom why the people haven't learned their lessons. In each case the consequences are severe. In the rebellion we will read about today, a group of Levites demand to be able to do the work of the priests and accuse Moses and Aaron of taking advantage of their leadership positions. As with the other rebellions, this one doesn't end well for the rebels.

One important fact becomes clear in this story, only those whom God has appointed and consecrated had direct access to Him. In this case, that included Aaron and his sons and later Aaron's descendents. This precedent changed with Christ's death on the cross. With His one and final sacrifice, the curtain in the temple that separated the people from the priest and God was torn in two (Matt 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45), symbolizing the access to God that we now have through Jesus Christ.

### □ Notes

# Numbers 19-21

Not even Moses and Aaron were above rebelling against God as we'll see in our reading today. It's a well-known story in the Bible but one that often has been misunderstood. When the people complain (yes, they still haven't learned) to Moses and Aaron about their lack of water, God gives Moses and Aaron instructions on how to provide water for the people. Moses calls the people to the rock and, instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded Moses, strikes it two times with his rod. This disobedience of not following God's instructions is often seen as the real sin of Moses and Aaron.

But the heart of the matter is often overlooked and is found in verse 20:10 when Moses questions the people. Notice what he says "Shall we (referring to himself and Aaron) bring forth water?" The key word is "we". The deeper issue isn't Moses and Aaron's lack of following God's directions; it's in their taking credit for what only God can and will do. This episode reminds us that, regardless of where we are in our spiritual journey, none of us are exempt from forgetting God and His rightful place in the world.

## □ Notes



## Numbers 22-24

As Israel approached the Promised Land, the nations who surrounded and occupied it were confronted with the implications of a new nation arriving in the neighborhood. The king of Moab, seeing this reality, takes a non-military tactic to deal with Israel — he asks a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on Israel. This story is both entertaining and instructive. Balaam discovers that he can only say the words God puts into his mouth, even if saying them means losing out on a handsome reward.

The entire interaction between God, Balaam and the king of Moab reminds us that God's Will is always accomplished. He is not dependent on the actions or words of people, but instead, assures that people will act and say what He deems necessary to see His Will done. This should give us confidence that ultimately our lives and the course of events in the world rest in the hands of the eternal and holy God and not in the hands of fickle and evil-leaning people.

### □ Notes

## Numbers 25-26

Chapter 25 provides us a story that illustrates the reason God instructed Israel not to ally themselves with the nations around them. The people and the nations that occupied the Promised Land as well as the territories around it were idol worshippers of the worst kind. Their idol worship centered on perverse sexual rites. God knew if Israel allied themselves with these nations they too would quickly pick up their neighbors' horrible practices.

When the people of Israel, and specifically the family and tribal leaders, married Moab and Midian women, they began to follow their religious ways. The issue wasn't inter-racial marriage (Moses married a Midianite); it was the false worship that the marriages led to. It's important to see the difference. In addition to Moses, Jesus Himself had "gentile" blood, for one of His ancestors was a woman named Ruth, a Moabite, who we'll read about in a few weeks. God affirms the marriage of those who fear and worship the true God in the way He prescribes.

### □ Notes



## Numbers 27-29

Because Moses knows he will not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land and that his death is near, he asks God for his replacement — someone who could lead the people. Moses understands the essential need for a new leader and we'll see the new leader's responsibility will be different. Moses' role was primarily political, civil, and religious. The next leader needed to be a military leader.

God appointed the perfect person to replace Moses — Joshua, son of Nun. Joshua had been one of the spies who surveyed the Promised Land, so he was familiar with the geography as well as the nations occupying it. He was one of the two spies who believed God would give the Israelites the land if they would only go in and take it, so he was also a man of faith. The combination of experience and faith were exactly what the new leader of Israel needed to lead them in the next chapter in their history.

### □ Notes



## Numbers 30-31

One of the last major responsibilities for Moses before he died was to direct and assure that Israel took revenge on Midian, the nation that led the Israelites into the worship of the false god, Baal. The Scriptures use the word “revenge”, but it may be more helpful to understand the Lord’s command as justice. God called Israel, through Moses, to bring justice to Midian for their horrific crimes.

