



# JANUARY REFLECTION GUIDE

## DAY 1-31

### **Day 1-3 - Genesis 1-11**

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On Day 1 (Gen. 1-3), Tara-Leigh in The Bible Recap introduces this idea,

*“It’s important to note that Genesis has historically been regarded as a book of the LAW — that’s even how Jesus refers to it. It’s not a science book or even a history book, though it does tell us a lot about history. This book is 100% true, but it isn’t always 100% literal...it’s important to hold our scientific conclusions or opinions with an open hand — regardless what you believe. And honestly, It’s even important to hold our questions with an open hand, because this book isn’t here to answer them. It’s here to reveal GOD to us.”*

For many of us, this is a shift in how we read our Bibles. It’s common to approach scripture asking, **“How does this apply to me?”** But not as common to approach scripture asking **“What does this reveal to me about God’s CHARACTER? Where does this passage fit in God’s STORY of REDEMPTION?”**

- **Has asking these questions changed your perspective as you have approached scripture this year? If so explain?**

**What stood out to you from Days 1-3 and what did you learn about the character of God:**

**Here’s a few examples:**

- Genesis 1:26 - “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” - **We see the evidence of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son & God the Spirit) right here from the very beginning.**
- Genesis 3:7-13 - Shame, guilt, fear and blame enter the story. They thought they could hide from God.
- Genesis 4:15 - “And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.” - Cain killed his brother and had to face the consequences, but we see that God still showed mercy on Cain by protecting him.
- Genesis 5 - The Flood was at least 1500 years after creation. We’ve covered a lot of years in 3 days.

## Day 4-15 - Job

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The question at the heart of the book of Job, is often, “Why does God allow suffering?” It’s a question we have probably all asked at one time or another. The book of Job doesn’t quite answer that question for us, but the book does point us to see a Just, Sovereign and Merciful God that never leaves or forsakes us in the midst of pain. The book of Job is about suffering, but more than that, it’s about the God who speaks to us in the midst of our pain.

On Day 4 (Job 1-5), Tara-Leigh in The Bible Recap talks about God allowing Satan to test Job:

*“After God initiates the conversation about Job with one of his enemies, the enemy concocts a plan to test Job, and we see God allowing it. Here’s what’s noteworthy to me in this section: God didn’t create the plan for testing Job, but God allowed it. He wasn’t the active agent in the evil perpetrated by Satan, but He was still sovereign over it. And in His mercy, He limited it. Satan was on a leash. He wasn’t allowed to take Job’s life.”*

- **What does this exchange between God and Satan show us about God’s sovereignty? Does it frustrate you that He is in control and you are NOT?**

Author Lisa Harper says this about the idea of this perhaps changing our perspective on suffering...

“In the economy of God, Job’s suffering was an honor, a privilege. After all, “should we accept only good from God and not adversity?” (Job 2:10). Our Creator and Redeemer handpicked Job for the honorable position of carrying the weight of pain. While God is not the author of evil ([Psalm 5:4](#)), He did choose Job **with the foreknowledge that he would carry suffering well**, because even our pain is a great conduit for God’s glory.”

- **Can you think of a time when you have seen someone “suffer well”?**
- **Have you ever thought of a trial as a “privilege” or as something that God’s glory could shine through?**
- **How could our perspective shift in hard times if we could hold onto this idea of suffering we’ve learned in Job?**

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### Job’s Lament

Author Lisa Harper says this about Job’s lament before the Lord...

*“Job’s outburst is a healthy reminder that our Redeemer doesn’t rank our emotions on a scale from good to bad, allowing only “good” emotions like joy and peace while barring “bad” emotions like grief and disappointment. We do not have to censor ourselves before the God who knows our hearts better than we do. Scripture doesn’t instruct us to smile on the outside while we die on the inside—just the opposite, in fact (see 1 Samuel 1). Frankly, I believe one of the biggest fallacies perpetrated in communities of faith is that the closer we get to Jesus, the more we need to keep a lid on it.*

*We need to understand there's a colossal difference between disagreeing with God and denying His existence altogether. Job cursed the day he was born and expressed confusion, frustration, and even anger, at God over allowing tragedy to befall him—but he did not reject God. In fact, the tormented exasperation Job hurls toward God proves that he is anything but an atheist! He knows God holds all things together. Faith powered by God can stretch us far beyond our own capacity to endure. We can and should continue to bring all of who we are—including our anger, confusion, and disappointment—before God. We can trust Him with every piece of our hearts.”*

➤ **What did you learn from the book of Job about pouring out our emotions to the Lord?**

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## **Job's Friends**

Tara Leigh points out the following about Job's friends and their “advice”...

