



God wants to be in a close, loving relationship with all people. The Bible's stories tell how he has broken through to men and women throughout human history. God's biggest breakthrough was when his son, Jesus Christ, became human and lived among us. Now God wants to break through to you—to let you know how much you are loved. Here is a simple prayer to say whenever you read God's word:

Heavenly Father, through these words
help me understand the things you
wish to teach me.

Dear Jesus, through these words let
me feel the love you have for me as
you feel your Father's love for you.

Holy Spirit, through these words
inspire me to live as a follower of
Jesus and bring your love to every-
one I meet today.

Amen.

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Break Through!

The **Bible** for
Young Catholics

Good News Translation
Catholic Edition

Saint Mary's Press®

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Read This First!

Welcome to *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*. Growing out of childhood and into your teens is an exciting time of life. It can also be hard sometimes. You will be making some important decisions about what kind of person you want to be. The good news is that you are not alone—God is with you!

Sometimes it is difficult to feel God's love. Sometimes it seems as if no one else you know cares about listening to God—so why should you? Some people are in difficult or

even abusive situations that make them wonder if God really cares for them. Some people have never had the opportunity to really learn the truth about God. The good news is that no matter what we are feeling or what our situation is, God never stops trying to **break through** and let us know that he loves us. That is why the title of this special Bible for young people is *Breakthrough!*

God has provided us with many ways to experience his love and to understand how

Scripture and Tradition

God wants us to know him. So throughout history God has revealed himself to human beings. We call this “revelation.” God’s most complete revelation was through the person of his son, Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles handed on to others what they had learned from their experience of Jesus. They passed on everything that our loving God revealed to save us from sin and death. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the bishops of the Church continue to pass on this revelation without error for all ages.

This revelation is handed on in a special way through the Bible—in both the Old and New Testaments. It is also handed on through something called Tradition, a word which actually means “handing on.” Tradition includes some teachings and practices that may not be found explicitly in the Scriptures (another word for the Bible). In fact, some of God’s revelation is known chiefly through Tradition rather than through the Bible. That is why the Bible alone is not enough to learn about all of God’s revelation. Both the Bible and Tradition are needed to learn the fullness of God’s revelation.

“Catholic Connections” articles explain how Catholic beliefs are part of God’s revelation and are taught through the Bible. They discuss things like our belief in the sacraments, our devotion to Mary, and the special role of the Pope and bishops. If you read all the “Catholic Connections” articles, it will be like getting a mini-introduction to the main beliefs of the Catholic Church!

Catholic
Connections

he wants us to live. Hopefully, you experience God's love through your family, your friends, and the people of your church. But another way to know God's love is through reading his word, which we call the Bible or the Scriptures. Through the words of the Bible, God speaks to all people. That is why we read from the Bible when we gather at church to pray. But God also wants us to read the Bible on our own, and the Catholic Church encourages every person to do so.

This Bible was specifically created to help young people read and understand the Bible. We started by using the Good News Translation, a version of the Bible that is easier for young people to read. Then we added articles to forty of the Bible's seventy-three books to help you understand what God is saying in those books. You will find four different types of articles in those books: Study It!, Pray It!, Live It!, and Catholic Connections. There are samples of those articles on these pages so you can see what they look like. But read on for explanations of some other great *Breakthrough!* features.

Helps for Starting to Read the Bible

Everyone needs help reading the Bible. It is not an easy book for beginners to pick up and understand. The events the books talk

Study it!

Background for Understanding

The Bible was written a long time ago. So it is not surprising that you might need some help understanding the full meaning of the stories and teachings. This is true for adults as well as youth!

The Study It! articles give you information to help you better understand the Bible story you are reading. Some of the Study It! articles focus on the symbols the author used in the stories. Some help you understand the history behind the story. Some help you understand the story by explaining how people lived back then. The main purpose of the Study It! articles is to help you understand what the original author of the story was trying to get across.

Pray it!

Talking with God

Think of reading the Bible as sort of like having a conversation with God. Whenever you read the Bible, start by asking God for help in understanding what you read. After you read a section, listen for what God is telling you in the story. Then you will want to respond to God. This is one way of praying—by talking to God and listening for God's voice in what you read.