This is one characteristic of God we’ll continue to see throughout the Old Testament — His justice. He made right what was wrong and acted in fairness, assuring people and nations received what they deserved for their sin. As we think about God’s justice in light of our own lives, we may wonder if we’re receiving what we deserve. Yet God, who is also gracious, satisfies His justice on our behalf through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus took our punishment so that God’s justice would be satisfied and His graciousness would be displayed. In doing so, He gives us a gift beyond anything we deserve or could even imagine — life everlasting with Him.

### □ Notes



## Numbers 32-33

We read the entire Bible because it's God's Word — all of it, every single word. Yet, as in today's reading, some verses stand out as significant because they shed light on other sections of the Bible. This is especially true of verses that point us towards salvation. The key verses today, which enlighten us on other key sections of the Bible, are found in Numbers 33:53-54. God warns the Israelites of the consequences of not completely following His command to totally drive out the people living in the Promised Land.

These verses are significant because God provides a preview of both what Israel's history looks like and why it looks this way. As we continue through the Old Testament we'll see these verses come true. Underline these verses, highlight them or make a note. As we continue to read the story of Israel, we can refer back to these verses and understand that God clearly warned the Israelites of the consequences of not fully taking what God had given them.

### □ Notes

# Numbers 34-36

The book of Numbers finishes with some “housekeeping” items that the Israelites needed to know before entering in and taking the Promised Land. The list includes: the boundaries of the land they were to take and occupy, a list of family leaders, assuring the Levites (who didn’t inherit the land) that they had cities to live in, instructions about cities set aside for people who accidentally killed another person, and how they would handle female heirs of land in light of tribal land assignments. It all seems a bit mundane, administrative and certainly not applicable to us today. But there are a few important truths we can take away from these chapters.

First, our God is an orderly God (I Corinthians 14:33). He’s concerned, not just about outcomes, but about the “how” behind outcomes. Second, God is a God of the details. This means He’s concerned about the little things in our lives, not just the big picture. Lastly, God is involved in every aspect of life, not just the “spiritual” aspects, including how we’re to live together whether the context is civil, political, cultural, or spiritual. This is our God and He’s a God who deserves our complete allegiance.

## □ Notes



# Deuteronomy 1-2

The word “Deuteronomy” literally means “second law”. However, the book of Deuteronomy isn’t about another law for the Israelites in addition to the law given in Exodus. Instead, it’s a review of the only Law God gave the Israelites. As we read Deuteronomy we’ll receive not only a recap of the Law, but also the events that occurred since the Jews left Egypt. In essence, it’s a summary and conclusion to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

Today’s reading is a chance to review this important time in redemptive history. To know this history and the Law, to understand it and to be able to see its place in the Bible story, helps us better understand and appreciate the entire redemptive story. Understanding the entire story helps us better know God and our relationship with Him and our place in the story.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 3-4

The reason for the continued review and the repeating of the Law can be found in verse 4:6. Moses tells the people that the Law is where the Israelites will find their wisdom. If they obey this wisdom, even the other nations around them will acknowledge how wise and full of understanding the Israelites are. It's a powerful way to look at the Law — it's the source of wisdom, wisdom for life. Because of this, Moses also tells the Israelites to make sure not only to remember the Law but to teach it to their children so that it's never forgotten. Unfortunately, we'll see later in the Old Testament that this command wasn't completely obeyed and the result was the painful destruction of Israel.

As we look forward to the New Testament we find Jesus Christ to be the complete fulfillment of the Law. By implication, Jesus is the fulfillment and embodiment of all wisdom. If we live in Christ we have the same wisdom Moses called the Israelites to pursue.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 5-7

Not only does Deuteronomy repeat the Law and the history of Israel, it also summarizes it in important ways. One of the most important summaries of the Law we read today in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Affirming the importance of this verse, Jesus Himself quotes it when asked which is the greatest command (Matt. 22:36-37). Jesus actually says all of the commandments hang on this one — “to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

There is another part of this summary that’s worth reflecting on. It’s found in verse 6:4, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” For its day, this truth was profound, earth shattering and a unique perspective of God not found anywhere in the world. It’s an affirmation of what made Judaism (and later Christianity) different from all other religions. But more importantly, the truth behind this verse binds the entire Bible and should be foundational to understanding God and our faith in Him.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 8-10

Our reading today has a beautiful flow to it that takes us from a focus on God to a focus on Israel and finally to the covenant between the two. This breathtaking overview provides us important insights into God and into people in general, including ourselves. These insights can be boiled down to a simple statement, “all good things come from God so we can never take credit for them ourselves.” The implication for us is that we need to always (whether in good things or bad) maintain a posture of humility before God.

