

## January – Week 1

# The Thread

### WEEK 1 - DEVOTION 1

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. – John 1:1*

This year you'll be learning the big-picture story of the Bible. But you also have the chance to learn the Gospel as you go. Do you know what the Gospel is? Could you define it?

The term gospel comes from the Greek phrase that means "good news." So, the Gospel is essentially the good news of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the payment of our sins. That is, after all, really good news. But what does it have to do with the big-picture story of the Bible? Great question . . .

The Gospel is the fullest expression of God's grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. And if you begin to look for it, you see signs of the heart behind the Gospel all throughout the Bible. See, the Bible really is the story of God's desire to rescue us from the penalty of our sins, and to restore us to a perfect relationship with Him. As we read the Bible, we can see the thread of the Gospel weaving itself through the entire story of Scripture. It's pretty cool, actually.

One of the goals of these devotions is to highlight where we see evidence of the Gospel as you read the Bible's story. You'll do this in the form of weekly memory verses.

On the first day of each week, you'll be challenged to memorize a verse or two of Scripture. Take this chance seriously. Being able to meditate on God's Word as you go through your day is a vital aspect of growing in your faith. And the best way to think about the Bible is to "hide it in your heart," as the psalmist says.

**Today, memorize John 1:1.** It's an important verse that speaks to the foundational role Jesus (the Word) played in creation.

# The Thread

### WEEK 1 - DEVOTION 2

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1*

Is it possible to pack more wonder into fewer words?

Read Genesis 1:1 again. With these verses, the Bible comes to life, starting its long, winding journey from Genesis to Revelation. However, these words also speak to another beginning. These words speak to the beginning of all things. And look who we see in the middle of the action . . .

God.

Look at the first four words of the Bible: "In the beginning, God . . ." In the beginning, God. In the beginning, God was. And there was only God. Before anything else existed, God did. Nothing created Him. He wasn't born. He just was. And He just is.

The same God that existed before time and creation exists today. But He doesn't merely exist. He is active. He is active in world affairs, in natural events, and in all circumstances. Most importantly for you, He is active in your life. The God who spoke everything into being knows you and loves you. He wants you to know and love Him more, too.

So, today, just sit back and reflect on the awesomeness of God. Look around you. Those trees? That sunset? Your life? It's all His handiwork. Today, think about what it means that God created all things and that He chose to include you in His creation.

# The Thread

### WEEK 1 - DEVOTION 3

*The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. – Genesis 1:2-3*

There are times that we read the Bible and we struggle to wrap our brains around what we've read. Sometimes this is due to the fact that the Bible was written thousands of years ago in a cultural context different from ours. We have to work to find the central truth of what we're reading and apply it to our lives. But sometimes, we can be blown away by what we read simply because God is overwhelmingly awesome to our human brains. Genesis 1:2-3 is one of those times.

**Read Genesis 1:2-3.** Can you imagine what this is describing? A time before light? What do you think the "surface of the deep" means? Sounds a little scary. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as alive and active, in motion, hovering, existing, being . . . Hovering over the waters? What waters? And then BOOM! God says, "let there be light," and there was light. Amazing!

It's human nature to want to understand things. We aren't comfortable with the unknown. We also like to be in charge. But God doesn't work that way. While we can know a ton about God, we'll never understand all of Him. He's too awesome for that. And we'll never be in charge of Him. He'll always be above us. And that's OK.

When we read verses like these, it's perfectly OK to be blown away by them. We don't have to have all the answers. It's part of what makes God majestic and wonderful. In these moments, it's OK to sit back and just marvel at who God is, and how amazing His ways are. It's actually a healthy part of knowing and loving God. So today, do that. Just be amazed by God. Go to Him in prayer and tell Him how awesome He is.

# The Thread

### WEEK 1 - DEVOTION 4

*God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. – Genesis 1:10*

If someone let's you borrow or use something they value, what is your attitude toward it? You're pretty careful with it, right? For instance, if your friend lets you see her new phone, you're not likely to toss it back to her in the air, are you? No. Because she values it, you value it. You respect the fact that this is a new, good thing.

**Read Genesis 1:6, 9-10.** This is a bit of a combination of what God did on days two and three of creation. The creation account pictures God crafting and shaping the universe. The cool thing about the account is how often God steps back at the end of a day's work and summarizes the work He just did.

Throughout the creation account, God looks at His handiwork and proclaims it "good." God was pleased with the work He did. God looked at the order of things created and said, "Nice work." Here's a random question you might not have ever considered: how do you view God's handiwork? What is your attitude toward the world God has made? Interesting question, isn't it?

God values His creation. That includes the earth, the animals, and other people. As we said at the beginning of this devotion, you most likely try to value the things that people you care about value. The way you treat God's creation says a lot about how you feel about Him.

**Something to think about . . .**

- Do you see yourself as someone who tries to take care of the environment? If it's God's creation, shouldn't this be something you are intentional about?
- Do you look at other people and see the value that God sees in them? If not, what keeps you from doing so?

# The Thread

## WEEK 1 - DEVOTION 5

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. – Genesis 1:27*

What's your most valuable possession? Is it a piece of technology, such as a phone or a gaming system? Is it your car? Or is it something more sentimental? Maybe it's a gift given to you by someone you love. Whatever it is, visualize it. Think about it. What feelings does it evoke in you? Why is it so valued? What would you feel like if you were suddenly without it?

**Now read Genesis 1:26-27.** We're nearing the end of the creation account in Genesis 1. And before He was finished, God made people. There are a couple of things to note here. First, as verse 27 states, we were made in God's image. No other part of God's creation was described this way. We are unique in this aspect. And it hints at our extreme value to God. While all of God's creation is beautiful, humans are the crowning achievement of God's creative work. Also, if you were to look down a little further in the passage, you'd see that when God looked back over all creation, with humans in the mix, He pronounced it not just good, but very good. God was pleased.

We can be guilty of having a low opinion of ourselves. When we make mistakes, do dumb things, blow opportunities, or just act like dorks, we can be our own worst critics. We don't like the way we look, or feel, and we get down on ourselves. The fact of the matter is this: God loves you immensely. You were made in His image. He created you with Himself in mind. That should make you smile.

### Something to think about . . .

- What causes you to feel down, or to have a low opinion of yourself?
- What does it do to your self-worth knowing that God created you and loves you with an unending love?