

**The VibbleSpace  
Daily Bible Reading  
Schedule**



# Introduction to the Devotional Guide

As the new year begins, it is a great time to get into the habit of daily Bible reading. The **VibbleSpace Daily Reading Schedule** follows a Monday-Friday rhythm, allowing the weekends for catch-up, meditation, or other reading. The schedule begins on the first Monday in January and runs for 50 consecutive weeks, ending in the middle of December. This allows for a break over the holidays!

While a daily dose of the Bible is really all you need (after all, the Holy Spirit is the teacher), sometimes it can be helpful to have a little supplemental guide to spark your meditative imagination. This document contains two types of supplements to your daily reading:

1. ***Illustrations.*** Each week there is a cartoon illustration that attempts to capture the overall message of the designated passage. If you are a visual learner, you may find this a helpful tool for meditation.
2. ***“Food for Thought.”*** These daily commentaries were originally written in 2004 for a network of house churches in Southern Nevada. We have extracted the location specific language from the text, but left everything else in its raw state. Hopefully you will find a helpful nugget here and there to enhance your reading of the scripture.

Enjoy!



# Genesis

## Week 1

# Creation, Uncreation, Recreation

God creates it, Man distorts and destroys it, God restores it



**Monday:** Genesis 1-5

**Tuesday:** Genesis 6-10

**Wednesday:** Genesis 11-16

**Thursday:** Genesis 17-20

**Friday:** Genesis 21-24

## Introduction

In the 1970's Alex Haley's television mini-series "Roots" gripped the nation. In this mini-series the story of the African people's experience in the United States was told in epic style. As a nation we felt the pain of Kunta Kente as he was trapped and taken from his African village and sold as a slave to European settlers in the United States. Why was this mini-series created? Why did it air in the 1970's? In the mid-seventies the first generation of young black people was emerging following the riotous decade of the civil rights movement in the 60's. Alex Haley knew that the identity of the black community in the United States was at a crucial crossroads. The diligence of the civil rights activists had made a difference in our culture and the black person was presented an opportunity to emerge from the darkness of racial oppression and take his place at the table of the free American citizen. Having never experienced freedom like this before, and having been told by society for so long that they were second-class citizens at best, the black community's search for identity was a difficult journey. Haley knew that the black population needed to have stories with which to identify that would connect them to the past, that would give them heroes to emulate, and that would fill their existence with meaning.

Every culture and every people group is the same. Whether it is a family sitting around the table at

a family reunion and retelling the stories of their grandparents, or the bard of a village singing the ancient songs of the tribe, every group has its stories that give it meaning.

The people of Israel are no different. As you begin to read the book of Genesis it will be helpful to put it into its correct context. The book of Genesis is to the people of Israel as “Roots” was to the black population of the United States. In order to fully grasp the context of this epic story we must turn the video tape ahead and look at the book of Exodus. In Exodus we find the story of one of the greatest leaders of all time: Moses. Under the direction and power of God, Moses led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years, during which time they had known nothing but oppression, humiliation, and subjection to the pagan culture of Egypt. As the people emerged from Egypt and stepped into the wilderness of Zin they were at a similar cross-roads as the black population in America. Who were they? Where did they come from? Why were they there? Where were they going? How were they to behave? Moses knew that the people needed stories that would unify them, give them meaning, make sense out of the chaos that had been their experience, and give them a trajectory on which to travel.

The first five books of the Old Testament – known as the Pentateuch, the books of Moses, the Law, and the Torah – are designed to give meaning and direction to the people of Israel. Here is a brief intro to each book.

**Genesis:** the word means “beginnings.” In this epic tale we find the stories that describe the beginning of everything. In ch.1-11 the universal,

cosmic questions are answered? Where did we come from? Why is there pain and suffering in the world? What is the meaning of life? In ch. 12-50 we find the beginning of the specific group of people called Israel. In these chapters we track through the lives of the “patriarchs” or founding fathers of the nation of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

**Exodus:** This book tells the story of how Moses led the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and to Mt. Sinai where God gave them the Law. This Law would serve to create order out of the chaos of their existence and give a clear picture of how God wanted them to behave as a society.