The Pray It! articles will help you do that. They contain prayers or ideas for how you might pray. Sometimes they make connections with the way we pray together at church. You may want to keep a journal to write down your thoughts—and to make up your own prayers—as you read the Bible.

about go all the way back to the creation of the universe. To fully understand the Bible's stories, it is helpful to know how they fit in biblical history. But many of the books don't give dates for their stories, and the books are not always in chronological order. So to help you see how the books and people fit into the big picture of the Bible's history, the very next section is a Bible timeline, called "God Breaks Through: Salvation History Timeline." You will find it helpful to read it over before you start reading the Bible.

You will also want to look at the section following the timeline, titled "Introduction to the Bible." It contains answers to questions like, "Who wrote the Bible?" and "How do I know the Bible is true?" and "What is a good way to study the Bible?"

It is also good to have a plan for reading the Bible. An important spiritual practice for all Christians, including Catholics, is to read complete books of the Bible. But don't start by trying to read through the whole Bible from beginning to end! In fact, for young Christians we don't even suggest you try to read all seventy-three books. We have picked forty books for you to focus on. The section "*Breakthrough!* Reading Plan" gives you a chart for keeping track of your progress.

Bible People Interviews

In the Bible we read about how God **broke through** to certain people as part of his plan of salvation. (Think of "plan of salvation" as God's design for saving us from sin and death so we can have full and everlasting life.) You will meet some of those people through imaginative interviews contained in the color sections inserted throughout the Bible. The interviews will help you understand the role these people had in God's great plan. You will be surprised by the variety of people God called—nomads, warriors, teens, people who didn't speak well, working people, fathers and mothers. Let them inspire you to answer God's call in your life!

Study Helps

You will find some important study helps in the back of *Breakthrough!* There are lists to help you find important Bible stories, lists for locating Jesus' miracles and parables, and a list of all the "Catholic Connections" articles. "Bible Passages for Special Occasions" suggests Bible passages for you to read at important moments in your life.

But there is more! "Word List" is a mini-dictionary of some hard to understand Bible words. Also included is an index of all the topics covered in the *Breakthrough!* articles. Finally, nine maps show the location of important events in the Bible. The more you use these study helps, the more expert you will become in using and understanding the Bible.

Live It!

Following God in Every Day Life

Reading the Bible will change your life, especially if you are open to hearing God's call in the Bible. Even though the stories and teachings of the Bible were written long ago, they still apply today. God's word is eternal—which is a way of saying that it applies to everyone, all through history.

The Live It! articles will help you understand how these ancient stories apply to your life today. They show how the Bible is a guide to building good relationships—with your friends, your family, and other people in your school and community. Live It! articles also show how God wants us to serve others who are in need and bring justice and peace to the world.

God Breaks Through:

The Bible tells the story of how God breaks through to save human beings from sin and bring us to eternal life. History told from the perspective of God's breaking through is called salvation history. This timeline shows the major periods of salvation history as told in the Bible's stories. Each period briefly describes what God is doing during that time in history, lists some of the Bible books that tell the stories from that period, and lists some of the important people of that period. The Bible books listed are only the ones used in the *Breakthrough!* reading plan. The Bible people whose names are in bold have interviews in the color insert pages.

Primeval History

The Bible begins with imaginative stories about how God created everything that exists. These are sometimes called "primeval" stories, meaning they are stories of things that happened before recorded history. The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, and the tower of Babylon teach us that God created everything and that human beings have a special place in creation. They teach us that sin destroys our relationships with God and each other. They teach us that sin spreads and that without God's help, sin leads to death and destruction.

BIBLE BOOK

Genesis, chapters 1–11



BIBLE PEOPLE

• Adam & Eve • Cain & Abel • Noah

Patriarchs

In this period of salvation history, God begins to form a special relationship with a chosen race of people. He makes a special promise, called a Covenant, with a man named Abraham and his wife, Sarah. God promises that their descendants will be numerous and that they will inherit a Promised Land. This is followed by the stories of Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac; their grandsons, Jacob and Esau; and their great-grandchildren, Joseph and his brothers and sister. These stories show us that even though Abraham and Sarah's descendants had many problems, God was faithful to his Covenant with them. Jacob's sons become the patriarchs—that is, founding fathers—of the twelve tribes of Israel.

BIBLE BOOK

Genesis, chapters 12–50



BIBLE PEOPLE

• Abraham • Sarah • Isaac & Rebecca
• Jacob, Leah & Rachel • Esau • Joseph

CREATION

2000 BC

2000 BC

1700 BC



Salvation History Timeline

Egypt and the Exodus

At the beginning of the Book of Exodus, we discover that the descendants of Jacob's children—now called Israelites—are in slavery in Egypt. God hears their cries and calls Moses to lead the people out of slavery. But Pharaoh, the Egyptian leader, has a hard heart. God has to send terrible plagues to make him let the Israelites go. The Israelites' escape from Egypt and journey to the Holy Land is called the Exodus.

