

OLD TESTAMENT EDITION

go deeper

BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

MARCH 1 THRU NOVEMBER 29, 2009

**OLD TESTAMENT
READING PLAN &
DEVOTIONALS**

Based on THE DAILY WALK BIBLE from WALK THRU THE BIBLE

**PART 2 OF 2
WALKS 136 THRU 274**

Complete the Challenge!

We invite you to accept the *go deeper* Old Testament Bible Reading Challenge, where you will complete the Old Testament by Thanksgiving Weekend, completing 39 weeks of reading 6 passages of scripture and one devotion a week.

For this 2009 Bible Reading Challenge, we've decided to continue to use the reading plan created by *Walk Thru the Bible* available as *the Daily Walk Bible* which can be purchased in several versions from Tyndale publishing or directly from Walk Thru the Bible at www.walkthru.org. There is a New Testament Guide of Walks available as well.

You don't have to use a special Bible to participate in this challenge! Use your favorite version. Make a change and try a new translation. Read online. Keep a journal devotional guide, or even a blog.

Thanks to the folks at Walk Thru the Bible, they've given us permission to duplicate the devotional readings that are part of the Old Testament reading plan, and those devotionals are included in this booklet, which is also available on our church website, www.CiceroChristianChurch.org. Navigate through News&Notes→ Resources→ Forms&Policies.

This is booklet two of two, containing walks for the final 139 days of the challenge. Days 1-135 are in booklet one.

This booklet of devotionals is taken from *the Daily Walk Bible*, New International Version, published by Tyndale and Walk Thru the Bible, Inc. and is recreated with permission.








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 Walk 136	7/14/2009	go deeper day 136
<i>Esther 8-10</i>		<i>Mordecai's Exaltation</i>
 Walk 137	7/15/2009	go deeper day 137
<i>Job 1-3</i>		<i>Controversy between the Lord and Satan</i>
 Walk 138	7/16/2009	go deeper day 138
<i>Job 4-7</i>		<i>Eliphaz and Job / First Debate</i>
 Walk 139	7/17/2009	go deeper day 139
<i>Job 8-10</i>		<i>Bildad and Job / First Debate</i>
 Walk 140	7/18/2009	go deeper day 140
<i>Job 11-14</i>		<i>Zophar and Job / First Debate</i>
 Walk 141	7/19/2009	go deeper day 141
<i>Job 15-17</i>		<i>Eliphaz and Job / Second Debate</i>
 Walk 142	7/20/2009	go deeper day 142
<i>Devotional</i>		<i>Our God Reigns</i>

LOOK BACK Your reading this week has carried you from the palace of Queen Esther to the pit of Job's suffering. You've seen God deliver his people from certain death and allow his servant Job to experience suffering up to the point of death. You've seen God's mighty arm at work in the days of Esther, and you've seen God strangely quiet and inactive in the midst of Job's sufferings. You've read about Mordecai's promotion for looking out for the welfare of his people and Job's agonizing calamities even though there was "no one on earth like him; he [was] blameless and upright" (2:3).

Perhaps you've wondered, "What's going on here, anyway? Is this really the same God at work? How can he be so benevolent to one of his children and seemingly so cruel and passive toward another?"

If so, you are not alone. Job asked himself many of those same questions. He struggled with the why of his predicament: "God where are you when it hurts? Why have you allowed such sadness and pain to come into my life? What have I done to deserve all this?" The answers Job found—and which you will find, too, as you continue to read—changed forever the way he looked at the God of creation.

LOOK UP Reputation is what others think you are; character is what God knows you are. And when your reputation and character are both blameless, you have integrity—the ring of authenticity in the life of the child of God.

**THE LONGER YOU DWELL
ON YOUR MISFORTUNES,
THE GREATER THEIR
POWER TO HARM YOU.**

Integrity is behaving in the dark just as you would in the light. It is being what you say you are and doing what you said you would even when no one is watching. It is consistency of character, with no hidden agenda or twisted motive.

Integrity is what causes you to tell the truth, regardless of how tempting it might be to shade the truth. It's what prompts you to tell the cashier you've received too much change, to give back the wallet someone lost without first counting its contents, to drive one mile under (rather than over) the speed limit, to be one minute early (rather than late) for an appointment, to stand up for what is right even if you stand alone.

When Job's world came crashing down around him, he no doubt faced an avalanche of emotional responses: fear, frustration, anger, bitterness, confusion, and bewilderment. Unknown to Job, a celestial drama was unfolding between God and Satan—with Job as the center of attention. God was inviting Satan to observe one of his choicest servants and to discover what a blameless and upright man looks like—one who holds fast to his integrity. Job's character in the crucible of adversity was so remarkable that even his wife found it unbelievable (2:9).

LOOK AHEAD Do you hold to your integrity in the midst of trying circumstances? Here's a little quiz to help you measure your "Integrity Quotient": *If you knew no one was watching or would ever know...*

How much would someone have to pay you to get you to lie or shade the truth?

How long would you watch a sexually suggestive TV program before you changed the channel?

How much "too much" would a cashier have to pay you before you went to the trouble of pointing out the error and returning the money?

How bad would things have to get before you were tempted to curse God?

Walk 143 7/21/2009 go deeper day 143
Job 18-19 Bildad and Job / Second Debate

Walk 144 7/22/2009 go deeper day 144
Job 20-21 Zophar and Job / Second Debate

Walk 145 7/23/2009 go deeper day 145
Job 22-24 Eliphaz Silenced / Third Debate

Walk 146 7/24/2009 go deeper day 146
Job 25-28 Bildad and Zophar Silenced / Third Debate

Walk 147 7/25/2009 go deeper day 147
Job 29-31 Job's Final Plea

Walk 148 7/26/2009 go deeper day 148
Job 32-34 Elihu and Job / Part One

Walk 149 7/27/2009 go deeper day 149
Devotional Searching for Answers (in All the Wrong Places)

LOOK BACK Debates have a tendency of going round and round, back and forth. And Job's debate with his three persistent friends is no different, as the verbal ping-pong match continues chapter after chapter.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have taken turns attacking Job's credibility and affirming God's justice. From their vantage point, Job deserves what he is getting. With each round of debate, the arguments become more pointed and the atmosphere more charged. Diplomacy and tact give way to allegations and attack. The interaction produces plenty of heat but not much light, as Job struggles to defend himself before God and man and find a satisfying answer to the confusing circumstances that have befallen him.

When argument and accusation fail to produce a solution, anger takes over. The third and final round of "debate" demonstrates that there has been a noticeable hardening of the attitudes on the part of Job and his three self-appointed counselors. Job continues to maintain his integrity; his friends continue to insist God's ways and wisdom are unimpeachable. And the stalemate continues.

LOOK UP When do you know for sure—not hope, or wish, or think, or accept as conventional wisdom—but know with absolute certainty?

Notice the strength of Job's assertions in chapter 27:

“As surely as God lives...” (v. 2)

“As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils...” (v. 3)







“As long as I live...” (v. 6)





THE FIRE IN YOUR
HEART WILL MELT THE
LEAD IN YOUR FEET.

These are not the hopeful musings of an incurable optimist, but the gut-wrenching convictions of an embattled saint. Job knows for sure that wickedness and deceit have no place in his response to unexplained suffering. And he knows with equal confidence that integrity and righteousness are always the God-honoring alternative. Regardless of how dark the night or bewildering the circumstances, it's always safe to trust the Lord.