**Leviticus:** This book is the law itself. It gives specific laws regarding the place of worship called the Tabernacle, the priests who officiated the worship of God, and the societal laws that kept the people clean and healthy.

**Numbers:** In this book we see a snapshot of how God handles disobedient children. During this part of the story the nation rebels against God and is forced to wander through the wilderness for 40 years until a new generation can enter into the land that God had promised to Abraham.

**Deuteronomy:** In this book Moses preaches his final sermon to the new generation of Israelites, preparing them to enter into the Promised Land. Here we revisit the Law and hear the final plea of Moses urging the people to love God and obey His commandments in order to prosper in life.

# This Week in Genesis

Genesis is divided into two major sections:

## **Ch. 1-11 - The Beginning of Everything**

The beginning of the universe: Creation ch. 1-2

The beginning of pain and suffering: The Fall of Man ch. 3

The beginning of world...again: The Flood ch. 4-10

The beginning of the nations: The tower of Babel ch. 11

## **Ch. 12-50 - The Beginning of Israel**

Abraham ch. 12-25

Isaac ch. 21-27

Jacob ch. 25-36

Joseph ch. 37-50

Even though you will be reading through ch. 24 on the daily reading plan, the daily devotionals will be focusing primarily on ch. 1-11. This week we will look at some of the big questions of life: Why are we here? Why is their suffering? What is the purpose of life? I believe the issues raised in these five days are foundational ones for the understanding of the rest of the Bible. Please set aside adequate time each day to carefully meditate on the scripture readings. I encourage you to interact with the questions in the devotionals and seriously ask God to search your heart. May you be propelled a little further along your process of spiritual transformation as you use this simple tool.

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# Monday: Order Out of Chaos

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Read vv. 1-2. When you look at these verses by themselves, what picture is painted in your mind? Is this picture a surprise to you compared to ideas you may have previously had about creation? Why or why not?

What can you observe about the nature of God from these two verses?

Read vv. 3-27. Make a chart that shows what happened on each day. See if there are any patterns and/or relationships between the days and the events that emerge through your observation.

Read vv. 28-31. What was God's blessing on the man and woman? What were God's instructions to the man and woman?

How did God feel about all He had made?

Read 2:1-3. What did God do after he was finished with creation?

What have you learned about God, humanity, and nature from meditating on this chapter?

## Food for thought:

When you look out over the surface of a large body of water like one of the Great Lakes or the ocean, what do you notice? Water is in constant movement. Water is in a state of flux. In the ancient world the term “deep” that is used in Genesis 1:2 was a commonly used metaphor and image for chaos. In the beginning the earth was chaotic, like the raging waters of the ocean. Then, the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the chaotic waters. This a very beautiful picture of God. The Hebrew word translated “hover” is the word *recaph* which means to grow soft, relax, and, as used in this verse, to move gently over something. In Deuteronomy 32:11 it is used to describe how a mother eagle spreads her wings over her young for protection.

Now read v. 2 again with this definition in mind. Here we see God hovering over a chaotic universe, gently, lovingly, one day at a time, bringing order out of the chaos. By the end of the sixth day God had formed the chaos into a well-ordered system of life, relationships, purpose, and meaning. And then, after declaring that this ordered universe was “very good”, God rested. Can’t you just see it, like a craftsman admiring his masterpiece, He breaths deeply and sits down to relish in a job well done. In this rest, the chaos is gone and peace has taken root. There is quite a difference between 1:2 and 2:2. In 1:2 there is chaos, in 2:2 there is peace. The process in between these two verses is the creational process of God.

Now think of your own experience in life and ask yourself whether you are living in a 1:2 existence or a 2:2 existence. How many times have your circumstances or the condition of your mind seemed

like the heaving waves of a chaotic ocean, throwing you about in a chaotic maelstrom. Life in our culture can be very chaotic. Many of us spend much of our time in a 1:2 existence. But then, there, gently moving over our soul, hovers the Spirit of God, ready to bring order out of chaos once again and move us into the order, purpose, and peace of 2:2.