On the way to the Promised Land, the Israelites stop at Mount Sinai. There God extends the Covenant he made with Abraham to all the Israelites. He gives Moses the Ten Commandments, which the people must obey as part of the Covenant. During the Exodus the people frequently complain and lose their faith in God. As a consequence they must wander in the desert for forty years, and only their children will be able to enter the Promised Land.

Settling the Promised Land

Moses dies before the Israelites enter the Promised Land. God calls a new leader, Joshua, to lead the people into the land. Much of the land is inhabited by other people. The Israelites must fight to gain control of the land. When they trust God, they are successful in their battles; when they do not trust God, they fail. Eventually they gain control of the land, and each of the twelve tribes is given their own section of the land.

New invaders, the Philistines, try to capture the land. At this time the Israelites have no king, because God is their ruler. But God calls special prophets and warriors, called judges, to help deliver justice and defend the land against the Philistine invasion.

BIBLE BOOK Exodus



BIBLE BOOKS Joshua, Judges, Ruth



BIBLE PEOPLE

• Moses • Aaron & Miriam • Pharaoh

BIBLE PEOPLE

• Joshua • Deborah • Samson
• Gideon • Ruth

1700 BC

1250 BC

1250 BC

1050 BC



Introduction to the Bible

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a holy book, which means that God speaks to us through it. It is the story of God's love relationship with the human race. Actually, the Bible is really not one book; it is a collection of books. There are seventy-three books in Catholic Bibles, forty-six books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

Who wrote the Bible?

Many of the Bible's stories were first told by storytellers around campfires and in religious gatherings. Or they were messages given in public places by prophets and evangelists. Eventually these stories and messages were written down. Other people added to them, combined them, and rewrote them. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, some of the books in the Old Testament may have gone through hundreds of years of rewriting before they became the books we have today.

The Bible was written so long ago that we have no idea who most of these writers and editors were. What we do know is that the Holy Spirit was at work through the whole process, inspiring these authors to communicate God's truth.

What does *inspired* mean?

The Bible was written by people who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This means that God is the ultimate author of the Bible. God made sure the Bible contains the things we need to know about God and how God

saves us. By inspiring the human authors, God made sure they communicated these things without any errors.

Inspiration does not mean that the Holy Spirit took over the minds of the human authors who wrote the books of the Bible. They wrote as human beings using the knowledge and language they had available. Being inspired did not change their human limitations. They did not always have accurate information about history or geography. They could use only symbols and examples they were familiar with. (That is why a lot of the imagery in the Bible has to do with raising animals and farming.) Despite these limitations, under the Holy Spirit's guidance they were able to communicate the things we need to know about God and God's plan for humanity.

How do I know the Bible is true?

You can count on the Bible teachings to be true because the human authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit. God wants to communicate his truth and love to us. So everything the human authors wrote about God and how God saves us is true and without error. You can also count on the Bible's teachings to be true, because for two thousand years people have experienced God's truth and love through the stories of the Bible.

Sometimes understanding the truth in the Bible takes work. Sometimes we have to look at the teaching of the entire Bible to see the whole truth about a topic like suffer-

ing or God's justice. Sometimes we have to understand the world of the original authors in order to discover the truth God wants us to know. We also need the Church's guidance to understand some of the more difficult passages in the Bible. The articles in *Breakthrough!* will help you with these things. But most of the time, God's truth in the Bible is pretty clear for those who really want to find it.

How do I find things in the Bible?

The Bible has a system for helping you locate specific passages. Each book in the Bible is divided into chapters (except for some very short books). The chapter numbers are the larger ones on the page. Each chapter is divided into verses. A verse is usually about a sentence long. The verse numbers are the smaller numbers in each chapter and start with verse 1 in each new chapter.

A Bible citation is a code for finding a passage using this system. A citation has three parts: the Bible book name, a chapter number, and verse numbers. So John 3:16–17 means the Gospel of John, chapter three, verse sixteen through verse seventeen. Go ahead, try and find it. If you need help finding where the book is in the Bible, use the handy chart in the back of *Breakthrough!*

What is a good way to study the Bible?

It is not a good idea to start at the beginning of the Bible and try to read it all the way through to the end, like you would a novel. Start with a book you find interesting and read a chapter or two every day until you finish it. Then pick another book and read through it. *Breakthrough!* has a suggested reading plan for doing this. The chart on the next page will help you keep track of your progress.