LOOK AHEAD No one yearns to be crushed; no one welcomes the pain and pressure of adversity. Crushing is a painful, agonizing process—and the scars it leaves behind are real. But only through crushing can God release the full fragrance of his mercy in the life of a man or woman of God. If you are feeling the heat and pressure of painful circumstances today, then you are in good company. Place a copy of these triumphant words of Job in a prominent place and make them yours:

“I know my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (19:25-27)

 Walk 150	7/28/2009	go deeper	day 150
<i>Job 35-37</i>			<i>Elihu and Job / Part Two</i>
 Walk 151	7/29/2009	go deeper	day 151
<i>Job 38-39</i>			<i>Controversy between the Lord and Job</i>
 Walk 152	7/30/2009	go deeper	day 152
<i>Job 40-42</i>			<i>Job's Response and Reward</i>
 Walk 153	7/31/2009	go deeper	day 153
<i>Psalms 1-6</i>			<i>The Last Laugh</i>
 Walk 154	8/1/2009	go deeper	day 154
<i>Psalms 7-12</i>			<i>Let's Just Praise the Lord</i>
 Walk 155	8/2/2009	go deeper	day 155
<i>Psalms 13-18</i>			<i>No Fooling</i>

 Walk 156 <i>Psalms 19-24</i>	8/3/2009	go deeper day 156 <i>In God We Trust</i>
 Walk 157 <i>Psalms 25-30</i>	8/4/2009	go deeper day 157 <i>Praise and Thanks</i>
 Walk 158 <i>Psalms 31-35</i>	8/5/2009	go deeper day 158 <i>A Musical Manifesto</i>
 Walk 159 <i>Devotional</i>	8/6/2009	go deeper day 159 <i>Hitting the Prophetic Bull's—Eye</i>

LOOK BACK The book of Job introduced you to the sovereignty of God. The book of Psalms will help you learn to *worship* God.

Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, and you'll need an entire month to read your way through it. But don't let the size of the book overwhelm you. Think of it as 150 "songs of the heart"—poems set to music by David, Asaph, Moses, Solomon, and others as they walked with God and reflected on the many facets of his character.

You'll find a psalm for every mood: excitement and depression, gladness and gloom, expectation and exasperation. The human experiences behind the psalms bring the authors' words to life (don't miss the superscriptions at the beginning of many of the psalms—they often give important historical information about the occasion on which the psalm was written). You may want to review what you have already read in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles as a backdrop for the psalms David wrote.

Psalms is more than a big book of meter and verse. Think of it as God's love letter to you. He wants you to get to know him better, for to know him is to love him as Shepherd, Guide, Provider, Protector, and King.

LOOK UP The Psalms are more than a treasure chest of poetry and praise. They are also the source of many of the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

 THE HUMBLE CARPENTER
 OF NAZARETH WAS ALSO
 THE MIGHTY ARCHITECT
 OF THE UNIVERSE.

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, God used the words of the psalmists to predict with remarkable precision the details concerning the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As you continue to read through the Old Testament, find a spiral notebook and begin a "Portfolio of Prophecies" about the Messiah. Here is a partial list from the Psalms to get you started:

*A Messianic Prediction
in the Psalms...*

*... Fulfilled in the
New Testament*

All things would be put under his feet (8:6)	Hebrews 2:8
He would be resurrected from the dead (16:10)	Mark 16:6-7
He would be forsaken by God (22:1)	Matthew 27:46
He would be scorned and mocked (22:7-8)	Luke 23:35
His hands and feet would be pierced (22:18)	John 20:25, 27
Soldiers would gamble for his clothes (22:18)	Matthew 27:35-36
Not one of his bones would be broken (34:20)	John 19:32-36
He would be hated without a cause (35:19)	John 15:25
Zeal for God's house would consume him (69:9)	John 2:17
He would be offered bitter wine to drink (69:21)	Matthew 27:34

LOOK AHEAD Imagine that you have been given the task of predicting the birth of a child eight hundred years from today. You must correctly predict his name, place of birth, time of birth, the circumstances surrounding his birth, how he will live, how he will minister, how he will die, and what his final words will be before he dies.

"Why, that's impossible!" you say. And you'd be quite right... unless, of course, you were declaring God's message with a prophet's unerring accuracy. Aren't you glad you serve a God like that? Don't you wish everyone did? Share what you have learned about the messianic prophecies of Jesus with one other person this week, and invite him or her to meet the Messiah in a personal, life-changing way.

✚ Walk 160	8/7/2009	go deeper day 160
<i>Psalms 36-41</i>	<i>Looking Up from Down Under</i>	
✚ Walk 161	8/8/2009	go deeper day 161
<i>Psalms 42-49</i>	<i>A Mighty Fortress</i>	
✚ Walk 162	8/9/2009	go deeper day 162
<i>Psalms 50-54</i>	<i>Betrayed but Triumphant</i>	
✚ Walk 163	8/10/2009	go deeper day 163
<i>Psalms 55-59</i>	<i>The Link of Faith</i>	
✚ Walk 164	8/11/2009	go deeper day 164
<i>Psalms 60-66</i>	<i>Through the Night Watches</i>	
✚ Walk 165	8/12/2009	go deeper day 165
<i>Psalms 67-72</i>	<i>Your Burden Bearer</i>	

*Devotional**It's All in the Call*

LOOK BACK As the psalmist spotlights the character of God, he finds himself adjusting his conduct accordingly, God's love reaches to the heavens; therefore, there is no reason to be downcast. God is an ever-present help in trouble; therefore, there is no need to fret. God's greatness is astounding; therefore, let his praises be known to all.

By contrast, humans are frail and finite, sinful and guilty. The psalmist's cry for mercy and forgiveness is met by God's promise of cleansing and comfort. Seeing God's greatness and grandeur allows the psalmist to draw upon God's strength and supply. It's a lesson each new generation must learn—and one of the best places to learn it is at the knee of silver-haired saints who have walked with God for a lifetime (71:18)

LOOK UP Even a five-year old child knows the significance of the telephone number 9-1-1. It's the magic number that unlocks incredible lifesaving resources in a matter of seconds. Those confronted with a life-threatening situation have only to call 9-1-1 to find help in time of need, comfort in the face of danger, and protection from the forces that would seek to harm and destroy.

THE MELODY OF PRAISE IS
BEST PLAYED WITH THE
NOTES OF PRAISE,
ADORATION, CONFESSION,
AND THANKSGIVING

But stop for a moment and ask yourself this question: Why do people in trouble reach for the phone and dial 9-1-1? Is it because

- they *think* someone might be on the other end of the line to hear their plea?
- they *hope* there is help to be found somewhere?
- they *wish* there were a solution to their dilemma? or
- they *know* that someone who is trained, ready, willing, and able to help is poised to respond the instant their call arrives?

Think of Psalm 70 as the psalmist's 9-1-1 prayer:

"Hasten, O God, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me... Come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay" (70:1, 5).


And why does the psalmist call upon the Lord? Not because he hopes or thinks or wishes or wonders if God will come to his rescue, but because "[God] *will* deliver the needy who cry out... He *will* take pity on the weak and the needy... He *will* rescue them from oppression and violence" (Psalm 72:12-14). It's the same idea expressed by Jeremiah the prophet when he said, "This is what the LORD says... Call to me


and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33-2-3).


LOOK AHEAD When life seems to be out of control and circumstances are disconcerting as a three-alarm fire, you have several options as to how you will respond. You can lean on your own strength and understanding, even though you’ve been warned not to (Proverbs 3:5). You can surround yourself with busyness or indulge yourself in pleasure, but that won’t remove the feelings of fear and inadequacy. You can ignore your problems and hope they will go away, but chances are they won’t.


Or you can call upon the Lord, the only one who has promised never to leave you or forsake you (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5). It may sound like a simple solution—and in some ways it is. But with a Tower of Strength and Mercy like that awaiting your call twenty-fours a day, why would anyone look elsewhere for help?