Today, as you prepare to move out into the chaotic world of life, work, and daily duties, do a quick heart check and see where you are on the spectrum between 1:2 and 1:2. If you are feeling chaotic, take a few extra moments and breath deeply. Sit in silence and ask the Spirit to move gently through your soul and bring order to the chaos. Ask Him to remind you that God has set you free from sin (chaos) and has breathed life and purpose into your existence. Ask Him to give you the strength and courage to live for Him today. Ask Him to create in you a clean heart that is focused on Him. Then, ask Him to fill you with His peace so that you may enter your day with a level head, filled with the peace and joy of God, overflowing with love for all the people you meet throughout the day. Have a 2:2 kind of day!

## Tuesday: Created for Community

Genesis 2:4-25

What gave man life? (v. 7)

What was man's responsibility? (v. 15)

What was missing in man's life? (v. 18)

What was God's solution for man's problem? (vv. 19-24)

What was the man and the woman's attitude toward each other? (v. 25)

## Food for thought:

How would you feel if someone kidnapped you, stripped off all your clothes, and dumped you in the middle of a crowded shopping mall? As you stood there, bare naked, for all the world to see, what thoughts would run through your mind? How would the crowd around you respond?

Why does a scenario like this illicit such intense emotion within us? Why is the standing in front of your classroom in your underwear dream a common and recurring nightmare for so many people?

Deep within us we all have hidden secrets. We all have parts of our physical bodies and parts of our emotional/mental/spiritual self that we do not want others to see. Deep down there are many things about which we are ashamed. We carry regret, we carry imperfections, we carry pieces of ourselves that we would never want anyone else to see. These elements of our lives are shrouded in shame. So, in light of these “shameful” pieces, we spend a great deal of time, money, and energy on covering up these pieces with fancy clothes, pretty faces, a positive mental attitude, a successful career, or whatever mask or cloak that will keep others from seeing our entire package.

Can you imagine a world without shame? Can you imagine a world where we did not have to cover ourselves? A world where people did not use each other for their own gain? A world where people did not look upon each other with a cynical skepticism, afraid to trust for fear that they might be used, made to be a fool, or hurt in some way. A world where people saw nothing but the good in each other, said what they meant, looked out for the good of the other,

and loved deeply...with no shame, fear, or regret. Does this sound like the kind of world you would like to live in? Does this sound too good to be true?

Why do we have such a deep longing for this type of utopian society? We long for it because that is how we were intended to live. Adam and Eve were naked and they felt no shame. Adam and Eve were created in the full glory and presence of God, they had no knowledge of evil (remember, that didn't come until the crunch of the fruit), they were naked before God and before each other. I believe that the mention of their nakedness goes far deeper than the fact that they had no clothes on their backs (or fronts!). To be naked is to be fully exposed and vulnerable before another. In our current, fallen world, we spend a great deal of energy trying to hide ourselves from each other. We don't want people to see who we "really are" for fear that we might be rejected. We cover our naked bodies, but, even more intensely, we cover our naked souls. Adam and Eve did neither. Adam and Eve were fully exposed to one another and fully exposed to God (ch. 3 tells us that they walked together in the garden).

We were created to live in this type of world. We were created to be involved in deep intimacy with God and with each other. Does that mean that real Christians should run off and join nudist colonies so that we can experience "full-exposure" and vulnerability? No. We couldn't handle that. Unfortunately on this side of the fall, that type of exposure would simply feed our distorted sexuality and lead to further pain and destruction. However, we should realize that the Kingdom of God and the purpose of the church on earth is to begin rebuilding this type of intimacy into humanity.

Here are three truths upon which you can meditate today:

**1. God is a community of love.** We can see in the first two chapters many examples of the trinitarian plurality of God's nature. In 1:1-2 we see God the Father creating, God the Spirit hover over the waters, and God the Word speaking all things into being. In 1:26 God said, in reference to the male AND female aspect of humanity, let US make man in OUR image. Finally, the Hebrew word for God in chapter 1 is *Elohim*, which is in the plural form. So what, you may be asking? By recognizing the fact that God is in Himself a community of three persons, we realize that God, by nature, is a loving community. If God's nature, God's image, is a loving, harmonious community, then all that God creates will be, by nature, designed to be a harmonious, loving community.