It is a good idea to have a little ritual each time you read. This will help you be more focused on what God wants to say to you as you read the Bible. Here are some simple steps you might try:

1. Start with a short prayer asking for God's help in understanding what you read. There is a prayer in the front of *Breakthrough!* that you can use.
2. Read carefully through the chapter or passage. Don't rush. Try to hear every word and let its meaning sink in.
3. Think about what you just read. Try to imagine yourself in the story. How would you feel? What do you think God is saying to you through the words you read?
4. Read the Study It!, Pray It!, Live It!, or "Catholic Connections" article if there is one connected to the passage you read.
5. Finish by thinking about how the reading might apply to your life. Is God comforting you about a hard situation? Is God calling you to make a change or try something new? Talk with God about whatever you are thinking or feeling.

Breakthrough!

Reading Plan

As a young person, you will want to get familiar with the people and stories in the Bible. A good way to do this is by reading complete books of the Bible. However, we do not recommend that you start at the beginning of the Bible and try to read it straight through. Because the Bible is a collection of many different kinds of books, it was not meant to be read like that. A better approach is to go back and forth between books in the Old and New Testaments. That way you can see the connections between both testaments.

The following chart lists the forty books that we have filled with extra articles. We chose these books because reading them will help you see the big picture of God's Revelation. You don't have to read the books in this order though; read them in whatever order you wish. We have listed all the chapters in each book so you can check them off as you read them. There are 943 chapters all together. To read them all in one year, you would have to read about two or three chapters a day; to read them over three years, you would have to read about one chapter a day. There is no need to rush, the important thing is to open yourself up to what God wishes to say to you.

MARK

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16

GENESIS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29
 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38
 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47
 48 49 50

EXODUS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29
 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38
 39 40

JOSHUA

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24

LUKE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24

ACTS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

JUDGES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21

RUTH

1 2 3 4

1 SAMUEL

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29
 30 31

1 TIMOTHY

1 2 3 4 5 6

2 TIMOTHY

1 2 3 4

1 CORINTHIANS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16

2 SAMUEL

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24

1 KINGS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22

2 KINGS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25

Foreword to the Catholic Edition of the Good News Translation

In the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, promulgated in 1965, the Second Vatican Council urged that “easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful,” and encouraged the preparation of new translations of the Scriptures “since the word of God should be accessible at all times” (*Dei Verbum* 22). Just one year later, the American Bible Society published *Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in the Today’s English Version*, and it immediately became an international best-seller. This success encouraged the American Bible Society to undertake the translation of the Old Testament and to publish the first edition of the *Good News Bible* in 1976. Even as the Old Testament was being translated from Hebrew, discussions between the ABS and Roman Catholic officials began concerning the possibility of translating the Old Testament books that Roman Catholic Bibles always include but which are not based on Hebrew texts. These books are sometimes called “deuterocanonical” to suggest that they were added to the list (canon) of books that Catholics consider to be sacred Scripture and a worthy basis for doctrine at a somewhat later date than those books that were translated from Hebrew. The deuterocanonical books exist in Greek and Latin sources and have always been included in English Bibles translated from the Latin Vulgate.

Consequently, the American Bible Society published the *Good News Bible with*

Deuterocanonicals/Apocrypha in 1979. This “interconfessional” text included all the deuterocanonical books plus a number of additional books not usually found in Catholic Bibles, but which other Christian traditions revere and employ in worship. This was the first edition of the *Good News Bible* to receive an *Imprimatur* (which means “let it be printed”) from a Roman Catholic bishop, the Archbishop John Francis Whealon, the late archbishop of Hartford, Connecticut. While the *Imprimatur* does not constitute an endorsement, it assures the reader that the book does not contain anything contrary to the Catholic faith. When the *Good News Translation* was revised in 1992, it too received the *Imprimatur*, this time from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops under the signature of the then-Archbishop (now Cardinal) William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore.

The Catholic edition of the *Good News Bible* you hold in your hands contains the 1992 revised text in the order and format most preferred by Roman Catholics. It contains only those books considered sacred Scripture by Catholics and presents them in the sequence that follows the one used in all Catholic Bibles in the Latin Vulgate tradition. If you are unfamiliar with the *Good News Translation*, or if you are looking for a translation that will help you better understand the Good News of Jesus Christ for you and the world today, I encourage you to read on.