 **Walk 167** 8/14/2009 go deeper day 167
Psalms 73-77 *People’s Questions, God’s Answers*


 **Walk 168** 8/15/2009 go deeper day 168
Psalms 78-83 *Warmth for Cold Hearts*

 **Walk 169** 8/16/2009 go deeper day 169
Psalms 84-89 *A Promise-Keeping God*

 **Walk 170** 8/17/2009 go deeper day 170
Psalms 90-97 *God’s Seal of Approval*

 **Walk 171** 8/18/2009 go deeper day 171
Psalms 98-103 *A Joyful Noise*

 **Walk 172** 8/19/2009 go deeper day 172
Psalms 104-106 *Growing or Groaning*

 **Walk 173** 8/20/2009 go deeper day 173
Devotional *Don’t Forget to Remember*

LOOK BACK The psalms you have read this past week ask and answer some of the intriguing *why* questions everyone is tempted to ask from time to time. Why do the wicked seem to get away with murder (Psalm 73)? Why has God seemingly rejected us (74; 77)? Why is God so patient with his people (78)? Why do the pagans question God’s

very existence (79)? Why does God judge his people (80)? Why does God sometimes seem to hide his face (88)?

The answers are as clear as the character of God. He is eternal (90), omnipotent (91) majestic (93), righteous (97), compassionate, gracious (103), creative (104), and promise-keeping (106). In short, “the LORD is God” (100:3), and to love him and fear him is to unlock many of the secrets of this life and the next (103).

LOOK UP Try this pop quiz on important bits of trivia:

- When is your spouse’s (or mother’s birthday)?
- What is your social security number?
- If you have a will, who is the executor?
- If you have a safe-deposit box, what is its number?
- When were the batteries last changed in your smoke detectors?

THE PERSON
WHO WILL NOT
COMMAND HIS OR
HER THOUGHTS
WILL SOON LOSE
COMMAND OF HIS
OR HER ACTIONS.

When it comes to important information, the best advice is also the simplest: don’t forget. Perhaps you are in the habit of writing down important birthdays or anniversaries on a master calendar... keeping important documents in a special place... changing the batteries in your smoke detectors whenever you change your clocks to (or from) daylight savings time.

The psalmist David has a similar reminder for you in Psalm 103. He wants you to remember who God is (his attributes)... what he has done (his activities)... how well he knows you (his omniscience)... how much he is in control (his sovereignty)... and how worthy he is to be praised. But none of that information will do you any good if you don’t remember it.

LOOK AHEAD Think of Psalm 103 as a mother lode of golden truths about the God you serve. It takes only a few minutes of meditation and reflection to discover shimmering bits of insight about the greatness of your God. Take the next five minutes and see how many of these statements you can complete, using the words you have read in Psalm 103.

Don’t forget... what God has done:

Don’t forget... what God is like:

Don’t forget... what God is not like:

Don't forget... how much God loves you:

Don't forget... how well God knows you:

Don't forget... how much God is in control:

Don't forget... how worthy God is to be praised:

And lest you forget what you have just remembered, tie a string around your finger. Then when someone asks you what the string is for (and they will), be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).

 Walk 174	8/21/2009	go deeper day 174
<i>Psalms 107-110</i>	<i>Handling Slander / Psalm 109</i>	
 Walk 175	8/22/2009	go deeper day 175
<i>Psalms 111-118</i>	<i>God Understands</i>	
 Walk 176	8/23/2009	go deeper day 176
<i>Psalms 119</i>	<i>The Riches of God's Revelation</i>	
 Walk 177	8/24/2009	go deeper day 177
<i>Psalms 120-127</i>	<i>Hymns of the Highway</i>	
 Walk 178	8/25/2009	go deeper day 178
<i>Psalms 128-134</i>	<i>Portraits of Harmony</i>	
 Walk 179	8/26/2009	go deeper day 179
<i>Psalms 135-139</i>	<i>The God Who Is There</i>	
 Walk 180	8/27/2009	go deeper day 180
<i>Devotional</i>	<i>Thanks, and Thanks Again</i>	

LOOK BACK Metaphors abound in the Psalms. Already you have discovered that God is your shepherd, light, salvation, rock, fortress, refuge, strength, defense, glory, and judge. The list will continue to grow as you read further in this magnificent “diary of devotion.” When you learn a new truth about God, don't forget to respond in worship to God. Psalms was not written for your information but for your transformation.

For a change of pace, try reading a portion of the Psalms just before you go to bed at night. Or leave your Bible open to the Psalms, and make it your meditation the first thing in the morning. Stick a small copy of the Psalms in your pocket or purse, and “chew” on a psalm as you enjoy lunch. If you have access to an audio version of the Bible, try listening to a portion of the book of Psalms, as you drive back and forth to work. In the process you’ll be taking to heart the first psalm: “Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers” (Psalm 1:1-3).

GOD’S WORK
OF CREATION IS
DONE: OUR
WORK OF
PRAISING IS
JUST BEGUN.










LOOK UP Find a dictionary and look up the word *refrain*. Now compare that definition with this one: “the reverberation of the heart when touched by the greatness of God.” It is a heartfelt exclamation that deserves to be repeated. Refrains are what you have discovered in several of the psalms you read this past week. Think of them as divine ditto marks that highlight a particular facet of God’s character or program. Repetition doesn’t have to be redundant if the motive behind it is to underscore something of great importance.

Can you find the *refrain* in each of the following psalms? (Hint: look for the portion of the verse that is repeated virtually verbatim).

- Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28
- Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31
- Psalm 136 (every verse)

LOOK AHEAD Thanksgiving ought to be more than a holiday on the calendar. God intends it to be the attitude of your heart. How can you know for sure? He said so... twenty-six times!

In Psalm 136 the psalmist rehearses a long list of memorable moments from the history of God’s people to stimulate an “attitude of gratitude.” As you read the psalm, you begin to anticipate the refrain that concludes each and every verse: “His love endures forever.” Can you find a reference in the historical books of the Old Testament (the first seventeen books, Genesis through Esther) to which the psalmist is referring in each verse? For example, verses 7-9 are a reminder of what God did in Genesis 1:14-18. How many others can you find? And if you feel like joining the psalmist in his heartfelt refrain... well, don’t refrain.

 Walk 181	8/28/2009	go deeper day 181
<i>Psalms 140-145</i>		<i>A Heart like God's</i>
 Walk 182	8/29/2009	go deeper day 182
<i>Psalms 146-150</i>		<i>A Lifestyle of Praise</i>
 Walk 183	8/30/2009	go deeper day 183
<i>Proverbs 1-4</i>		<i>A Father's Words of Wisdom</i>
 Walk 184	8/31/2009	go deeper day 184
<i>Proverbs 5-9</i>		<i>A Father's Exhortation on Wisdom</i>
 Walk 185	9/1/2009	go deeper day 185
<i>Proverbs 10-13</i>		<i>Wisdom vs. Folly</i>
 Walk 186	9/2/2009	go deeper day 186
<i>Proverbs 14-17</i>		<i>Wisdom in Daily Conduct</i>
 Walk 187	9/3/2009	go deeper day 187
<i>Proverbs 18-21</i>		<i>Wisdom in Daily Choices</i>
 Walk 188	9/4/2009	go deeper day 188
<i>Proverbs 22-24</i>		<i>Words of Wise Men</i>
 Walk 189	9/5/2009	go deeper day 189
<i>Devotional</i>		<i>Learning the Skill of Living</i>

LOOK BACK The closer you find yourself to the end of the book of Psalms, the greater becomes the crescendo of praise. Psalms 144-146 encourage you to praise God personally; Psalms 147-150 exhort you to praise God corporately. But whether you are alone or in a crowd, the result is the same: God, who is worthy of our highest adoration, receives from his creation the glory he so richly deserves.

Worshipping the Lord includes a healthy reverence for the Lord, for “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). In more than nine hundred nuggets of common (and uncommon) sense, Solomon challenges the reader of Proverbs to hunt for, embrace, and employ heavenly wisdom for each earthly decision.

Making something beautiful out of the raw materials of life is God’s plan and purpose for each of his children. But whether you choose the life of wisdom or the life of a fool, the choice is up to you.