**2. Humanity is designed as community.** The image of God was not given to the individual man. The image of God is the male and female nature of humanity. We see in ch. 2 that it was not good for the man to be alone. The individual male needed a completer, a complimentary counterpart that was very different than him and without whom he could not be whole. As humans we need community. We need others who are different than us to complete us and to connect us. To have a loving community around you is not a nice perk that you can hope to develop in your spare time after work. A loving community is like air, water, and food. It is part of your spiritual DNA. The longer you are in isolation, the deeper your spiritual unrest and dis-ease will grow.

**3. You are invited to the party.** The community of God created the community of man in order to to invite the community of man into the community of God. In other words, God loves you and created you for the sole purpose of knowing Him and being known by Him.

We have spent so much time on this in today's devotional because I believe this is a central (if not THE central point) of all theology and truth. You will not understand the purpose and meaning of the rest of the Bible if you do not grasp this fundamental point. Let's state it again, in bold letters:

**God created you because He loved you and desires for you to know Him, love Him and be loved by Him...now and for eternity.**

# Wednesday: Community Confounded

## Genesis 3

What was the serpent's proposition to Eve? What was his accusation against God?

What was the result of Adam and Eve's disobedient act of eating the forbidden fruit? (v. 7)

In what ways did the man and woman's attitudes and behaviors towards each other and towards God change after their disobedience?

God "cursed" the serpent, the woman, and the man. Make a chart and list each element of the curse placed on each of these individuals.

Why did God expel Adam and Eve from the Garden? (v. 24)

## Food for thought:

Yesterday we saw that God's original intention for His world was to have a harmonious, loving community. God lived in union and harmony with man. Man lived in union and harmony with nature. Think about that for a minute. Has that been your general experience in the world? Does the mass of society live in loving harmony with God, with nature, and with each other? No. Why not? Think about this...fundamentally the concept of harmony doesn't make sense. How can God -- the life-giving, non-physical, unlimited, spiritual author of all things -- live in harmony and intimacy with man -- the physical, limited creature. How can man -- the thinking, rational, verbally-communicating creation -- live in harmony with the animals and plants -- the instinctual, non-rational, non-verbally communicating creatures? Good question. If we analyze this question given our own experience and our own ability to perceive reality, it is impossible. We can't see God with our eyes. Our brains can't comprehend eternity. We can't talk to animals or plants. In our experience we are limited and we are isolated from God and from nature. To the mass of humanity God is an enigma and nature is scary and a threat. And let's face it, we are pretty isolated from each other as well. Even though we share the ability to verbally communicate, it is very difficult to communicate well with one another and we typically end up hurting each other more than loving each other.

Perhaps the key to the improbability of the concept of a harmonious community is precisely because we are analyzing it from our current perception. We are looking at the Garden of Eden from this side of Adam and Eve's disobedience. In our current human condition we are intensely physical creatures. We

are consumed with the physical realities of living. We feel hunger pains, so we forage for food. Our mouths get dry so we scramble for fresh water. Our hormones rage so we seek sexual gratification. We see property so we beg, barter, or beat to get it. We spend most of our time either sweating and working hard to make ends meet or indulging our senses to ease the pain. In all that we do we are focused on the physical realities and the concept of “spirituality” is a vague notion that we may entertain once in a while. It is the rare person who invests much time into the pursuit of the spiritual senses, and even that person struggles intensely to have their spiritual senses be more dominant than the physical senses that so pervasively dominate our existence.