*“Job is handling his grief pretty well UNTIL 3 of his friends show up on the scene. They came to show him sympathy and comfort him, and they did a great job of that during the 7 days when they sat in silence with him. The problem was when they started to speak. Maybe you've had friends like that? Or maybe you've been a friend like that? There are some good lessons for us here in how to comfort someone who has experienced trauma. Sitting with them in silence is a pretty good bet.”*

*“God called us to mourn with those who mourn, not advise those who mourn. And certainly not to condemn them for their mourning.*

*“His friends have been trying to point out that since all these bad things have happened to him, it must be because he's acting wickedly somehow. This kind of thinking is embedded in our nature: if you do good things, God will give you what you want; if you do bad things, God will punish you. If you're not careful, you may find yourself living out of the same mindset Job's friends had -- thinking that if you walk uprightly with God, you can use that as bargaining chips to get what you want from Him.”*

*“Much of what these men say about God is true -- it's when they talk about Job that they really get it wrong.”*

- **When things don't go your way, have you ever wondered if God is punishing you?**
- **What did you learn from watching how Job's friends interacted with him?**
- **What did you learn from Job's reactions to his friends?**

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## **The difference between MERCY & GRACE**

On Day 5, Tara Leigh talks about the difference between grace and mercy...

*“We often use the words “mercy” and “grace” interchangeably, but they actually mean very different things -- they're like a pair of opposites that work together. MERCY is when you don't get what you deserve. For fallen humanity, we all deserve hell. We've sinned against a holy God and tried to elevate ourselves to His rank. We deserve nothing but punishment. The fact that we're breathing right now is God's MERCY toward us. He has not given us the immediate death we deserve because of our rebellion,*

*just like He showed mercy toward Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden. So MERCY is when you don't get what you deserve.*

*And GRACE is when you get what you don't deserve. It's everything over and above not being annihilated. It's the way food tastes delicious, it's the way music brings us joy, and mostly, it's the way we get to enter into a relationship with God despite our wickedness."*

- **Was this a new perspective on the words MERCY & GRACE? What did you take away from this explanation?**

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### **God plays the LONG GAME**

Elihu says this to Job in 33:29-30 - "Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life."

Tara Leigh points out on Day 12 that:

*"Elihu is basically saying: God plays the long game. God's eternity allows Him a vantage point that you and I don't have, and it also solidifies His patience toward us when we're going through trials. It's easier to be patient when you can guarantee the process and outcome will be worth it -- God has that kind of guarantee because of His eternity. Because of His sovereignty. Because of His omniscience -- which is just a big word that means He knows everything .*

*When Elihu points out that God will allow us to struggle in our lives as long as it serves to turn our hearts from darkness to light, it made me so grateful. Maybe this feels cruel to you, but isn't that what all good parents do? If you're a parent, don't you let your child learn the lessons the hard way sometimes -- especially if you know that the long-term consequences of learning something are less detrimental than the short-term consequences of the lesson itself? I want the kind of parent who lets me scream through the terrors of a swim lesson if they know it means I won't drown when they take me to the ocean. I love that God isn't always lined up with my desires in the moment and that He can see further than I can. It makes me trust Him more. It reminds me that I might only be right here in the pain and uncertainty of the moment, but if I can connect to Him and learn to trust Him in that, then I can access something more than my current emotions."*

- **What does the book of Job teach us about the omniscience of God?**
- **What do we learn from Job about trusting God?**

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### **TRUTHS from Job**

All throughout the book of Job, we see Job wrestle with God, questioning and doubting, but through all of that we also see how the truths hidden in his heart are what he clings to in his times of sadness, anger and grief.

He is sad, lamenting, even angry at times, yet still his faith & trust in our sovereign God peeks through in the truth bombs that he drops... These truths were etched on his heart and in these hard times we see these truths terrify him, but also comfort him!

## What truths did you see Job cling to as you read his words?

### Here's a few examples:

Job 1:21 - "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job 9:4 - "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength."

Job 10:12 - "You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit."

Job 12:13 - "With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding."

Job 13:15 - "Though he slay me, I will hope in him."

Job 19:25 - "For I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth."

Job 23:13-14 - "But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires he does. For he will complete what he appoints for me."

Job 28:28 - "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."

## What stood out to you from Days 4-15 in Job and what did you learn about the character of God:

- In Job 29, he talks of when his friendship with God was close and intimate. **Can you relate to seasons where you've felt intimate friendship with the Lord and other times where He feels far away?**
- In Job 37:13, Elihu says, "Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen." - **What does this say about the providence of God in times of suffering?**
- In Job 38-42, God finally speaks. **What does God establish about himself in these final chapters?**

## Day 16-29 - Genesis 12-50

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We jump back into Genesis 12 where we begin the story of Abram. God makes a promise to Abram, "*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*" This is about something bigger than Abram, God has big plans for Abram in His big story of redemption. This promise was repeated over and over as we go through the next several chapters.