LOOK UP Proverbs is such a treasure chest of insight that you'll want to read it more than once. In fact, you may want to begin the habit of reading one chapter from Proverbs each day of the month (for example, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, read Proverbs 24). As you read, notice the different kinds of proverbs and the lessons to be learned from each:

A WISE PERSON WILL DESIRE
NO MORE THAN HE OR SHE
MAY GET JUSTLY, USE
SOBERLY, DISTRIBUTE
CHEERFULLY AND LEAVE
CONTENTEDLY.

Contrasting proverbs use the word *but* to set up a comparison. "The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame" (3:35).

Cause/effect proverbs use the words *then* or *for* to show the cause-and-effect relationship of actions and reactions. "Honor the LORD with your wealth... Then your barns will be filled to overflowing" (3:9-10).


Numerical proverbs make a statement, and then itemize a list. "There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue..." (6:16-19).






Comparative proverbs use the word *better* to suggest something... better. "Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil" (15:16).

LOOK AHEAD If a carpenter can take a block of wood and turn it into a beautiful piece of furniture; we say that person is a gifted craftsman.

And if a man or woman, boy or girl, can take the raw materials of life and shape them skillfully according to the blueprint God has provided in his Word, we say that person is wise. It has nothing to do with IQ and everything to do with obedience. You can be wise with an IQ of 70; you can be a fool with an IQ of 170. The choice is up to you.

Whether you are a parent struggling to discipline a child, a teenager wrestling with peer pressure, or a rising executive tempted to follow the crowd in an unethical choice, you'll find Proverbs brimming with insight for living. Pick a topic you are eager to study from God's perspective, and retrace your steps through the book of Proverbs. Don't be surprised if God provides some heavenly (un)common sense.

 Walk 190	9/6/2009	go deeper day 190
<i>Proverbs 25-29</i>		<i>Wise Words from the King</i>
<hr/>		
 Walk 191	9/7/2009	go deeper day 191
<i>Proverbs 30-31</i>		<i>Alphabet of a Virtuous Wife</i>

 Walk 192	9/8/2009	go deeper day 192
<i>Ecclesiastes 1-6</i>	<i>Exploring Life's Inconsistencies</i>	
 Walk 193	9/9/2009	go deeper day 193
<i>Ecclesiastes 7-12</i>	<i>Explaining Life's Inconsistencies</i>	
 Walk 194	9/10/2009	go deeper day 194
<i>Song of Songs 1-8</i>	<i>Extolling Marital Love</i>	
 Walk 195	9/11/2009	go deeper day 195
<i>Isaiah 1-4</i>	<i>Judah's Shallow Religion</i>	
 Walk 196	9/12/2009	go deeper day 196
<i>Devotional</i>	<i>Search for Significance</i>	

LOOK BACK Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs—three books historically attributed to King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. But notice how these books parallel the downward spiral of his life: Song of Songs, when Solomon early in life was full of youthful passion and fervor; Proverbs, when Solomon in his midlife had learned much about the importance of choices, good and bad; and finally, Ecclesiastes, when Solomon in later life had discovered the bitterness of empty pursuits and the high office of chasing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

By contrast, Isaiah sets his compass on the commission he receives from the Lord and follows it with unswerving determination. For more than fifty years, spanning the administrations of four kinds of Judah, Isaiah stays true to his calling: delivering a ringing indictment upon God's disobedient people.

LOOK UP One of Satan's most effective tools to distract, disable, and ultimately destroy God's people, is the phrase "If only..."

**MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW
WHAT THEY WANT, BUT IT IS
SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM
WHAT THEY HAVE.**

- "If only I could get a high school or college degree, then I'd be on my way."
- "If only I could find a good job, then I'd have status and worth."
- "If only I could get married and have a family, then I'd be truly happy."
- "If only I could win the lottery, then I'd be set for life."
- "If only I could write a best-selling book, then I'd be someone important."






Take it from Solomon, the wisest, richest, most accomplished, most published, most married, most you-name-it individual in the Bible. If you are looking for significance and satisfaction in the pursuits of life, you are in for a rude disappointment. Purpose and meaning can never be found there; they are found only in the Giver of life himself. That's why at the end of his twelve-chapter odyssey, Solomon concludes with these words: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The hymn writer put it this way:

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

LOOK AHEAD Take a few moments to thoughtfully complete this "Significance Survey." It just might change the way you look at your "net worth" and accomplishments.

- I have \$_____ in the bank right now, but my real riches are what I have because I am in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
- I have earned a _____ degree, but I realize that all I can boast about is my relationship with God (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
- I am respected in my community because of _____, but whatever has been to my profit I consider loss for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:7).
- I have written _____ books and articles, but in the final analysis, all that matters is what I have done with *the* Book, God's Word.

Society today is marked by an obsession with significance. It's a pursuit as old as the days of Solomon—and just as fruitless unless God is the center and circumference of the search. Let your search end with him, and you will never be disappointed.

 Walk 197 <i>Isaiah 5-8</i>	9/13/2009	go deeper day 197 <i>Judah's Untamed Wickedness</i>
 Walk 198 <i>Isaiah 9-12</i>	9/14/2009	go deeper day 198 <i>Judah's Darkness and Dawn</i>
 Walk 199 <i>Isaiah 13-16</i>	9/15/2009	go deeper day 199 <i>Woe unto Them</i>
 Walk 200 <i>Isaiah 17-20</i>	9/16/2009	go deeper day 200 <i>Collapse from Corruption</i>
 Walk 201 <i>Isaiah 21-23</i>	9/17/2009	go deeper day 201 <i>Judgment Near and Far</i>

LOOK BACK It's hard to read Isaiah 5-27 without the aid of a good Bible atlas. Some of the nations and cities mentioned should be familiar because they still exist today (Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tyre, Arabia). Others have long since disappeared from the pages of history (Assyria, Babylon, Moab). Like a mighty threshing machine, the judgment of God falls upon small and great alike "in that day," punishing the arrogant, rewarding the faithful, and leading all humanity to worship the one who opens what no one can shut and shuts what no one can open (22:22).

LOOK UP Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the news that the space shuttle Challenger had exploded?

EVERY LOSS LEAVES A SPACE
THAT CAN BE FILLED BY
GOD'S PRESENCE.

For those of you over fifty, do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the news that President Kennedy had been assassinated?

Or what about when the World Trade Center towers fell?

Of course you do. These events touched the heart and soul of the nation. In those moments frozen in time, we held our collective breath, hoping, praying that the headlines had been a mistake.

Now read Isaiah 6:1: "In the year that King Uzziah died..." One of the most beloved monarchs in Judah's history, a man who had ruled for more than half a century, was dead. The only ruler many in Judah had ever known had died a tragic death, leaving an enormous leadership vacuum in the nation. No doubt many questions filled the air: How would they get along without good King Uzziah? What would happen to them and their nation? What would the future hold? Everything seemed so uncertain, so frightening, so fragile.

But then Isaiah saw something more. He saw the Lord, "seated on a throne, high and exalted" (6:1). Suddenly his fears melted away and his questions seemed unimportant. Who was in control? *God was in control*. Even though the king of Judah had passed off the scene, the King of the universe would continue to rule forever.

LOOK AHEAD Someone has commented, "If you can keep your wits about you when everyone else around you is losing theirs, you

obviously don't understand the situation." Perhaps. But it's equally possible you have a source of comfort and confidence that others around you haven't experienced. And that comforting Presence can give you a peace that defies human explanation, even in the face of tragedy (Philippians 4:6-7).

At a time when the nation of Judah was traumatized by front-page news, Isaiah was focusing on his holy, awesome, almighty God. The result was a quiet confidence that would fortify Isaiah for a lifetime of ministry to a hostile audience. How about you? Instead of reading a paper today, allow Isaiah's pen to be your eyes and ears as you look upon and listen to your mighty God. And don't be surprised if peace like a river (see 66:12) is the result.