Jean-Pierre Ruiz, STD
St. John’s University, New York
Epiphany 2003

OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is divided into two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament in Catholic Bibles contains forty-six books. The Bibles that most Protestants use has thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. They do not include the books of Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and some parts of Esther and Daniel. That is the main difference between Catholic and Protestant Bibles.

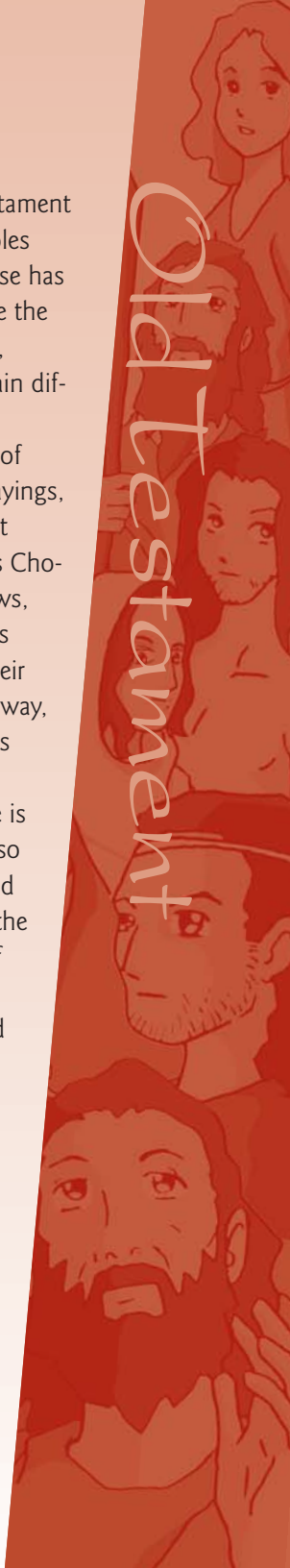
The Old Testament books include many different kinds of writings. You will find history, poetry, legends, laws, wise sayings, short stories, and the words of prophets. The Old Testament books are primarily about God's special relationship with his Chosen People. At different times these people are called Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and Jews. During their history God breaks through and calls the Chosen People to recognize him as their one and only God. God promises to bless them in a special way, and he asks the Chosen People to be faithful in following his commands.


This holy promise between God and the Chosen People is called a covenant. *Testament* is another word for *covenant*, so the Old Testament is the story of the Covenant between God and his special people—the Jews. Because of this, most of the books of the Old Testament are also the sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people. Since the books were written in Hebrew, they are sometimes called the Hebrew Scriptures. So the Old Testament isn't "old" because it is out of date. It is "old" because it is the story of how God first made his Covenant with his Chosen People.

The Old Testament in Christian Bibles is divided into four different sections. The table of contents shows the books that are in each section. Here is some information on each section:

The Pentateuch or Torah. These five books are the heart of the Old Testament. They contain the stories of Creation and stories about how sin entered the world. They tell how God broke through to first make his Covenant with Noah and Abraham. The Book of Exodus

Old Testament





tells how God led his people out of slavery through the leadership of Moses. At Mount Sinai, God extended the Covenant to all his Chosen People and gave them the Ten Commandments.

The Historical Books. These sixteen books are mostly religious history and some short novels. They tell how the Chosen People settled in the Promised Land. Eventually they became a kingdom led by kings like Saul, David, and Solomon. But the rulers and the people often worshiped false gods and ignored the poor. So God sent prophets like Elijah and Elisha to call the people to be faithful to the Covenant. The historical books have imaginative stories about heroes like Ruth, Tobit, Judith, and Esther.

The Wisdom Books. These seven books contain the collected wisdom of the Chosen People. They contain the songs they used in worship and prayer. They contain advice for living a good and holy life. The Song of Songs has poetry about the goodness of sexuality. The Book of Job is a debate about why good people suffer bad things.

The Books of the Prophets. These eighteen books contain the messages of important prophets. The prophets delivered God's message to the Chosen People. They warned the Chosen People against worshiping false gods. They challenged the Chosen People to act fairly and to care for the poor. The prophets also offered comfort and hope when the people thought God had abandoned them. And some of the prophets promised a future savior, the Messiah, who would bring God's love, justice, and peace to the world.

To fully understand God's plan for the human race, we need both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, God reveals the love he has for us. The stories teach us how sin keeps us from being in a completely loving relationship with God. The Old Testament shows how, through various people, God broke through to put his Chosen People on the right path. The stories prepare us to understand how Jesus Christ fulfills God's promise to save us from sin and death.

