Reading God's Story

A Chronological Daily Bible

George H. Guthrie
Reading God’s Story features a two-color interior page layout and is organized into fifty-two weeks of readings (six readings per week).

It presents Scripture in three main acts and seventeen total scenes, providing an introduction for each act and scene to orient the reader to its importance in the grand story. Unlike other chronological Bibles, this arrangement is not date specific (e.g. “January 1”), so a person can begin using this edition at any point in the calendar year.

The 3 Main Acts and 17 Scenes

**Act 1: God’s Plan for All People**
Scene 1: Creation: The God of All of Life. Week 1 Day 1.
Scene 2: Fall: Rejecting God’s Vision for Life. Week 1 Day 3.

**Act 2: God’s Covenant People**
Scene 1: The People: God Calls a Covenant People. Week 2 Day 1.
Scene 2: Deliverance: God Rescues His People. Week 5 Day 6.
Scene 4: The Land: God’s Place for His People. Week 11 Day 6.
Scene 5: Kings and Prophets: God Shapes a Kingdom People. Week 14 Day 1.
Scene 6: Kings and Prophets: God Divides the Kingdom People. Week 24 Day 5.
Scene 7: Kings and Prophets: The Southern Kingdom as God’s People. Week 28 Day 5.
Scene 8: Exile: GodDisciplines His People. Week 33 Day 6.
Scene 9: Return: God Delivers His People Again. Week 38 Day 1.

**Act 3: God’s New Covenant People**
Scene 1: Christ’s Coming: God’s True King Arrives. Week 40 Day 2.
Scene 2: Christ’s Ministry: God’s True King Manifests His Kingdom. Week 40 Day 6.
Scene 3: Christ’s Deliverance of His People: God’s Work through the Death, Resurrection, and Enthronement of His King. Week 44 Day 1.
Scene 4: Christ’s Church: God’s People Advance the Kingdom. Week 45 Day 5.
Scene 5: Christ’s Second Coming and Reign: God’s Future for the Kingdom. Week 52 Day 6.
The Bible contains the best story ever told, providing true answers to important questions such as: Who is God? How does He relate to the world? How can humans know Him? How did we get here and why? How will things end for us and our world?

Like every good story, the Bible has a memorable setting, interesting characters, and a grand plot that climaxes in a glorious conclusion. The plot plows ahead with conflicts described at many levels, but ultimately the conflicts are resolved as God moves history toward its appointed purpose. As you read the passages we have designated as Act 1, bear in mind that they are the foundation for Act 2 (God's Covenant People) and Act 3 (God's New Covenant People).

The Settings for Act 1
The settings for Act 1 are broad, beginning with the entire universe and then narrowing down to specific locales on earth. Although places such as Eden, Ararat, and the Tower of Babylon are named, we don’t know exactly where they were. This really doesn’t matter, for the narrator describes seminal events and conditions that apply to all humans no matter where they live. Further, this part of the story is written in a way that makes the events hard to date. The account starts “in the beginning” and extends to the time of Abraham, which was the dawn of recorded history. Clearly it’s more important for us to know that these things happened to our ancestors than to know when and where they occurred.

Main Characters for Act 1
God—He is the Creator of the setting and of all the other characters involved in the plotline. He is known through His words and His works. He will remain the central character throughout the whole Bible; after all it is His story. His greatness and goodness are on display in creation and in the pages of Scripture. His justice and mercy are especially seen in the way He responds to human sin. Without diminishing the gravity of sin, He provides a way for sin to be pardoned.

The Serpent (Satan)—Although the details of how and why he came to be in the Garden are not explained, the Serpent alters history as the antagonist who acts in opposition to God. After his deception of Adam and Eve, his direct presence disappears for the rest of Act 1. As Satan, he will show up again sporadically in Acts 2 and 3. At the end of the Bible’s storyline his final demise is foretold.