This is the same principle we need to keep before us as we think about our relationship with Jesus Christ. God gives us a gift beyond value in His Son, Jesus. We’re given this gift, not because we’ve done anything that deserves it, but because of God’s unfathomable purposes and His love for us and His world. Like the Israelites, we need to accept this incredible gift with humility, never taking credit for it, but only giving credit where it belongs — to God Himself.

## □ Notes



# Deuteronomy 11-13

As we read today, notice the flow of information shared with the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. This same outline can be helpful in our own lives today. Moses begins by challenging the Israelites to love and serve God only. This includes remembering all that He has done for them and then sharing it with their kids so it's never forgotten.

Secondly, God reminds the people, through Moses, of the importance of proper worship and doing so in the particular place God has designated. We start with loving and serving God then follow it by appropriately worshipping Him.

Finally, God warns the people not to be seduced by false gods. God knows this will be a temptation for the Israelites because of the nations who will live around them. The warning implies that worshipping false gods would be the result of drifting away from loving, serving and properly worshipping the true God. We too, can drift by allowing other "gods" to become the focus of our lives.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 14-17

In our reading today we'll cover a wide range of topics from annual celebrations to the proper setting for worship, to what food the Israelites could eat, and which ones they couldn't. A way to help sort through what appears to be random topics is to categorize each topic under one of four "headings".

The first would be "Personal Health and Holiness". Such topics as food could fit under this heading. The second heading could be "Relating to Others" which could include such topics as the Sabbath year and caring for the poor. The third heading might be "Relating to God" and could include all the instructions the Israelites were given about proper worship, tithing and celebrations. The final heading would be titled "Civil and Government" and could include the discussions about kings and judges.

By creating categories, it helps us to see that God is absolutely concerned about all aspects of life, not just our "religious" lives. It also reminds us to seek God's perspective and teaching first as we seek truth about how we're to live.

## □ Notes



## Deuteronomy 18-20

Moses continues in his instructions to the Israelites on a wide range of topics. In today's readings there are both instructions about what needs to be done and warnings about what to avoid. These two categories summarize nicely how we too should look at our own lives. Like the Israelites, there are things we need to do as members of God's family. We need to assure we provide for those in ministry and that there's justice without favoritism.

We also are to avoid certain things. We're to avoid becoming entangled in the destructive and hurtful attitudes and lifestyles so often found in the world around us. Though many of these instructions given to Israel by Moses seem unrelated to us today, we profit from understanding the principle behind them and evaluating our own lives against them. It's how we assure that our lives align with God's purposes and therefore reflect His reality to the world.

### □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 21-23

The miscellaneous laws and regulations for worship and living continue in our reading. Many of these laws fall into the category of civil law. They were given to help the Israelites live peacefully together. As you read each law and regulation, see if you can connect them to one of the Ten Commandments. Many of them are the practical, real life application of one of the “high level” Commandments.

Also notice the different spheres of life many of these “civil” laws apply to — marriage, parenting, business, worship, justice, the courts, etc. God intended the Israelites to live every aspect of their lives in a way that would make them different from the nations around them. God not only called them to be holy, thus separated and different from the rest of the world, He also showed them how to do so in a very practical and tangible way.

## □ Notes

## Deuteronomy 24-26

Today concludes the long list of laws and regulations we've been reading over the past several days. They conclude with some important words found at the end of chapter 26, verses 18-19: "And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for His treasured possession, as He has promised you, and that you are to keep all His commandments, and that He will set you in praise and fame and in honor high above all nations that He has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as He promised."

As you read these verses, think of them applying not just to ancient Israel but to God's people today — the Church. The difference is we, as part of the Church, have Jesus Christ who perfectly fulfilled all of the Law. This assures us that we'll receive all that God promised to the Israelites, because we are now His visible people, a holy nation as Peter called us, here on earth.

### □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 27-28

Blessings and curses. On the one hand, it's easy to believe as we read these chapters today that we can earn blessings for obeying God's Word and commands. Or, we can earn curses by our disobedience. Yet, as you read the list of blessings and of curses, it seems that there are fewer things the Israelites earn than the natural consequences of obedience and disobedience. The reason is simply that much of the Law and regulations God gave the Israelites were common sense, a natural reflection of the ways things should be and how people should live.