Well, you may be thinking, what is wrong with that? Isn't that how we were created? Aren't we predominately physical creatures? Perhaps not. What if Adam and Eve were originally created with the spiritual senses being the dominant factor in their lives. What if the Garden of Eden was a state of existence in which spirit and matter were not as distinct as we understand them to be. What if we were created to be able to handle the very presence of God, in all His glory, in His realm, on His terms. If that is the case then the perplexity of harmonious community would disappear. If we were created to be spiritual/physical creatures, and our spiritual senses dominated our existence, then perhaps we could know God. Perhaps we could speak to the animals. Perhaps we would be in full harmony with nature so that eating, drinking, mating, and working, would all be a natural flow of existence that were secondary, involuntary acts (like breathing) that existed merely to support our purpose and focus, which is to know and love God in eternity.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and willfully rejected His instructions, then something dramatic happened. When they ate the fruit they suddenly had the knowledge of evil. It wasn't that the fruit magically altered their mind and cognitive ability, rather, it was that, by disobeying God they now knew what it was to do evil. By disobeying God they turned their backs on Him, so to speak, and were cut off from His life-giving goodness. When they turned away from Him -- the source of light in the universe -- they stared into darkness and became aware that it was possible to be apart from God. This new-found knowledge of evil flooded their minds with doubt, with fear, and with shame. Now they saw their nakedness. Now they knew that if they were capable of turning on God they were capable of turning on each other and they hid their nakedness from each other. No longer would they be willing to be fully exposed to one another. The knowledge of evil had forever altered and inhibited the harmonious community that God had created. Being aware of evil their senses had been inverted. In the original creation they were SPIRITUAL/physical creatures, able to commune with God fully in the spiritual realm. Now they were (and we are) PHYSICAL/spiritual creatures, unable to connect with God, with each other, or with nature. We are isolated within ourselves, trapped in a limited, physical existence in a body that will eventually die.

Notice how this is evident in the curse. As you read through the curse in vv. 14-19 observe how each player in the drama was altered in their primary senses and were doomed to experience pain in the very thing that was supposed to be their purpose. Notice also how their spiritual focus on God has been replaced by a focus on something physical.

The serpent. The serpent represented the animal kingdom. Animals would be forever unable to commune with humanity and would be at enmity with humans. Being severed from their focus on God they would now be mindless, physical brutes “eating dust” and in enmity with humans.

The woman. With her spiritual senses “inverted” and having her physical senses elevated to dominance the woman would now have pain in childbirth. That thing that was intended to be the image of God’s creational activity in humanity, would now be a physically painful and dangerous experience. Also, the woman’s focus would no longer be on God but “her desire would be for her husband.” Women would now be considered the “weaker partner” and would become fixated on the need for a man’s provision and protection in their life.

The man. The dominance of the physical senses in the man’s life now made his purpose one full of pain. In the original creation God told Adam to tend the garden and watch over nature. This was man’s spiritual function as he fellowshiped with God. Now, without the focus on God, working the ground would become a sweat-laden, thorn-infested chore that would beat up his body and eventually grind him into dust. The man’s focus was no longer on God but on his work. He had to work to provide, he had to toil and labor, and beyond that there was little meaning.

Can’t you see the results of the curse all around us and in us? Men and women can’t get along with each other. Women tend to find fulfillment in relationships and men tend to find fulfillment in their work, so we spend much of our time watching women chasing

after their men while the men are chasing after their work. In both cases the focus is misplaced, the physical senses dominate, and the curse is played out generation after generation.

So, is there hope today? Yes. The hope is that God has not given up on us. God has provided a way for us to reconnect to the spiritual reality of eternity and glory for which we were created. As we read through the Old Testament you will see how God, out of love for His creation, is constantly reaching out from Eden, where the tree of life eternally stands, and inviting us to return home. The Old Testament paves the way and sets the stage for the invasion of the Kingdom of Heaven (the spiritual senses) into the Kingdom of Man (the physical senses) through the person of Jesus.

The message for today is that Jesus has made it possible for us to begin the refocusing process. If we will focus our hearts, minds, and bodies on Jesus and take them off of each other and the “stuff” around us, then we will begin to experience the healing and reconciliation process that comes through a relationship with God.

# Thursday: When Man Reaches to the Gods

Genesis 11:1-9

What was the state of society in the beginning of this chapter?

What did the people try to do and why did they want to do it?

What was God's opinion of their plan?

What was God's response to their plan? Why?

## Food for thought:

When the people in Genesis chapter 11 gathered together they had one thing going for them that was really good. They had unity. They shared a common language, they shared a common value system, and they shared a common goal. In the corporate American world they would have been poised for success. There was one problem. They had inverted the process of knowing God. They were trying to build a tower that would connect them with God. That sounds silly to our modern minds, but in the ancient world they believed that God lived just above the celestial dome of the sky. If they could just build a tower tall enough then they could be at an equal standing with God and they would “have a name for themselves.”