Jake's mom keeps photo albums and scrapbooks. Chantal's dad videotapes the major moments in her life—and the not-so-major ones. Frederick's grandparents tell stories about what life was like when they were young. Human beings need to keep track of their memories. They also need to understand where they came from and where they are going.

The Book of Genesis does these things for the family of God. It starts out with stories about how God created the world, how evil came to be, and what God did about it. Then it tells the history of God's people—people who are holy (sometimes), good (except when they're bad), and faithful to God (eventually). Most of all, the Book of Genesis is the beginning of a love story between God and us.



Headlines

- God Creates Stars, Seas, and Slimy Things (chapters 1–2)
- First Sin Leads to First Punishment (3:1–24)
- Flood Warning! Noah Evacuates (chapters 7–8)
- God Calls, Abram Listens (12:1–9)
- Treachery and Trickery: Twin Steals Inheritance (27:1–45)
- Jacob Tricked, Marries Wrong Sister! (29:15–30)
- Pharaoh Appoints Israelite Governor (41:37–57)

FACTOIDS

Who wrote this book? A tradition says Moses wrote Genesis, but that is unlikely.

It was probably written by one or more authors who collected stories that were passed from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Why was it written? Genesis was written to explain how God created the world, how sin became part of life, and how the Israelites came to be God's Chosen People.

How does it fit into the Bible? Genesis is the first book of the Bible. It is part of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Bible that Jews call the Torah.

How is it organized? The first eleven chapters tell the story of Creation, the Fall, and God's Covenant with Noah. The rest of the book starts the history of God's Chosen People, beginning with Abraham and Sarah.

Important themes

- Everything God created is good and holy.
- Sin and evil are real.
- God promises to care for those who are faithful.



GENESIS

The Story of Creation

1 In the beginning, when God created the universe,^a the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the Spirit of God^b was moving over the water.³ Then God commanded, “Let there be light”—and light appeared.⁴ God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness,⁵ and he named the light “Day” and the darkness “Night.” Evening passed and morning came—that was the first day.

⁶⁻⁷ Then God commanded, “Let there be a dome to divide the water and to keep it in two separate places”—and it was done. So God made a dome, and it separated the water under it from the water above it.⁸ He named the dome “Sky.” Evening passed and morning came—that was the second day.

⁹ Then God commanded, “Let the water below the sky come together in one place, so that the land will appear”—and it was done.¹⁰ He named the land “Earth,” and the water which had come together he named “Sea.” And God was pleased with what he saw.¹¹ Then he commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit”—and it was done.¹² So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased with what he saw.¹³ Evening passed and morning came—that was the third day.

¹⁴ Then God commanded, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate day from night and to show the time when days, years, and religious festivals^c begin;¹⁵ they will shine in the sky to give light to the earth”—and it was done.¹⁶ So God made the two larger lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night; he also made the stars.¹⁷ He placed the lights in the sky to shine on the earth,¹⁸ to rule over the day

Live it!

And God Was Pleased

The Bible says that every time God created something, God was pleased. God never made a mistake in creation, never started over, never even said “oops!” Poison ivy, stinkbugs, gray skies, mosquitoes, seaweed, vultures, and aardvarks were all worthy of God’s pride.

God was especially proud of the human beings he made on the sixth day (Genesis 1:31). No human being who lives on this planet was a mistake. You are here because God wanted YOU at this time in this place for a special reason. The same goes for the person at school whom you really don’t like and the person halfway across the world who lives in an “enemy” country.

The next time you’re down on yourself or you see someone you don’t really like, close your eyes and imagine God saying, “I am very pleased! I do great work!”

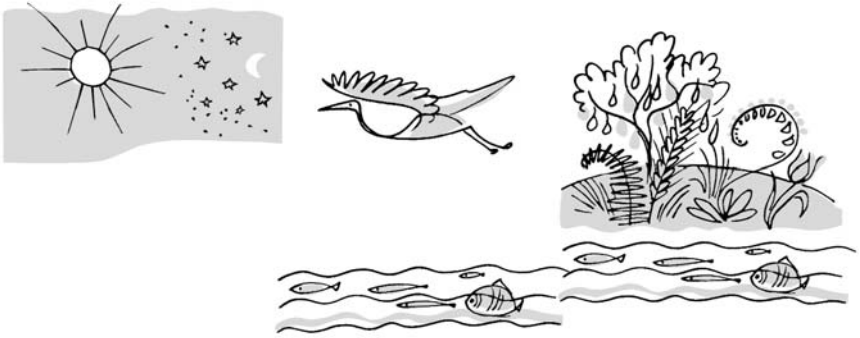
— Genesis 1:1—2:4

and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God was pleased with what he saw.¹⁹ Evening passed and morning came—that was the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God commanded, “Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings,

^a 1:1 In the beginning . . . the universe; *or* In the beginning God created the universe; *or* When God began to create the universe. ^b 1:2 the Spirit of God; *or* the power of God; *or* a wind from God; *or* an awesome wind.