We're never to make the consequences the primary reason for obedience to God — they may reinforce our obedience — but they shouldn't be the true reason. The better reason for obedience, as Jesus says in John 14:23, is because we love God and therefore we want our lives to align with His Will. We should want His reality of the world to be reflected in us so that others may see and His name may be glorified throughout the earth.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 29-31

After working through many chapters of law and regulations we come to the concluding chapters of Deuteronomy and to Moses' leadership of Israel. These chapters are full of insightful observations about human nature and God while providing us a glimpse into the future history of Israel. For example, we're given the following insights to ponder and pray about:

- God opens the hearts and minds of people to see and receive His truth (29:4).
- God established Israel as His people and He their God (29:13).
- God will forgive when people turn back to Him with all their heart and all their soul (30:10).
- God offers a choice — life or death. He is life, to choose Him and to obey Him means we live (30:19-20).
- God calls Joshua (and us) to be strong and courageous in doing the work He has for him (and us) (31:6-7).
- Materialism and prosperity, if we're not careful, can lead to spiritual dullness and unfaithfulness to God (31:20).
- The inclination of the heart's of people, by nature, is towards evil and over time it finds its way there (31:21).

If time allows, re-read the seven insights above. Certainly, these are truths to reflect on throughout your day.

## □ Notes

# Deuteronomy 32-34

Today we read about the last days of Moses' life. He ends his public life with a God-centered song that reminded the Israelites of their covenant with Him. Following this beautiful song, Moses closes with specific blessings for each tribe of Israel. In the song and in the blessings we see a bit of Israel's past and a glimpse into Israel's future. Both are beautiful expressions of the most significant man (apart from Jesus) in Jewish history. If Abraham is the father of the Jewish and Christian faiths, than Moses is the founder and father of the Jewish religion and the Jewish nation.

This is why scholars see Moses as a "Christ type" — someone who foreshadows the One who comes to institute the Christian "religion", the Church, and who will return to establish His Kingdom on the new earth. Moses established a religion and a nation through the Law; Jesus Christ establishes a religion, and more importantly, the Church and the Kingdom through grace and truth. Moses was a prophet who spoke to God; Jesus is the Son of God who sits at the right hand of the Father. Moses died and was buried; Jesus died, was buried and then conquered death by resurrecting to life eternal.

## □ Notes

# Joshua 1-4

The book of Joshua records the story of Israel conquering and occupying the land God promised hundreds of years ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's a powerful reminder that God always fulfills His promises and does so in His own timing.

Joshua becomes the main character in this chapter of Israel's story. He's a military leader mentored by Moses. Through his leadership and the miraculous work of God, Israel confronts and defeats their enemies and the enemies of God. Notice the first miracle that God performs — stopping the water flow of the Jordan River so that the entire nation can cross on dry ground. There is significant meaning in this event — just as the Israelites pass through the Red Sea when they left Egypt signifying a new chapter in their life as a people — passing through the Jordan River signifies another new chapter for Israel. Once again, it reminds us of our own “passing through the waters” of baptism as we enter our new lives in Christ.

## □ Notes

## Joshua 5-7

After crossing the Jordan, Joshua made sure the people, and in particular the men, were spiritually prepared for battle. God used circumcision as the physical sign of their covenant with Him and their distinction from the nations around them. Joshua made sure, by God's decree, that the circumcision of all men was completed before intermingling with people inhabiting the Promised Land.

Once they completed the circumcision the Israelites received their first battle plan and target — Jericho. This is one of the battles we learned about in Sunday school as kids because of the courageous people in them (i.e. David and Goliath) or the miraculous work of God.

In the battle for Jericho, God drew up a battle plan based on the seven days of creation, reminding the Israelites of whose plan it was and who would assure the victory. As we read through the rest of the Scriptures, we'll see the number "7" is a number of symbolic importance; always drawing our minds back to the creation story where God ended His work saying "it was very good" in Genesis 1:31.

### □ Notes

## Joshua 8-9

Joshua and the Israelites continue their siege against the inhabitants of the land God promised to them. Joshua uses a thoughtful plan to attack Ai which turns out successful. It's a plan that began with the Lord's command and followed with obedience by Joshua and the people. The result was complete victory.