 Walk 204 <i>Isaiah 28-30</i>	9/20/2009	go deeper day 204 <i>A Painful Example</i>
 Walk 205 <i>Isaiah 31-35</i>	9/21/2009	go deeper day 205 <i>Coming Destruction, Coming King</i>
 Walk 206 <i>Isaiah 36-39</i>	9/22/2009	go deeper day 206 <i>Judah's Day of Judgment</i>
 Walk 207 <i>Isaiah 40-43</i>	9/23/2009	go deeper day 207 <i>Mighty Lord vs. Idle Idols</i>
 Walk 208 <i>Isaiah 44-48</i>	9/24/2009	go deeper day 208 <i>God's Choice and Babylon's Fall</i>
 Walk 209 <i>Isaiah 49-51</i>	9/25/2009	go deeper day 209 <i>The Prince of Peace</i>
 Walk 210 <i>Devotional</i>	9/26/2009	go deeper day 210 <i>Walking in the Light</i>

LOOK BACK Disciplining an obstinate child is painful, both for the child and for the parent. God's loyal love for his people was tempered by his heartache over the pain they were inflicting upon themselves because of their disobedience. They said the right words, but their lives betrayed their true allegiance. They submitted man-made rules for wholehearted worship. They knew full well whom to trust and where to turn but willfully chose not to do either. They looked to foreign alliances for deliverance, rather than to the Lord Almighty.

Shining like a bright light in a dark room was righteous King Hezekiah. Faced with a tidal wave of Assyrian soldiers, Hezekiah turned to the one true Lifeguard—the living God. Faced with a life-threatening illness, Hezekiah turned to the Great Physician. In each case, the answer that came could only have one explanation (God did it) and one outcome (“so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God” 37:20). Indeed, comfort, instruction, and guidance are near at hand for all who look to the Holy One of Israel.

LOOK UP How do you walk with a holy God? If he is truly a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), how do you stay in step with him, enjoying his company without being consumed by his glory?

A PERSON SHOULD GIVE A
LOT OF THOUGHT TO A
SUDDEN DECISION.

How do you talk with him? Fellowship with him? Please him? Serve him?

The answer is as close as Isaiah 33:15-16. Those who aspire to walk with God cannot be casual or indifferent about their conduct and conversion. The ones who long to please God in everything are the ones

- who are righteous and truthful;
- who reject gain from extortion;
- who do not accept bribes; and
- who refuse to listen to plots of murder, who shut their eyes against contemplating evil.

And what reward awaits those willing to pay the high price for holy living (33:16)?

- “[They] will dwell on the heights” (heaven will be their home).
- “[Their] bread will be supplied” (God will supply their physical needs, Philippians 4:19).
- “[Their] refuge will be the mountain fortress” (God will protect and defend them from their enemies.).

LOOK AHEAD It’s not easy taking a stand for what’s right when everyone around you is running after what’s wrong. It’s not fun swimming against the current of public opinion or walking against the wind of selfish pursuits. If the truth were known, it’s hard work. But don’t be quick to go with the flow. After all, it was Jesus who warned us that “small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:14).

Even if you are the only one in your office or school who refuses to cheat and cut corners, tell the truth. Even if you are the only one in your dorm or class who has committed yourself to sexual abstinence until marriage, be willing to wait. Standing alone may not be popular, but it is always profitable for the man or woman who chooses to walk with God.

✚ Walk 211	9/27/2009	go deeper day 211
<i>Isaiah 52-57</i>		<i>The Suffering Servant</i>
✚ Walk 212	9/28/2009	go deeper day 212
<i>Isaiah 58-62</i>		<i>Consummation of Judgment</i>
✚ Walk 213	9/29/2009	go deeper day 213
<i>Isaiah 63-66</i>		<i>Isaiah's Prayer and the Lord's Reply</i>
✚ Walk 214	9/30/2009	go deeper day 214
<i>Jeremiah 1-6</i>		<i>Judah in Jeopardy of Judgment</i>
✚ Walk 215	10/1/2009	go deeper day 215
<i>Jeremiah 7-10</i>		<i>Judah in Idolatry</i>
✚ Walk 216	10/2/2009	go deeper day 216
<i>Jeremiah 11-15</i>		<i>Judah in Rebellion</i>
✚ Walk 217	10/3/2009	go deeper day 217
<i>Jeremiah 16-20</i>		<i>Judah in the Potter's Hand</i>
✚ Walk 218	10/4/2009	go deeper day 218
<i>Jeremiah 21-25</i>		<i>Judah in a Leadership Crisis</i>
✚ Walk 219	10/5/2009	go deeper day 219
<i>Jeremiah 26-29</i>		<i>Judah in Opposition to Jeremiah</i>
✚ Walk 220	10/6/2009	go deeper day 220
<i>Devotional</i>		<i>The Death That Brings Life</i>

LOOK BACK Ironically, the good news that brings peace began with bad news that brought brutality. The word picture in Isaiah 53 includes a graphic depiction of the Suffering Servant and his violent death at the hands of wicked men. He was “despised... rejected... pierced... crushed... oppressed... led like a lamb to the slaughter” (53:3-7). But far from being a tragic accident of history, his death “was the LORD’s will” (53:10) because he “bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (53:12). Like water to a thirsty pilgrim and healing to a broken heart, this glorious news needs to be made known to the nations, and that’s where the people of God come in.

But often, God’s people feel totally inadequate for the assignment—like Jeremiah, whose tender spirit and frequent tears made him an unlikely candidate for the demanding role of prophet and proclaimer. For every excuse Jeremiah could raise, God had a faith-building vision of what could happen through an obedient servant, even in the face of false accusations and death threats.

PATIENCE IS A TREE WHOSE
ROOT IS BITTER BUT WHOSE
FRUIT IS VERY SWEET.

LOOK UP Have you discovered the liberating truth of God’s patient promises?

As early as Genesis 3:15, God promised that one day the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent—the Messiah would come to deal Satan a crushing blow and provide the bridge between sinful humanity and holy God. The promise was sure, but the wait would last thousands of years.

Isaiah painted a prophetic portrait of the Suffering Servant hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. Crucifixion was unknown in Isaiah’s day, yet he described the brutal procedure in minute detail. With unerring accuracy, Isaiah foretold details of Jesus’ death as if he were at Calvary gazing upon the very scene.

Centuries later—it all came true just as Isaiah had predicted. With each passing year, the promise moved closer and closer to fulfillment, until at long last, “when the time had fully come, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4).

LOOK AHEAD Waiting for the fulfillment of a promise can be as exasperating as waiting for Christmas to come. Time can seem to “stand still” when something you long for is long awaited. But those with the patient endurance to keep their eyes on the prize will one day discover it was all well worth the wait.

When you read “this is what the LORD says” in the pages of his Word, mark it down—it will come to pass. And when the time is right, you won’t have to wonder or wait. Pick a promise from the list below, and lay it alongside Isaiah 60:22: “I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly.” Then wait with patient expectation, for in due season you will reap if you don’t faint.

- “I am going there to prepare a place for you... I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:2-3).
- “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18).
- “God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him... Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 18).

Walk 221 <i>Jeremiah 30-33</i>	10/7/2009	go deeper day 221 <i>Hope amidst Judgment</i>
Walk 222 <i>Jeremiah 34-36</i>	10/8/2009	go deeper day 222 <i>Before the Fall of Jerusalem</i>
Walk 223 <i>Jeremiah 37-39</i>	10/9/2009	go deeper day 223 <i>During the Fall of Jerusalem</i>
Walk 224 <i>Jeremiah 40-45</i>	10/10/2009	go deeper day 224 <i>After the Fall of Jerusalem</i>
Walk 225 <i>Jeremiah 46-52</i>	10/11/2009	go deeper day 225 <i>The Fall of Jerusalem</i>
Walk 226 <i>Lamentations 1-5</i>	10/12/2009	go deeper day 226 <i>Wailing without a Wall</i>
Walk 227 <i>Devotional</i>	10/13/2009	go deeper day 227 <i>Light in the Darkest Hour</i>

LOOK BACK Sometimes through sermons, sometimes through silence and symbolic object lessons, Jeremiah confronts the people of Judah with the deadly consequences of their disobedience. His sermons are ignored by some and burned by others. His character is smeared and his motives questioned. Finally, Jeremiah is thrown into a muddy well, where he sinks to an all-time low (literally and figuratively). But through it all, God is at work in and through his choice messenger. When Jerusalem falls to the Babylonian onslaught, Jeremiah is freed and carried to Egypt. There he declares the future fortunes and misfortunes of Judah and their pagan neighbors. Though the present is grim, the future brims with hope if you know where to look (see Jeremiah 52:31-34).

