

February 3/4, 2024
"Faith & Works"
Pastor Brad Holmes



SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

February: Read Genesis to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 Genesis 3:15 | Jesus in Genesis

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15

This year, we are looking for Jesus in the Old Testament to see how God's plan always included Jesus saving us from our sins. This month, we are looking for Jesus in the book of Genesis. Genesis sets the foundation for the rest of the biblical storyline.

New Man. Genesis opens with the grand creation of the world, culminating in God creating man and woman in his image. God charges them to multiply and fill the earth. God intends for them to take the beauty and order of Eden and fill the whole world with it. Where man fails, Jesus succeeds. Jesus is the ultimate reflection of the image of God (Hebrews 1:3). He faces temptation and does not sin (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus brings God's kingdom and will one day restore the earth to Eden (Revelation 21:1-4).

Son of the Woman. Immediately after sin enters the world, God hints that a son of the woman will one day defeat the serpent. Jesus is the son who defeats the serpent. Some of her sons foreshadow Jesus. Noah saves his family and a remnant of animals from God's judgment by flood. Similarly, Jesus makes the way for salvation from God's judgment by his death and resurrection.

Heir of Promise. God chooses Abraham to be the patriarch of his family. Isaac is the promised heir, born of humanly impossible circumstances. God tests Abraham but does not ultimately require Isaac as a sacrifice. Instead, God will sacrifice his son. The ram as a substitute sacrifice symbolizes what Jesus will do on the cross. A later descendant, Joseph, provides a type of Christ when he suffers unjustly yet saves his family from certain death. He offers his family forgiveness, restoration and protection as Jesus will one day do. Yet it is through Joseph's brother Judah that Jesus eventually comes. Judah foreshadows Jesus's willingness to give himself up for his brother Benjamin (Genesis 44:32-34).

TODAY: As you read Genesis this month, ask God to open your eyes to all the people, places, events, promises and symbols that point to Jesus. Understanding Genesis is the key to unlocking the rest of the story.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Genesis 1-2. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to the creation of and charge to man and consider how Jesus is the new Adam.

Day 2 James 2:14-26 | Faith and Works

Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17b

James writes to the early church which is scattered due to persecution. New Christians living in this stressful environment need guidance and assurance they are following the truth. James wants them to understand that believing Jesus died in their place to give new life is just the beginning. Their new beliefs should actually change who they are and how they act. James doesn't sugarcoat his words. If they say they are a Christ follower then their lives should change to mirror his behavior. If their new faith doesn't demonstrate action, it is dead.

James provides three ways to know whether or not their faith is dead. Their faith is alive if it moves them to action, changes their habits to be more Christ-like, and if they feel challenged to trust God and do what is right according to God's truth. This week, we will take a closer look at these three indicators and let James challenge us to demonstrate faith that is alive.

TODAY: Real faith is more than simply saying, "I'm a Christian." As you begin this week, consider areas of your faith-walk that may need to come alive. With an open heart, ask God to show you where you need to grow and change to become like him.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Genesis 3-5. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the promise given in Genesis 3:15 and how this points to Jesus.

Day 3 James 2:14-18 | Real Faith Moves Us

If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ... I will show you my faith by my deeds. James 2:16,18b

James tells believers the reality of faith in their lives is tied directly to taking action. He gives the example of seeing someone in physical need and merely saying, "Good luck with that," then walking away. Words without action do nothing. God sets the example of taking action by moving toward people who need a savior. God has compassion and sent Jesus to die for people when they could not save themselves (Ephesians 2:8).

James calls faith dead when it does not move into action. Our gratitude for what Jesus did for us should compel us to move toward helping others in need. Real faith sees a person in need and moves toward them to help. Our faith is shown by our deeds. So instead of looking the other way, we could take a meal to our neighbor who has had a death in the family. Or, when someone we know is diagnosed with cancer, we can call to talk and encourage them. Or if someone in our small group has car trouble, we can offer to drive them around while it is repaired.

TODAY: Ask God to make you aware of the needs of people around you. When you see a need, move toward that person to offer your help. If the person says they don't need help, silently commit to praying for them. Listen to this week's **BEYOND THE WEEKEND PODCAST** [HERE](#) for more about faith and works.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Genesis 6-7. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the narrative around Noah and the flood and how this points to the saving work Jesus will do.

Day 4 James 2:18-19 | Real Faith Changes Us

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. James 2:19

James reminds his readers that just believing who God is doesn't make faith real. He uses the example of demons who know who God is. But belief in God doesn't move them to change or obey God. In contrast, real faith changes a person from the inside out. Real faith is more than just knowing God and his truth but shaping everything in your life around that belief.

If God is who he says he is, then acknowledging him should change every aspect of our lives. It should compel us to leave behind things that oppose God and commit to the things he wants for us. Our purpose will change, as will how we spend our time, how we treat our coworkers, and how we use our phones and the internet. We offer ourselves to God by making Godly choices while the Holy Spirit within us is changing us to be like Christ.

TODAY: Is there a habit Jesus is calling you to change? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it and empower you to change. Share it with your small group or a trusted friend so they can encourage and support you.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Genesis 8-9. Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

Day 5 James 2:21-22 | Real Faith Challenges Us

Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. James 2:21-22

James tells the early Christians that challenging situations can reveal true faith. James points back to Abraham in the Old Testament. Abraham believes and trusts God's promises of blessing and that his family would become a great nation even though he and his wife were past the age of having children. Years after their son Isaac's miraculous birth, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham obeys, but God stops him and provides a substitute ram for the sacrifice. James says this is Abraham's real faith in action. Abraham trusts God to fulfill his promise and believes God would raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Challenging and complicated situations will pop up in our lives, too. Our faith in who God is and his Word will move us to trust God and obey him in our challenges. Our faith is revealed in our actions as we face challenging dating situations, how we use the internet and social media, and how we interact with friends and family.

TODAY: Listen to the Ada Bible Worship Team sing "In Christ Alone." Think about the lyrics, "No guilt in life, no fear in death." Reflect on how you've trusted Jesus when life has become challenging, and thank him for bringing you through.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Genesis 10-12. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the genealogy and the promise given in chapter 12.