Yet, when a group of men showed up as ambassadors of a "far off nation" offering to make a peace treaty with Israel, Joshua forgets to seek the Lord's direction and falls for the deception. Often, over-confidence follows victory which then leads to self-reliance as we see with the Israelites. They forgot the true source of their victories so when the opportunity came to, once again, depend on God, they depended on their own wisdom. This episode is a powerful reminder to us of the need to never let the victories in our lives take our eyes off the source of these victories — God.

### □ Notes

# Joshua 10-11

As the armies of Israel continue their march across the Promised Land, we read again of God’s miraculous intervention in battle. Joshua, having learned his lesson from the Gibeonite fiasco, publicly prayed to God for a miracle — the sun would stop and extend the day long enough for Israel to win their battle. The prayer is a clear example of the power that exists when a person’s request to God aligns with His purpose.

It’s from this incredible moment that Joshua leads Israel to conquer much of the remaining land He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Though we don’t have all the details of all the battles, we have a record of the results — victory upon victory upon victory. In our own lives, we can have the same “victory upon victory” over temptation and sin through faith in Jesus Christ, just as Joshua did in his faith in God the Father by being obedient and trusting in God for the outcomes.

## □ Notes

## Joshua 12-14

Though the Israelites conquered much of the land by the time Joshua was an old man, there was still much to do. As you read of the conquered land in chapter 12, note which nations were not conquered. Some of these nations the Israelites never conquered and they will become a serious problem for Israel in the decades to come, much of which we'll read in the next book — Judges.

Often people question why God would direct the Israelites to kill and destroy so many people and cities. Could it be only to fulfill His promises to Israel? The answer is because these nations had become severely corrupt — not just in the fact that they worshipped false gods, but in how they worshipped these gods — often through child sacrifices and sexually centered rites. The time had come in history for God not only to fulfill His promises to Israel, but to bring justice and an end to the incredible corruption of the people who occupied the Promised Land.

### □ Notes

# Joshua 15-17

Joshua begins to divide up the land among the 12 tribes which we will cover in the next six chapters. Even though the land is being divided up and the tribes are able to occupy it, enemies still remained and the responsibility fell to each of the individual tribes to deal with them. As we read today, this job was never fully completed (15:63, 16:10, 17:12). This incomplete job will come back and haunt the Israelites in the decades to come.

Though this is a time of victory and celebration for the Israelites finally occupying the land promised by God, we have this nagging worry that the Israelites' inability or unwillingness to complete their work has made their victory hollow. The Israelites' willingness to be satisfied with an incomplete job is a vivid reminder to us of not allowing our lives to be satisfied with the hollow victories over sin and temptation. We're to continue to fight to our last breath against the sin in our lives, working to eradicate it forever.

## □ Notes

## Joshua 18-20

Today we read through the rest of the tribes of Israel and their allotment of land. As mentioned yesterday, each tribe had the responsibility to eliminate the occupants of their own land. Finally, at the end of this list we see that cities set aside as sanctuaries for people who unintentionally killed another person. These cities provided protection from avenging family members until their case could be heard before the courts. The need for such cities tells us of the strong sense of justice the ancient Jews had.

It was this sense of justice that was also built into God's Law and explained the elaborate sacrificial system needed for the atonement of sin. The identification of these cities also points to God's love and mercy — the protection of those who might deserve death. Both strong justice and merciful love are attributes of our God and should be reflected in our lives.

### □ Notes

## Joshua 21-22

The last tribe to receive its inheritance of land was the Levites. They had a special role in the life of Israel; they were the workers, administrators and the priests of the Tabernacle. As a result, they did not receive land as the other tribes did, but instead, received cities dispersed among all the other tribes. Notice how many times in chapter 21 we read “out of the tribe...” as it referred to the cities given to the descendents of Levi. The picture should be obvious now — God’s intent was for the religious leaders to live among all the tribes not clustered all together, separated from the rest of Israel. The idea being, the Levites would be a constant reminder and a positive influence of the covenant Israel had with God.