 WHEN LIFE IS FILLED
 WITH SHADOWS, LOOK
 TO THE SONSHINE.

Lamentations is Jeremiah's "diary of disaster," penned as he watches calamity befall his beloved Jerusalem. You can almost wring out the pages, so soaked are they with Jeremiah's tears. But in the midst of Jeremiah's grief (Lamentations 3:22-23), he proclaims a truth so powerful, it has become the theme of one of the best-loved hymns of all time: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Governments rise and fall;

economies crumble; even spiritual leaders disappoint us. But the Lord's mercies never fail.

LOOK UP Have you ever experienced total darkness? You know, the kind you can feel as well as see?

Try it. Find an interior room, attic, or closet in your house where there is little or no natural light. Put a blindfold over your eyes and close your eyes tightly. What you have is absolute darkness—the absence of any glimmer of light.

Metaphorically, the people of God were experiencing total darkness in Jeremiah 52 as they faced the Babylonian onslaught. After all, consider this:

- There was not a crust of bread left in the city (v. 6)
- The city's defenses were in shambles (v. 7).
- The army had all gone AWOL (v. 7).
- The king's family was slaughtered before his eyes. Then his eyes were gouged out, and he was deported in chains to a distant prison (vv. 10-11).
- The Temple, city walls, and chief buildings were burned down (vv. 13-14).
- The king's entire "cabinet" was taken prisoner and executed (vv. 24-27).
- Thousands of Jews were taken captive to a distant land (vv. 27-30).

Dark days for the people of God, to be sure. But don't miss the final four verses, for there you'll discover light in the darkness—hope in the midst of horror. Though Evil-Merodach had no earthly reason to do so, the king of Babylon showed kindness and courtesy to the exiled king of Judah. Why? Because *God was not finished with his people*. He knew that they needed hope and a future.

LOOK AHEAD When your health is frail, when your financial prospects are bleak, when your family and friends are far away, when your job is uncertain, when tomorrow looks no brighter than today, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the darkness. But the light of one match can illuminate an entire room.

Take a moment to bask in the light of Psalm 27:1. There you'll discover that darkness is no match for the Light of your life, the one in whom there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life,
of whom shall I be afraid?*

Walk 228 <i>Ezekiel 1-6</i>	10/14/2009	go deeper day 228 <i>Ezekiel's Vision and Call</i>
Walk 229 <i>Ezekiel 7-11</i>	10/15/2009	go deeper day 229 <i>Sins and Sorrows</i>
Walk 230 <i>Ezekiel 12-15</i>	10/16/2009	go deeper day 230 <i>Signs and Sermons</i>
Walk 231 <i>Ezekiel 16-19</i>	10/17/2009	go deeper day 231 <i>Parables of Judgment for Judah</i>
Walk 232 <i>Ezekiel 20-23</i>	10/18/2009	go deeper day 232 <i>Swords and Signposts</i>
Walk 233 <i>Ezekiel 24-28</i>	10/19/2009	go deeper day 233 <i>Judgment East and West</i>
Walk 234 <i>Devotional</i>	10/20/2009	go deeper day 234 <i>Then You Will Know</i>

LOOK BACK Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—each shares a common experience. Early in their prophetic ministries, they experience a vision from God that shapes the entire course of their lives. Ezekiel discovers that the person God can use is awed by the glory of God... available to the Spirit of God... and acting on the Word of God. In signs and symbols, Ezekiel dramatizes the fate awaiting his countrymen: siege, enslavement, and a “very close shave”! Indeed, the end is near, and God is going out of his way to be sure the world knows who is behind it all—the sovereign Lord.

As the glory departs from the Temple, it is clear that judgment and exile for Judah’s leaders cannot be far behind, for as go the leaders, so go the people. Jerusalem has been unfaithful and fruitless, but God has shown loyal love in the face of their spiritual prostitution. Lamenting loudly and repenting of its wicked ways are the only appropriate responses nations desperately need to learn.

LOOK UP *Specialization* has been defined as “the art of learning more and more about less and less.” Wisdom comes more from living than from studying, and indeed, it is better to know some of the answers than all of the questions.

**DRAW A CIRCLE AND
 GET INSIDE, THEN
 PRAY GOD WILL
 SEND REVIVAL
 WITHIN THE CIRCLE.**

There are many things God wants you to know, but perhaps the most important is the truth repeated dozens of times in the book of Ezekiel: “You will know that I am the LORD” (6:7). Whatever else you learn in life will be meaningless unless and until you discover that God exists and rewards those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Scan back through the chapters you have read in Ezekiel this past week, and catalog a few of the things that should have led the people of God to the inescapable conclusion that there is a God and he is not silent.

5:13 _____

6:7 _____

7:4 _____

12:15 _____

13:14 _____

15:7 _____

16:62 _____

17:21 _____

20:20 _____


24:24 _____


28:24 _____


LOOK AHEAD God is sovereignly in control of what happens in your life, your family, and your nation. Did you know that? If so, what difference does it make?


God is holy, totally separate from sin, and totally committed to helping you find power over every sinful habit that still clings to your life. Did you know that? If so, what is his will for you today?


God knows all about you and still loves you unconditionally. Did you know that? If so, there's nothing he would rather hear than “I love you, Lord” flowing from your heart to his. Have you told him that today? If not, there's no time like the present.

 **Walk 235** 10/21/2009 go deeper day 235
Ezekiel 29-32 *Judgment on Egypt*


 **Walk 236** 10/22/2009 go deeper day 236
Ezekiel 33-36 *Watchman on the Wall*

 **Walk 237** 10/23/2009 go deeper day 237
Ezekiel 37-39 *Gog and Magog*

 **Walk 238** 10/24/2009 go deeper day 238
Ezekiel 40-43 *New Temple for Israel*

 **Walk 239** 10/25/2009 go deeper day 239
Ezekiel 44-48 *New Worship for Israel*

 **Walk 240** 10/26/2009 go deeper day 240
Daniel 1-3 *Daniel's Friends in the Furnace*

 **Walk 241** 10/27/2009 go deeper day 241
Devotional *Watching and Waiting*

LOOK BACK This past week you have seen Judah herself receive the full brunt of Ezekiel's assault. Like a diligent watchman, Ezekiel guards the house of Israel by warning of impending judgment. He calls and calls, but no one is listening. And finally the end comes, for "the city has fallen!" (Ezekiel 33:21). People are curious to hear the word of the Lord but do not put it into practice.

Knowing what to do must be translated into doing what you know. Like sheep without a shepherd, like dry, lifeless, disconnected bones, the nation lies plundered and devoured by its pagan neighbors. But even in defeat, God's purposes shine through, for he wants the nations to know that the Lord alone is God. The book ends with a glorious display demonstrating that God is not finished with his people or their Temple.

By contrast, Daniel is torn from his beloved Jerusalem to begin a three-year "resident program" in Babylonian studies. In his diet and his dreams, Daniel demonstrates to his captors that "there is a God in heaven" (Daniel 2:28), who interprets the world's most difficult dreams and protects his exiled people far from home.

LOOK UP Life has been described as "a series of crises cleverly connected by the mundane of the everyday." In Daniel's young existence, the mundane of life in Jerusalem gave way almost overnight to the crisis of living out his faith in a foreign land.

A WELL-WORN
PATH IS NOT
NECESSARILY
THE RIGHT ONE.