What they failed to realize is that God cannot be reached by human effort. God has to do the reaching down. There is no tower tall enough, no religious system perfect enough, no human righteousness good enough to “reach” God. God must reach down to us and we must accept His terms for knowing Him. Otherwise we will mess it up. When humans build the tower you end up with Facism and goose stepping Nazis. When humans build the religion you end up with the Inquisition and bloodshed.

Jesus’ second command was to love your neighbor as yourself. This is impossible unless it is preceded by the first command. We must first love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then, and only then, are we even able to love our neighbors. To love God is to acknowledge that there is a knowable God that is more than a fuzzy notion or a non-personal force. To love God is to first learn about God and

who He is and who He is not. To love God is to realize that God has established parameters for His creation and expects obedience from His children. To love God is to allow God to kill our own ambition and self-desire and be filled with His love which was fully demonstrated in Jesus. Then, when we are filled with His love, we can overflow that love and truly love those around us.

Today, ask yourself, “Am I building a tower, or am I letting God call the shots?” This is a deep and difficult question that may take years to unpack. Part of the journey of spiritual formation is to allow God to dismantle the towers that we so readily build and break us of our pride. Allow God to bring out His wrecking ball in your life today.

## Friday: When God Reaches Out to Man

Genesis 12:1-9

Based on the little information given, how would you describe Abram?

What promise did God make to Abram?

What was Abram's response to God whenever God would make a promise?

## Food for Thought:

Yesterday we saw how God tore down something that man built. In today's passage we see a man building something again, only this time the order is different.

God chose Abraham to become a vessel of His grace to the world. We really don't know why God chose Abraham. It doesn't give his credentials for being the father of God's chosen people. Perhaps that's the point. Perhaps Abraham didn't have any credentials. Isn't that how God tends to work? God takes the least likely people in order to do His greatest work. Think about it. Abraham and Sarah were old. They were beyond child bearing years. So God reaches down to an ordinary Urite who can't physically have children with his wife and says, "You are going to have so many children you won't be able to count them." "Yeah right," Abraham must have thought, "Do you have the right number? Have you seen my wife? She's pretty and all that, but I think the baby making factory has been shut down." God says, "Perfect. Now you can't take any of the credit."

If we are to know God then we need to get one thing clear: We can only know God when God makes Himself known to us. There is nothing we can do through good works, incantations, or magic potions, that will make God come to us. God is God and we are not. When we are stripped of pride and any self-delusion that we somehow "deserve" God's love and favor, then we are ready to accept God's gracious gift of love and life to us.

At this point in the devotional it is important for us to stop and take a moment to understand the extreme importance of today's passage. The promise God made to Abraham is called the "Abrahamic

Covenant.” A covenant was an agreement between two parties that was binding and unbreakable.

The covenant that God made to Abraham has two important components that we need to grasp:

1. The rest of the Bible is all about this promise. God made His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 and the rest of the Old Testament is how God continually and progressively developed this promise. The New Testament is about how Jesus became the ultimate fulfillment of the promise and the means by which it would be fully realized in the world. As you read the rest of the Bible you need to interpret it through the lens of this promise.

2. In this promise we see an attribute of God that can bring great peace to our minds. God is a covenant God. In other words, God doesn't break His promises. In our world people break contracts all the time. A person's word is worth almost nothing. Not so with God. When God makes a promise, He will never break it. In that we can rest assured. The covenantal nature of God is the foundation upon which we can build the rest of our lives.

Notice what Abraham did when God made His beautiful promise to him. Abraham worshipped. Abraham didn't build a grand tower to impress others or God. Instead, he built a simple altar upon which he gave a sacrifice to God. That is how it should be. When we are faced with the presence and the promise of God, we, too, should fall on our faces and worship God. In light of God's grace we should offer ourselves back to Him in absolute gratitude and devotion.

In what ways can you worship God with your life today in response to God's grace?