In I Peter 2:9, we’re told to be a royal priesthood; in essence we’re to be the Levites in the world today. Like the Levites, we’re to live in a community with other “priests”, what we call the local church, and local churches should be dispersed throughout every tribe, language and nation. Our goal, like the Levites, is to point all people to the true God and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

### □ Notes

## Joshua 23-24

As Joshua prepares to pass on his leadership and leave this world through death, he challenges Israel to be faithful to God. The interchange is bold and directs the people to:

- Remember all that God had done for them in keeping His promises.
- Live out and obey His Law.
- Be strong and courageous as they finish the task of conquering all their land.
- To put away any foreign gods they had with them before entering the Promised Land.

It was Joshua's intent to help Israel fulfill their end of the covenant with God, even after he was gone. As we'll soon see in the book of Judges, the people's hearts were not "inclined towards God" (24:23), but instead, like all people before them and all people since, their hearts inclined towards unfaithfulness. God will continue to use Israel to prepare the world for the coming of the One who will give us new hearts inclined to Him — Jesus.

### □ Notes

# Judges 1-3

We'll see a pattern in the story of Israel's history that will repeat itself throughout the book of Judges. It's a pattern that has its roots in the reality of verse 2:3, "I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you." God said this because of Israel's unfaithfulness in making covenants with the nations around them instead of "breaking down their altars" (2:2).

The resulting pattern will be seen repeated throughout the rest of the book. Outlined in chapter 2 and beginning in chapter 3, the pattern is this: The Israelites sin by chasing after false gods. They experienced suffering at the hands of the nations in whose gods they worshipped. Israel realizes their sin and makes supplication to God to be rescued. And then God sends a "judge" who delivers salvation to the people. As you continue your reading in Judges, try to identify this pattern in each story: sin, suffering, supplication, and salvation.

## □ Notes

## Judges 4-6

We see clearly the pattern of Sin-Suffering-Supplication-Salvation in our reading today. We read the story of Deborah, who God used to rescue the Israelites from the hands of Jabin, a Canaanite king. Notice verse 4:1, it states clearly that Israel had sinned. As a result, in verse 4:2 God allowed Israel to suffer and in verse 4:3 the Israelites cried out to God in supplication. The rest of chapter 4 and 5 is the story of God's answer to that supplication — the Israelites' salvation through the leadership of the prophetess Deborah.

Deborah's story follows the Judges pattern when God chooses a man lacking in confidence and faith named Gideon. The difference between the stories lies in the fact that Deborah demonstrated confidence in herself, Israel, and especially God while Gideon needed tangible signs that God was really on his side. The bottom for each story is simply this — it's God who provides salvation for the Israelites and, as Deborah sang, all thanksgiving and praise belong to Him and to Him alone.

### □ Notes



## Judges 7-8

The story of Gideon continues with an irony that makes it not only instructive, but entertaining. Gideon, who lacked confidence in himself and God, gathered men to fight the Midianites. God tested him one more time by directing Gideon to go to battle with significantly fewer men than he planned. As a result, Gideon's army shrank from 32,000 to 300 men. If Gideon felt scared before the fleece, this scenario would have frozen his heart.

God gives Gideon one more assurance of victory before going to battle with his reduced army. With this assurance Gideon led his 300 men into battle and defeated the Midianites and freed Israel from their oppression. It's a powerful reminder that God is behind every good and wonderful thing. Yet, we are to do our part even when we're scared or afraid because we know that God will do what we can't and He will assure the victory is His.

### □ Notes

## Judges 9-10

We continue to look into the life of Israel before the days when they will have a king. There seems to be much more betrayal, unfaithfulness, and sin than loyalty, solidarity, and fidelity. Near the end of chapter 10, we sense that God's "running out of patience" with Israel (if such a thing were possible for Him). In verse 10:13-14 the Lord says, "Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods, therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen; let them save you in this time of your distress." Ouch!

Hard words to hear, but understandable from a human perspective. We'll see that God doesn't abandon His people and He will in the end rescue them over and over. But it's important we see that He rescues, not because Israel deserves it or has earned it, but because of His unending patience and love for them and, more importantly, looks to fulfill His plans for Israel and the world. Ultimately God will show Israel, and us, this love through His Son, who offers us reconciliation once and for all to His Father for all who believe.