- **Do you see your life as being about something bigger than you? Where is your place in God's big story of redemption?**

In Chapter 13, 16 and 20, we see Abram & Sarai try to take things into their own hands instead of waiting on the Lord:

- Tara Leigh explains that "*Sarai's fear and impatience has yielded millennia of war and destruction that's still happening around the world today. Sarai's servant Hagar became pregnant with a child she would name Ishmael, and Ishmael is the father of Islam, so Muslims regard him as a prophet and the ancestor of Muhammad. Years later, when Sarai and Abram finally have their first child together -- his name is Isaac -- he begins the line of Abraham from which the Israelites descend. Genetically, the Israelites of the Old Testament are the Jewish people of today. And in case you aren't up on politics and world news, Muslims and Jews have been at war for basically 4000 years.*"
- **Have you ever seen consequences from taking matters into your own hands instead of waiting on the Lord?**

So far in our reading we have seen God change several names: Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel

- **What is the significance of God changing their names at the times that He did?**

**What things that stood out from Days 16-29 (Genesis 12-50) and what did you learn about the character of God:**

- **Day 17** - Tara Leigh's explanation that some parts of scripture are **DESCRIPTIVE** (explaining what IS happening) vs **PRESCRIPTIVE** (explaining what SHOULD happen) **Do these descriptions help you read scripture through a different lens?**
- **Day 19 - Genesis 23 - "The Angel of the Lord" is possibly God, the Son appearing. What evidence shows that this might be true?**
- We see a pattern repeated often of the younger child receiving the blessing intended for the older child (Cain/Abel, Ishmael/Isaac, Jacob/Esau, Jesus/Us) This goes against the cultural norms. **What do you think God is trying to say about inheritance through this pattern?**
- **Tara-Leigh says...** *"There's no true flourishing apart from the presence of God. There's accumulation of goods -- there's happiness, for sure. Wicked people can and do succeed -- we learned that in Job. But they don't flourish -- not in the deepest sense. They build temporary castles and seek fleeting pleasures. But their souls don't thrive like the people who draw near to God's presence."* **Are you thriving in abundance or just seeking fleeting pleasures?**

## **Day 30-31 - Exodus 1-6**

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Exodus is believed to be primarily written by Moses. The word Exodus means "departure" and takes place about 300 years after Joseph died.

- The book opens clearly showing us how God is faithful to Moses and spared his life by allowing him to be found by Pharaoh's daughter and to be taken care of by his own mother. **Have you ever done something that is for the good of someone you dearly love, but it takes a huge sacrifice on your part?**

**What things stood out to you from Days 30-31 (Exodus 1-6) and what did you learn about the character of God:**

- **Day 30 - Tara-Leigh said,** "God has nothing but sinners to work with, and He seems to specialize in using the unlikely. He calls to furthest from Him, and He draws them near to Himself!" We see all through scripture so far that God uses broken people to fulfill His plan.
- **Day 31 - Moses says things like...** Who am I to go do this?...They won't listen to me... I'm not eloquent enough...Please send someone else... **Can you relate to Moses' response to what God was calling him to do?**
- **Day 31 - After all of Moses' excuses,** God continued to clearly tell him that "I will be with you!" **Why do you think Moses still questioned his calling after God promised to be with Him? Have you ever questioned your calling and if you were equipped to do what God was asking of you?**

## **Names & Attributes of God we've seen so far in Scripture**

EL SHADDAI (God Almighty, Lord of the Mountains, All-Sufficient One) – Gen 17:1, Ps 91:1

EL ELYON (The Most High God, Sovereign God) – Gen 14:17-20, Psalm 9:1

YAHWEH (Lord, Jehovah, The Self-Existent One) – Exodus 3:14, John 8:58, Hebrews 13:8

JEHOVAH JIREH (The Lord Will Provide / Provider) – Gen 22:13-14, Phil 4:19

EL ROI (The God Who Sees) – Gen. 16:13, Psalm 139:1-18

ELOHIM (Creator God, powerful and mighty) – Genesis 1:1, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 139:13-16

REWARD / REWARDER – Genesis 15:1, Hebrews 11:6

## **Additional Resources available at [www.graceclarksville.com/womenintheword](http://www.graceclarksville.com/womenintheword)**

### **Books:**

- *30 Days to Understanding Your Bible* by Max Anders

### **Videos:**

- **Genesis 1-11 Overview Video** - <https://youtu.be/GQI72THy05I>
- **Job Overview Video** - [https://youtu.be/xQwnH8th\\_fs](https://youtu.be/xQwnH8th_fs)
- **Genesis 12-50 Overview Video** - <https://youtu.be/F4isSyennFo>
- **Exodus 1-11 Overview Video** - [https://youtu.be/jH\\_aojNJM3E](https://youtu.be/jH_aojNJM3E)

### **Websites for further studies:**

- <https://bibleproject.com/> - Great overview videos by theme, book of the Bible and topic
- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/> - Choose a version of the Bible and click TOOLS next to the verse