Captured as a prisoner of war, Daniel was confronted with numerous choices: Should I eat what they feed me? Should I accept the name they give me? Should I take the credit for being able to interpret dreams? Should I bow down to an idol of gold—at the risk of my life if I don't?

LOOK AHEAD Though you never read of Daniel preaching a sermon, that's precisely what he did with his life—in the choices he made, the

wisdom he demonstrated, the priority that he gave to prayer, and the diligence he demonstrated toward every task set before him.

“Dare to Be a Daniel” is more than an old gospel song. It is a timeless challenge for each new generation, calling them to be God’s “change agents” wherever he might send them. You may never see the inside of a kingly castle (or a lions’ den), but you can be sure your life will be full of excitement and challenge.

Daniel demonstrated by his dietary habits that his body was the temple of God. Your body is the only vehicle God will give you to do his will this side of heaven. Are you taking good care of it—eating a nourishing diet, getting adequate rest and exercise, and avoiding harmful substances? If not, study Daniel’s example carefully, and then “dare to be a Daniel.”

✚ Walk 242	10/28/2009	go deeper day 242
<i>Daniel 4-6</i>	<i>Daniel’s Faith in the Lions’ Den</i>	

✚ Walk 243	10/29/2009	go deeper day 243
<i>Daniel 7-9</i>	<i>Beasts, Kings, and Seventy Weeks</i>	

✚ Walk 244	10/30/2009	go deeper day 244
<i>Daniel 10-12</i>	<i>Previews of Israel’s Future</i>	

✚ Walk 245	10/31/2009	go deeper day 245
<i>Hosea 1-3</i>	<i>Moral Sins of Gomer</i>	

✚ Walk 246	11/1/2009	go deeper day 246
<i>Hosea 4-6</i>	<i>National Sins of Israel</i>	

✚ Walk 247	11/2/2009	go deeper day 247
<i>Hosea 7-8</i>	<i>International Sins of Israel</i>	

✚ Walk 248	11/3/2009	go deeper day 248
<i>Hosea 9-11</i>	<i>Promise of Israel’s Ruin</i>	

✚ Walk 249	11/4/2009	go deeper day 249
<i>Hosea 12-14</i>	<i>Promise of Israel’s Renewal</i>	

✚ Walk 250	11/5/2009	go deeper day 250
<i>Joel 1-3</i>	<i>Locusts and the Day of the Lord</i>	

LOOK BACK Daniel first appeared as a transplanted teenager. By chapter 4 of the book that bears his name, he was probably about seventy-six years old. And by the end of the book, he was a spry ninety-three!

Again and again Daniel demonstrated the *power* of God in the life of the *child* of God, enabling him to read strange writing on the banquet room wall, decipher the dreams of a king, and untangle beastly visions.

Daniel's life of singleness and single-minded devotion contrasts with Hosea's life as father of three and the husband of an unfaithful wife. Hosea's frustrated home became the backdrop for preaching to a fractured and faithless nation. God would heal and restore—if only Judah were interested in being cured. But her unrelenting disobedience and indifference left room for only one conclusion: "God will reject them because they have not obeyed him" (Hosea 9:17).

In the wake of a devastating locust plague, Joel wrote his message of comfort and caution to the southern kingdom of Judah. Joy and gladness had evaporated from the house of the Lord, and the day of his vengeance was near. But the solution has always been the same, in Joel's generation and in yours: "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved" (Joel 2:32).

LOVE IS A FABRIC
THAT DOESN'T
FADE WHEN
WASHED IN THE
WATER OF
ADVERSITY AND
GRIEF.

LOOK UP What's in a name? If you're a character in the pages of Scripture, the likely answer is "Plenty!" Here is a cast of characters from the book of Hosea and a suggested meaning for each name. Can you retell the story of the book of Hosea and his family experience just by using the names of his family members?

- *Hosea* means "salvation."
- *Gomer* (his wife) means "completion."
- *Jezreel* (his first born son) means "God plants."
- *Lo-Ruhamah* (his daughter) means "not loved."
- *Lo-Ammi* (his younger son) means "not my people."








LOOK AHEAD There are no perfect families in the Bible because there are no perfect people. Regardless of your family background, you'll find someone to identify with in the pages of the Bible.

Did you come from a home filled with jealousy and backbiting? You're in good company. So did the shepherd boy David and the eleventh of twelve brothers, Joseph.

Were your parents unfaithful to one another? Join the ranks with Jephthah, whose mother was a prostitute (Judges 11:1).

Has one of your parents been married more than once? Welcome to the club. The Samaritan woman whom Jesus met one day by a well in Sychar had been married and divorced *five times* and at the time was living with a sixth man (John 4:16-18).

The Bible does not condone this behavior, but neither does it seek to conceal the real family situation. And the point is clear: regardless of the family situation from which you have come, God has a wonderful family in mind for your future—the family of God. His unconditional, undying love for you is modeled in Hosea’s love for his unfaithful wife. It’s a love that doesn’t know when to quit. Do the members of your earthly family know about God’s love yet? They can, even without your saying a word (1 Peter 3:1-2).

 Walk 252	11/7/2009	go deeper day 252
<i>Amos 1-2</i>		<i>The Funnel of Fire</i>
 Walk 253	11/8/2009	go deeper day 253
<i>Amos 3-5</i>		<i>A Fallen Family</i>
 Walk 254	11/9/2009	go deeper day 254
<i>Amos 6-7</i>		<i>Woes and Warnings</i>
 Walk 255	11/10/2009	go deeper day 255
<i>Amos 8-9</i>		<i>Visions of Horror and Hope</i>
 Walk 256	11/11/2009	go deeper day 256
<i>Obadiah</i>		<i>An Ancient Family Feud</i>
 Walk 257	11/12/2009	go deeper day 257
<i>Jonah 1-4</i>		<i>God’s Reaching Mercy</i>
 Walk 258	11/13/2009	go deeper day 258
<i>Devotional</i>		<i>Loving Others as Only God Can</i>

LOOK BACK Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah were three minor prophets with messages of major importance. Amos (whose name means “burden bearer”) leaves his country roots as a shepherd and fig picker to bring a fiery message of judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel. Obadiah (“servant of the Lord”) declares a scathing indictment

upon the Edomites for their cruelty toward their brother nation Israel; and Jonah (“dove”) takes a boat ride and a “whale” of a thrill ride before he arrives in Nineveh to announce a forty-day countdown to calamity for the mighty nation of Assyria.

Amos uses three sermons and five visions to portray in graphic detail Israel’s unavoidable judgment. Though his is the shortest book in the Old Testament, Obadiah carries one of the strongest messages of judgment, offering Edom no plea to return and no promise of avoiding national calamity. Jonah, the only Old Testament prophetic book that revolves exclusively around a Gentile nation, shows it is possible for the audience (Nineveh) to repent, even though the preacher (Jonah) is hesitant to preach.

LOOK UP “The world would be a better place if only God would destroy _____.”

Few of us are bold enough to *utter* those words, but most of us have *considered* that thought at one time or another. If only God would get rid of the world powers that threaten the safety of our nation... the criminals who kill without conscience... the doctors who terminate life rather than protect it... the political and social zealots who murder for their cause... the parents who abuse and even murder their children.

The book of Jonah addresses our desire for revenge and retribution upon evildoers. The Assyrians were the most brutal, bloodthirsty power on earth in Jonah’s day. Given the chance, Jonah would have asked God to destroy them—and felt good about his








GOD INVITES US TO
BURDEN OURSELVES
WITH WHAT
BURDENS HIM.

request! But God had other ideas. He wanted Jonah to see the Ninevites as God saw them: lost, desperate, without hope, spiritually naive, in need of mercy, and worthy of saving.