### □ Notes

# Judges 11-13

As we continue in our reading, the stories are becoming full of more drama. The story we read today is about a son of a prostitute named Jephthah. Like any good drama, this story has many unexpected twists and turns. The most challenging part is the rash vow Jephthah makes to the Lord in exchange for victory against the Ammonites. In his vow, he commits as a burnt offering the first thing that walks out of his door upon arriving home from battle. To demonstrate just how foolish this vow is, verse 11:34 says Jephthah has only one child, a daughter. Therefore there is only one thing that could actually walk out of his door to greet him on arriving home, his only daughter (there's no mention of a wife).

Now there's some debate among scholars as to what Jephthah actually ends up doing with his daughter — he either does sacrifice her (which would have been a great abomination against the Lord) or simply kept her from becoming married, and instead, has her spend the rest of her life serving God. In either case, the message is clear even in the best of scenarios — life in Israel borders on chaos.

## □ Notes



## Judges 14-16

The story of Samson is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. It is memorable because it has all the factors that we look for in an engaging story — intrigue, action, betrayal, romance, disgrace and ultimately redemption. The story of Samson tells us much more about God and how He works in this world. We see God's purpose for Samson's life set at his birth. We see how God uses Samson's unrighteous desires to bring about the end He desires. Finally, we see God's grace by granting Samson one last opportunity for redemption.

What we see in God's work in this story should provide us encouragement in our own lives. It reminds us that God has a plan for us and part of that plan is the opportunity for redemption through His Son. The question is, will we ask and receive this gift of redemption and be restored to fellowship with Him?

### □ Notes

## Judges 17-19

Today we read about two different, but possibly related stories, each centered on a Levite. God set apart the Levites from the rest of the tribes of Israel to serve God in His Tabernacle. As we read these two stories we see clearly that these two particular Levites (some scholars' believe they could be the same one) have lost track of their life's calling. In both stories we read, "In those days there was no king in Israel" (18:1, 19:1), which indicates the waywardness not just of the Levites but of Israel in general.

We'll read of forbidden images, inappropriate worship of God, theft, kidnapping and finally gang rape and murder. All of this occurs in the midst of God's ordained priests, the Levites and without any repercussions by any formal law or courts. It truly seems as though Israel became a lawless country even though they have been given God's Law to live by.

### □ Notes

## Judges 20-21

As we finish the book of Judges, we read the conclusion of the horrific events surrounding the Levite and the assault on his concubine. Though the Israelites sought justice, there's a sense of revenge over justice. This revenge leads to civil war and ultimately the decimation of the tribe of Benjamin. We are left to wonder, how could a nation and a people God chose to be His own become so full of evil? The final verse of Judges provides the answer: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Yet there was a King in Israel, not a human king, but instead a divine King. God was to be their King. God was to be the center of the life of Israel. As we read in Judges, the people often turned away from their King, opening the door for chaos, evil and suffering. It's the same rule of faith today — we're to give our lives to the King — Jesus Christ — who is to rule in our hearts, in our lives and one day in our world.

### □ Notes

## Ruth 1-4

We ended the book of Judges wondering if there was anything good in Israel during this time in their history. Then we're given the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. It's an uplifting story of the loyalty and integrity of not just one person but of many. In particular, Ruth and Boaz both show qualities and characteristics that we would expect to see in the people of God.

Beyond the "feel good" story in this short book, there is another reason for its placement in the Old Testament. The reason is found in Ruth 4:17-22, where Ruth, a Moabite and foreigner, becomes the great-grandmother of King David. And even more remarkable, this makes Ruth an ancestor of Jesus Christ. Ruth is only one of a few women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy found in Matthew 1. The significance of this story is the providential hand of God in, not only providing for a poor widow, but in orchestrating the coming of the Savior of the world.

### □ Notes

# I Samuel 1-3

We begin the transitional chapter in the life of Israel between the time of the judges and the time of the kings. In this period of history we read about Israel's last judge, a man named Samuel. It's apparent from the story that Samuel was born for great work — work done on behalf of the Lord. Not only will Samuel be the last of the judges, he also will hold the informal office of prophet. A prophet's responsibility is to speak the words of God — whether about the future or current events.

Samuel's first assignment as a prophet was to tell Eli about the word of the Lord concerning Eli's family, and in particular, his two rebellious sons. The prophetic office will become an important part of the life of Israel as we will see going forward in our Old Testament readings. We'll then see the fulfillment of the prophetic office in Jesus Christ who is the Word — the Word that was with God, the Word who was God and became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1).