Adam and Eve—Our first parents are known for the impact of their words and deeds rather than by any description of their appearance. They are human beings made in the image of God, and yet they choose to disobey God. This sets in motion the central conflict of the Bible: rebellion (sin) against God. Since they are the parents of the entire human race, their sin shows that 100% of humanity became rebels against the Creator. It is impossible to understand the human condition today without making reference to Adam and Eve.

Noah and his family—These eight persons, imperfect but accounted righteous by God, are set in contrast to the rest of wicked humanity. Noah and his family are best known for building the ark and riding out the flood,
but the theological importance of this should not be missed: they become the means by which God provides our ancestors with a fresh start. Even so, in the aftermath of the flood, awful behavior continues with Noah and his descendants. God has given humanity a fresh start, and yet it remains true that all humans are sinners in need of salvation.

The people of Babylon—The “whole earth” is again in conflict with the Creator. Individuals go unnamed, but they all receive God’s judgment and are scattered. Sadly, in this last episode reported in Act 1, all humans are still rebels.

Plot Summary for Act 1
The plot for Act 1 can be summarized in three phases:

- God’s good creation
- Humanity’s fall into sin
- Humanity’s ongoing rebellion

The action begins with God’s creation of the universe from nothing, focusing on planet earth and then mankind. The results are said to be “very good.” But quickly the scene changes to the temptation and fall of humanity into sin. Sin leads to a death sentence for Adam and all his descendants, and the depressing refrain “then he died” resounds like an ominous drumbeat throughout the biblical genealogies and down to our own day. Later events demonstrate a pattern of broken relationships and rebellion against God: Cain murders Abel out of jealousy; the human race is so sinful that God sends a worldwide flood; people settle in Babylon (and try to reach heaven on their own) rather than scatter over the earth as God intended.

Despite the ongoing rebellion, there are glimmers of hope. God’s mercy breaks through undeserved: Adam and Eve live on to bear children rather than face immediate death for their sin; Noah finds favor with God in spite of his imperfections; after the flood God makes a covenant to preserve human life; God scatters (rather than destroys) the people despite their intention to disobey Him.

As you read Act 1, use the lens of “God’s plan for all people” to help interpret the story.
George H. Guthrie is the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. He helped establish and is now a Senior Fellow at Union’s Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, which is committed to promoting sound Bible reading, study, and interpretation at the grassroots level of the church. Guthrie is also the author of Read the Bible for Life and has participated in developing or revising several popular Bible translations including the HCSB, English Standard Version, and New Living Translation.
your guide to
UNDERSTANDING
and LIVING
GOD’S WORD

LifeWay, in partnership with the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University, has launched one of our most important initiatives of this decade, a biblical literacy initiative called Read the Bible for Life. It’s more than a series of resources—it’s a movement, and in homes, in churches, and in community gatherings across the country, our prayer is that it will help you rediscover, reengage and rebuild your life on the Word of God.

"With pastoral sensitivity and practical skill, George Guthrie is equipping us to know, understand, and apply the treasures of God’s Word in a way that will transform our lives and our communities of faith for the glory of our God."

—Pastor David Platt, The Church at Brook Hills

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Reading God’s Story presents the Bible in a narrative approach, utilizing a brand new, fresh chronological reading plan. It presents Scripture in three main acts and seventeen total scenes, providing an introduction for each act and scene to orient the reader to its importance in the grand story. Unlike other chronological Bibles, this arrangement is not date specific (e.g. “January 1”), so a person can begin using this edition at any point in the calendar year.

**Fast Facts**

- Interior organized in a 52-week reading plan (six readings a week)
- The Bible is divided into three easy-to-remember acts
  - Act 1: God’s Plan for All People
  - Act 2: God’s Covenant People
  - Act 3: God’s New Covenant People
- The entire Bible is composed of seventeen scenes. Scenes include, for instance, “Creation: The God of All Life” in Act 1, “Deliverance; God Rescues His People” as Scene 2 in Act 2, and “Christ’s Coming: God’s True King Arrives,” as the first scene in Act 3.
- An introduction is provided for each act and scene to orient the reader to the importance of that act or scene in the grand story.

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