^c 1:14 religious festivals; *or* seasons.



So God made them all, and was pleased with what he saw. (1:25)

and let the air be filled with birds.”²¹ So God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw.²² He blessed them all and told the creatures that live in the water to reproduce and to fill the sea, and he told the birds to increase in number.²³ Evening passed and morning came—that was the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small”—and it was done.²⁵ So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.

²⁶ Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild,^d large and small.”²⁷ So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female,²⁸ blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.²⁹ I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat;³⁰ but for all the wild animals and for all the birds I have provided

grass and leafy plants for food”—and it was done.³¹ God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased. Evening passed and morning came—that was the sixth day.

2 And so the whole universe was completed.² By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working.³ He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation^e and stopped working.⁴ And that is how the universe was created.



So God created human beings . . . and he was very pleased. (1:27–31)

^d 1:26 One ancient translation animals, domestic and wild; Hebrew domestic animals and all the earth. ^e 2:3 by that day he had completed his creation; or on that day he completed his creation.

1:26 Wis 2:23; Sir 17:3, 4; 1 Cor 11:7 1:27, 28 Gen 5:1, 2 1:27 Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6 2:2, 3 Ex 20:11 2:2 Heb 4:4, 10

The Garden of Eden

When the LORD^f God made the universe, ⁵there were no plants on the earth and no seeds had sprouted, because he had not sent any rain, and there was no one to cultivate the land; ⁶but water would come up from beneath the surface and water the ground.

⁷Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground^g and formed a man^g out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹He made all kinds of beautiful trees grow there and produce good fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.^h

¹⁰A stream flowed in Eden and watered the garden; beyond Eden it divided into four rivers. ¹¹The first river is the Pishon; it flows around the country of Havilah. (¹²Pure gold is found there and also rare perfume and precious stones.) ¹³The second river is the Gihon; it flows around the country of Cush.ⁱ ¹⁴The third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria, and the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. ¹⁶He told him, “You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.^j You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him.” ¹⁹So he took some soil from the ground and formed all the animals and all the birds. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they all

Study it!

Uncovering the Truth

The first two chapters of Genesis tell two different stories of Creation. Some people believe that everything happened just as the Bible says it did. But Bible scholars tell us that neither of these stories gives us the scientific or historical facts about Creation. For example, God did not really create the world in six twenty-four-hour days. Neither God nor Adam named anything. And God did not take a rib from Adam to create Eve.

The stories in Genesis are symbolic stories. They may not contain scientific facts, but they tell us some important truths about God:

- God always was, even before the universe was created.
- God created everything.
- God loves all of Creation.
- God created humans in the image of God.
- God created us to be happy and live in perfect harmony with him, each other, and all creation.