## □ Notes

# I Samuel 4-7

This is, perhaps, the lowest point in the young history of Israel — the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. The situation epitomizes the broken state of Israel (its lack of leadership), their lack of faith in God and the short supply of trust in His good promises. Yet, God will not be mocked. He will not be allowed to be treated as some false god — one among many found in that region in that day. The Ark itself isn't a god, or its contents — rather the place ordained for God's presence among His people. This is why chaos ensues in Philistia when they capture the Ark and why some of the men of Israel died when looking into it upon its return.

This entire episode becomes a strong reminder to Israel, and now to us, of not taking God and our relationship to Him casually. As the Israelites cried out in verse 6:20 "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?" The answer, apart from a mediator, is no one can stand before this God. But for us, as Christians, we do have a Mediator — Jesus Christ — who provides full access to the Father.

## □ Notes

# I Samuel 8-10

The day has come when Israel demands a human king. Samuel's days as judge and seer were nearing its end and the people saw no good replacement for him. Notice the key verses which describe both God's intent for Israel and Israel's own heart about the matter of having a king. In 1 Samuel 8:7 the Lord says to Samuel, "For they have not rejected you, but have rejected me from being their king over them." God's plan was for Israel to have no human king, but instead, to be ruled in a true theocracy. Notice the motivation and heart of the people in verses 8:19-20 when they tell Samuel, "But there shall be a king over us, that we may be like all the other nations." The Israelites didn't want to be different, but rather similar to those nations around them which meant they wanted a human king.

God granted their wish and gave them a king. He warned them through Samuel that having a human king would come at a cost, a cost they may soon regret. A man named Saul became the first human king of God's people.

## □ Notes

# I Samuel 11-13

Saul begins his reign as Israel's king in very humble circumstances. When his first opportunity to lead Israel into battle comes, we find Saul plowing his fields and doing the work of a laborer, not the work of a king. Once Saul leads Israel to victory in this first battle, his kingdom becomes secure and Samuel feels it's appropriate to retire from his role as judge and seer. As a good prophet, Samuel's farewell speech is full of warnings and admonitions to Israel. Words we can apply easily to ourselves today include, "If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice and not rebel against the commandments of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well" (12:14). Yet we'll quickly see how Saul, the new king, disobeys God and compromises his reign and the kingdom. The truth became clear — even an earthly king isn't the answer to Israel's long-term prosperity and security.

## □ Notes

# About SpringHill Camps

SpringHill Camps is a non-profit Christian camp and retreat ministry with locations in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio. Our mission is to glorify God by creating life-impacting experiences that enable young people to know and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. You and your kids will love Summer Camp with our extreme sports, high adventure activities and outdoor games because it's all integrated with life-changing, fun, faith-filled experiences.

But that's not where it ends! We've also got Day Camps, Weekend Retreats, Men's and Women's Retreats, Family Camps, Corporate Retreats, Church Retreats, etc. Whether it's spring, summer, fall or winter, there's always something going on! Youth, teens, adults and families can truly live it up. And you, your church, your company or organization can even book our facilities and programs for your very own group retreats, conferences or outing.

Over 53,000 people experience SpringHill Camps every year.

Come see why!





### About Michael Perry

I'm married to Denise and we have four children, M.D., Christina, Mitch and Jonathan. I've worked for SpringHill Camps since 1998 and have been its President and CEO since 2001.

I graduated from Central Michigan University with a degree in Business Administration in 1984. I obtained my MA in Ministry Leadership at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary through Cornerstone University in May 2012.

Since my days at Central Michigan, I have made reading the Bible in its entirety a major commitment. This practice has made a significant personal difference in my life and I'm excited to help others live out this similar commitment.

Though I am not a Bible scholar or theologian, I have a deep love of the Scriptures and have taught it for over 15 years through adult Sunday school classes and retreat seminars. My goal is to inspire others to spend time in all of the Scriptures on a daily basis allowing the Scriptures to transform their lives and the world in which they live.

For additional copies, please contact the Development Department at 231.734.2616.





# Reflections

Reflections photography by Michael Perry.  
SpringHill Camps photography by SpringHill staff.  
Quotes sourced from New International Version, Zondervan 1984.

© 2013 SpringHill Camps  
P.O. Box 100 | Evart, MI 49631 | 231.734.2616 | [springhillcamps.com](http://springhillcamps.com)