



MARCH 2020

# READING TOGETHER

*For our soul's nourishment • For our spiritual growth and transformation • For our joy • For our deepening fellowship and conversations together • For our unity*

Everybody likes a good story. By the time you read this, we will be two months into our reading through the Bible. A lot of what we have been reading are good stories. These stories are part of a particular genre we have in Scripture that is called narrative material. Some suggest nearly half of the Old Testament is narrative. In the New Testament, a large percentage of the Gospels and Acts are narrative. So we must understand how to read the narrative genre of Scripture to gain greater benefit from our reading. Please consider what follows as a guide for reading the greatest story ever told.

First, **narratives are descriptive in nature.** Narratives do not instruct us per se but provide us with an illustration. Some state it by saying, "Narratives are descriptive rather than prescriptive." An illustration of the descriptive nature of Scripture is found in Joshua 6 and the battle of Jericho. This narrative account does not teach us the eight aspects of God's faithfulness, but instead, we "**see**" the faithfulness of God. You could say, the faithfulness of God is "**demonstrated/illustrated**" in the battle of Jericho. Narratives show us how to live or how not to live, rather than telling us how to live or how not to live.

Second, **narratives have a plot, setting, and characters.** The **plot** is the main part of the story—what all the parts

of the story are directing us to grasp. It is important to understand when reading narratives that there is not a special meaning in every character or event. Generally, the parts of a narrative emphasize and point to a **plot** or one single message. As you read a particular episode or narrative, you need to ask yourself, what is the single message of this story?

There is also the **setting**. The **setting** gives you the background or the situation in which the story and events are taking place. In Joshua 6, the **setting** is that Israel crossed the Jordan and is entering into the Promised Land. Their reputation had gone before them. The knowledge of their battles on the east side of the Jordan had preceded them. Now they are crossing over to the west side of the Jordan—the foothills of the Promised Land—and, we read in Joshua 6:1 that Jericho was in lockdown because of what they had heard regarding Israel. That is the **setting**.

Then there are the **characters** in the story. There is a danger here that as we read these accounts, we might become fixated on the people in the story. Biblical narratives, whether Old Testament or New Testament, make God the central character. One writer states, "**If we miss God in the story, then we have missed the story.**" So when you read narrative genre be asking yourself, "What is this story telling me about God?" Narratives can

become lessons for our own lives and how we relate to God or how we should not relate to God.

Third, **a narrative does not always explicitly say the truth it is illustrating.** Sometimes the truth is **“implicit”** meaning, while not being directly stated, it can be understood from what is said. Joshua 6 is a great example. In Joshua 6:2, God declares, “I have given Jericho into your hand . . .” In Joshua 6:20c, **“and they (Israel) took the city.”** **Nowhere in the account do we read, “God is faithful.”** But in the spoken words and the actions taken, we **“see”** God is faithful.

Fourth, **narratives need to be read in context.** The best rule of thumb here is that for each narrative you read, read three chapters. Read the chapter preceding the narrative you are reading. Read the chapter which contains the narrative you are reading. Lastly, read the chapter which follows the narrative you are reading.

Finally, **read the narrative carefully.** Refer back to Pastor Douglas’s article on tips for reading the Bible. Ask yourself, “What is the big idea? What are the little details? Why should I care?”

So pick up this **“good read”** and enjoy the plots, the twists and turns, and all the drama. Ask the Lord through His Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind to behold our glorious God in these events. Also, ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment and to enable you to obey and follow the patterns of those who were obedient and to avoid the negative examples of others.

## March Reading

### March 2

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- ☐ Num 3-5; Heb 12
- ☐ Num 6-7; Heb 13
- ☐ Num 8-11; Col 1
- ☐ Num 12-14; Ps 28; Col 2
- ☐ Num 15-18; Ps 113; Col 3

### March 9

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- ☐ Num 19-21; Col 4
- ☐ Num 22-25; Luke 1
- ☐ Num 26-29; Luke 2
- ☐ Num 30-33; Ps 35; Luke 3
- ☐ Num 34-36; Luke 4

### March 16

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- ☐ Deut 1-3; Ps 36; Luke 5
- ☐ Deut 4-5; Luke 6
- ☐ Deut 6-9; Luke 7
- ☐ Deut 10-14; Ps 5; Luke 8
- ☐ Deut 15-18; Ps 115; Luke 9

### March 23

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- ☐ Deut 19-22; Ps 6; Luke 10
- ☐ Deut 23-26; Luke 11
- ☐ Deut 27-31; Luke 12
- ☐ Deut 32-34; Ps 13; Luke 13
- ☐ Josh 1-4; Ps 143; Luke 14

### March 30

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- ☐ Josh 5-8; Ps 14; Luke 15
- ☐ Josh 9-13; Luke 16
- ☐ Josh 14-17; Luke 17
- ☐ Josh 18-21; Ps 15; Luke 18
- ☐ Josh 22-24; Ps 116; Luke 19

## March Memory Verse

“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

**Deuteronomy 4:9**