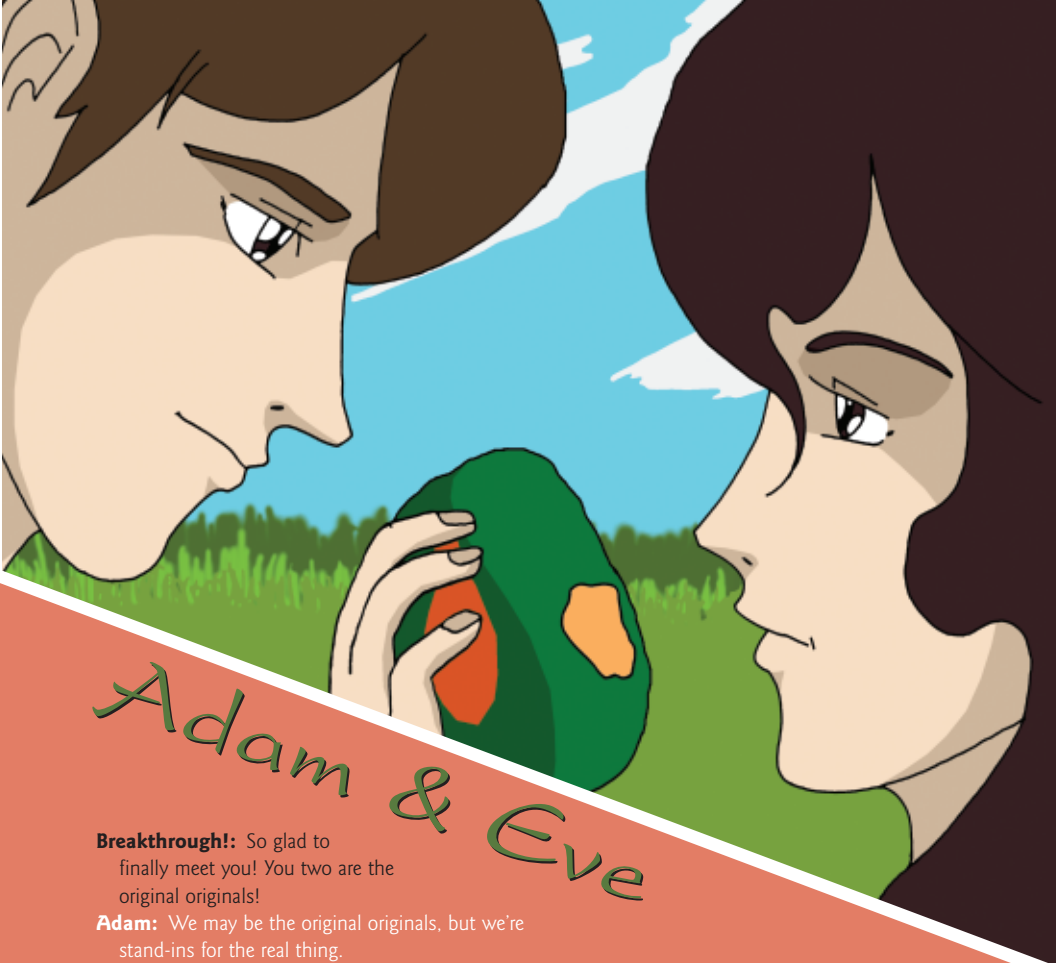
There are many ways to communicate religious truth, and the Bible uses most of them. Believing the religious truth that the Bible teaches is the thing that really matters.

— Genesis 2:5–25

^f 2:4 THE LORD: Where the Hebrew text has Yahweh, traditionally transliterated as Jehovah, this translation employs LORD with capital letters, following a usage which is widespread in English versions. ^g 2:7 GROUND . . . MAN: The Hebrew words for “man” and “ground” have similar sounds. ^h 2:9 knowledge of what is good and what is bad; or knowledge of everything. ⁱ 2:13 CUSH: usually means Ethiopia, but here may refer to a place in Mesopotamia. ^j 2:17 knowledge of what is good and what is bad; or knowledge of everything.

2:7 Wis 15:8, 11; 1 Cor 15:45 2:9 Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14

Genesis means “source” or “beginning.” It means that this book is about the beginning of things: the world, human beings, sin, the Covenant with God.



Adam & Eve

Breakthrough!: So glad to finally meet you! You two are the original originals!

Adam: We may be the original originals, but we're stand-ins for the real thing.

B: Huh?

Eve: What Adam is trying to say is that we're characters in a story that isn't really history.

B: But you've got real names! And you're in the Bible!

Adam: Actually, my name simply means "human being."

Eve: And my name means "living."

B: You mean, you never existed?

Adam: I wouldn't say that. God created human beings and there was a first set of human parents, right? But the first human beings lived long before recorded history. So in the opening stories of the Bible, we are the symbols for the first man and woman.

B: Then what about the part about the Garden of Eden?

Eve: The garden is another symbolic part of the story. It explains the way things should be between God and human beings. God created

us with a free will and meant us to live in perfect harmony with him, each other, and all creation. But we chose to give in to temptation and disobeyed God.

Adam: Our sin has been passed on to everyone who lived after us—except Jesus and his mother, Mary.

Eve: Have you ever heard of original sin? That's what Adam is talking about. It means that every person is born somewhat separated from God and has a tendency to choose sin.

B: Does that mean we're all bad?

Adam: Absolutely not. Everything God created is good and holy. Sometimes we make bad choices, but God's love is much greater than our weaknesses.

Eve: Right. Even though we sometimes turn away from God, God never turns away from us. And that's the truth!