Jonah’s prejudice toward the Assyrians ran deep. His hatred was intense, and he longed to see God’s mercy withheld from his enemies. For four chapters, God patiently worked with his stubborn prophet. When the book closes, the issue is still in doubt. What do you think? Do you suppose Jonah ever got on God’s “wavelength” regarding the Ninevites?

LOOK AHEAD Don’t allow an individual or a group of people who are objects of God’s love to become objects of your hatred or revenge. That doesn’t mean condoning conduct that God condemns. But it does mean releasing any bitterness or unforgiveness you may be harboring toward those whom God loves. Regardless of the *reason* for your hatred, the *response* should be the same: seeing others as God sees them and loving others as God loves them.

The psalmist David prayed this way: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Don’t follow Jonah’s example and harden your heart as well. Life is too short to spend it hating the very people God longs to love and save.

 Walk 259	11/14/2009	go deeper day 259
<i>Micah 1-2</i>		<i>Judah’s Day of Judgment</i>
 Walk 260	11/15/2009	go deeper day 260
<i>Micah 3-5</i>		<i>Judah’s Day of Triumph</i>
 Walk 261	11/16/2009	go deeper day 261
<i>Micah 6-7</i>		<i>Judah’s Day in Court</i>
 Walk 262	11/17/2009	go deeper day 262
<i>Nahum 1-3</i>		<i>A Flood of Judgment on Nineveh</i>
 Walk 263	11/18/2009	go deeper day 263
<i>Habakkuk 1-3</i>		<i>Living by Faith in Hard Times</i>
 Walk 264	11/19/2009	go deeper day 264
<i>Zephaniah 1-3</i>		<i>Judgment Day Is Coming</i>
 Walk 265	11/20/2009	go deeper day 265
<i>Devotional</i>		<i>Mercy and Justice for All</i>

LOOK BACK Micah (whose name means “Who is like the LORD?”) has been called the prophet for the exploited and downtrodden. Corrupt kings, false prophets, bribed judges, and pilfering priests all become targets of Micah’s prophetic barbs. Every level of Judah’s society has been taken captive by greed and opportunism.

Nahum (“burden”) concludes the saga begun more than a century earlier in the book of Jonah. The Ninevites, who experienced a short-lived repentance, now face a tidal wave of judgment. Total destruction is sure, and escape is impossible.

Habakkuk (“embrace”) is not afraid to wrestle with tough issues that test his faith. His questions of “Why?” and “How long?” are met by comforting descriptions of the person and program of God. The more Habakkuk knows about the plan of God, the more he can relax in the

loving arms of the Planner, for indeed, “the righteous will live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

Zephaniah (“the Lord hides”) paints a grim picture of death, destruction, and darkness for wayward Judah. He looks in all four directions before focusing on Jerusalem, the focus of God’s chastening and the object of God’s love.

LOOK UP Last week you read the book of Jonah and discovered that God delights to show his love to even the most wicked.

THOSE WHO SEE GOD’S HAND IN EVERYTHING CAN BEST LEAVE EVERYTHING IN GOD’S HAND.

Perhaps it surprised you to read this week that the city of Nineveh, which was the object of God’s love in the book of Jonah, became the object of his wrath and judgment in the book of Nahum. How can this be? Is God fickle in his feelings? How could God be angry with Jonah for failing to show mercy to the Ninevites, then turn around and act precisely the same way himself?

The key is found back in Exodus 34:6-7. There you will learn how the mercy of God and the justice of God blend together perfectly: “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

LOOK AHEAD How can so many people get away with murder today? Because it is “today.” The time is coming when God will settle all accounts equitably, when it will be too late for mercy, and in mercy’s place justice will prevail. For the Ninevites, that “day of reckoning” came approximately 150 years after Jonah’s memorable visit. The Assyrians’ change of heart in the days of Jonah became “business as usual” within a handful of years. God’s patience is great, but it is not endless. And while he may be long-suffering today, there will come a day when those who have rejected him will do the suffering.

On a three-by-five card, make a list of any grievances you are carrying against others that, from your perspective, are as yet unsettled. Now take your list of “unrighted wrongs,” commit each to the Lord in prayer, and then tear up the list. Practice showing mercy; leave justice to God.

Walk 266 <i>Haggai 1-2</i>	11/21/2009	go deeper day 266 <i>Don't Throw in the Trowel!</i>
Walk 267 <i>Zechariah 1-2</i>	11/22/2009	go deeper day 267 <i>Visions of Horses and Horns</i>
Walk 268 <i>Zechariah 3-4</i>	11/23/2009	go deeper day 268 <i>Visions of Priests and Olive Trees</i>
Walk 269 <i>Zechariah 5-6</i>	11/24/2009	go deeper day 269 <i>Visions of Scrolls and Chariots</i>
Walk 270 <i>Zechariah 7-8</i>	11/25/2009	go deeper day 270 <i>To Fast or Not to Fast</i>
Walk 271 <i>Zechariah 9-11</i>	11/26/2009	go deeper day 271 <i>Israel's Coming King and Shepherd</i>
Walk 272 <i>Devotional</i>	11/27/2009	go deeper day 272 <i>Finishing Touches</i>

LOOK BACK Haggai (whose name means “festive”) and Zechariah (“the LORD remembers”) are prophetic contemporaries with contrasting styles and messages. Haggai delivers a powerful call to arms, urging the people of Judah to *take part* and complete the rebuilding of the Temple. Zechariah, by contrast, uses a series of visions, messages, and burdens to gently urge the people of Judah to *take heart*, regain courage, and see the future as bright with the promises of God. Haggai exhorts the people to action with strong words of rebuke; Zechariah urges the people to action with stirring reminders of the future importance of the Temple.

Haggai, the second shortest book in the Old Testament, jars the nation out of its complacency and preoccupation. Because of Judah’s misplaced priorities, the Temple that should have been finished years earlier, still stands half-completed and useless. By contrast, Zechariah reminds the nation of God’s covenant faithfulness. When times are tough and the future is uncertain, it’s always safe to trust the Lord. Together, these prophets urge God’s people to rise up and complete the rebuilding of the Temple—which they did.

LOOK UP Here is a simple three-question quiz with a profound point to it:

- How long does it take to cook a one-minute steak?
- How long does it take to complete a four-year bachelor's degree?
- How long does it take to read the Bible all the way through with the help of a through-the-Bible-in-a-year devotional program?

TO DO
NOTHING IS
TIRESOME
BECAUSE YOU
CANNOT
STOP AND
TAKE A REST.

The answer to each question is the same: no one knows for sure. It all depends on your attentiveness and persistence.

A one-minute steak *should* take about a minute... unless the cook gets distracted or interrupted, in which case the steak might cook indefinitely (with predictable results).

A four-year degree program *ought* to be completed in about four years, but many who start with the best of intentions find themselves mired in a half-completed program after more than a decade.

A through-the-Bible-in-a-year reading plan *can* be completed in a year, if it remains a daily priority with the reader. But allow the goal to grow fuzzy or other priorities to compete for the necessary twenty or so minutes a day, and the goal may prove elusive indeed.

LOOK AHEAD Even a goal as worthy as rebuilding the Temple has a way of becoming slippery and elusive when other priorities are allowed to compete. As the project dragged on year after year, the homes and comforts of God's people become more important than the Temple and glory of God. The result? Sixteen years after Cyrus had issued the proclamation launching the project, there were weeds instead of walls growing from the foundation.

Haggai and Zechariah held their countrymen accountable to finish what they had begun. Haggai (with exhortation) and Zechariah (with encouragement) both urged the builders not to "throw in the trowel." If you're having trouble completing a long-term project you began more than a year ago, why not enlist the help of a friend or family member? A weekly time of accountability and progress reporting might be just the thing you need to stay on target and bring to completion a worthy endeavor.

 **Walk 273** 11/28/2009 go deeper day 273
Zechariah 12-14 *Israel's Coming Consolation*

 **Walk 274** 11/29/2009 go deeper day 274
Malachi 1-4 *Hard Words for Hearts of Stone*

You've completed the 274 day

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