**Series OVERVIEW**

 “turn-the-page”

1. *(verb)* To proceed to the next page in a book.
2. *(idiom)* To move on to new activities or involvements; to make a fresh start.

In this series we’ll challenge people to move forward in their spiritual journey by challenging them to:­

1. Engage with Scripture - We know that regularly reflecting on Scripture is the most catalytic practice for spiritual growth no matter where a person is in their spiritual journey. During this series, we’ll start at the beginning of the Bible and encourage everyone to “turn the page” with us as we move through a big picture view of the story of the Bible. Each week through a creative element, we’ll provide an overview of a particular section of the Bible. We’ll also provide an expanded “Turn the Page” Bible Reading Resource (including extra material and reflection questions that lead people through the story of the Bible). The goal is to help people gain clarity and confidence in their understanding of the Biblical narrative so they feel greater confidence engaging Scripture on their own.
2. Make a Fresh Start - Each week we’ll focus on a particular Biblical character that is representative of the section of Biblical history he or she represents. We’ll learn something about what that person experienced in an area of their spiritual journey and challenge one another to “turn the page” in that area of our lives, allowing God to give us a fresh start.

**WEEK 1  | OCTOBER 21 | FROM REBELLION TO RELATIONSHIP**

**Primary Scripture: Genesis 3:1-24 (The Fall)**

**Additional Scripture: John 14:23-24**

**Message Big Idea**“Turn the Page” by coming back to God and committing yourself to live in relationship with him.

*23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. -John 14:23-24*

**Bible Overview**
The Beginning (Genesis 1-11) - Creation, Adam/Eve, Noah, The Tower of Babel, Job

**Key Story**
Adam and Eve Disobey God (Genesis 3)

**Message Description**

God created us for intimate relationship with him. It’s hardwired in all of us. But from the very beginning of the story, we rebelled and chased our own ambitions instead. We chose to not believe God when He said that He is the source of life, identity, and purpose. After the Fall - God asks Adam and Eve “Where are you?” Now, it’s not because God doesn’t know where they are. He’s asking, “Where is your heart? Why are you not with me?” God doesn’t want us to obey him because he’s some kind of egomaniac, but because our obedience reflects the posture of our heart toward him.

Cornelius Plantinga has written an insightful analysis of the biblical view of sin, in which he defines sin as a breaking of “shalom,” the Hebrew word for “wholeness, health, peace.” In his words, “shalom is God’s design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder.” When God asks Adam and Eve where they are, he’s wanting them to say out loud, to name the thing that has come between them,

N.T Wright put it brilliantly when he said: “Sin is not simply the breaking of a law, it is the missing of an opportunity.” (N.T. Wright, Simply Christian)

What if full obedience to God is less about allegiance to a bearded man in the sky, and actually your greatest opportunity in life? Obedience reflects the posture of our heart towards him.

**Turn the Page**: God created us for relationship. We continue to stray from him in our rebellion. Yet, God never stops pursuing us. “Turn the Page” by coming back to him and committing yourself to live in relationship with him in obedience to his Word.

*“The essence of the fall of Eve and Adam - is the supreme pleasure we have in being independent, and deciding for ourselves what is true and right and beautiful, rather than finding supreme pleasure in God as the fountain of all that is true and right and beautiful. The essence of the fall is preferring to* ***be*** *god rather than* ***enjoy*** *God.” –* ***John Piper***

**Docent Requests**:

* Commentary on Genesis 3:1-24.
* What are the places we tend to go when we doubt God’s Truth?
* Theological framework for understanding a “disturbance of shalom”
* Imagery that helps illustrate what happened/continues to happen as a result of the Fall.
* Surprising/easily overlooked ways sin is manifest in our daily lives

**WEEK 2  | OCTOBER 28 | FROM BLESSED TO BLESSING**

**Small Group Commissioning**

**Primary Scripture: Genesis 12:1-5 (The Call of Abram), 15:1-21 (The Lord’s Covenant with Abram)**

**Additional Scripture: Galatians 3:26-29**

**Message Big Idea** “Turn the Page” by seeing all that you’ve been given as a blessing meant to bless the world.

*26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. -Galatians 3:26-29*

**Bible Overview**
The Patriarchs (Genesis 12-50) - Abraham, The Covenant, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph, 12 Tribes

**Key Story**
God Makes a Covenant with Abram (Genesis 12, 15)

**Message Description**

In Genesis chapters 1-11, we saw that even though God had a dream for the world where we would live in perfect harmony (shalom) with God and each other, very quickly that dream was destroyed. As humans multiplied, their capacity for wickedness only increased.

Yet, God did not give up on his dream for humanity. At the end of Genesis 11, we are introduced to a new character, Abram, and as we turn the page to Genesis 12, we find that he is the man God decides to use to move the story forward.

Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 are two of the most important chapters in the Bible as we begin to see God put his plan of redemption into motion. He makes a covenant promise to Abram that he and his descendants will be “the people of God” - that he will bless them and use them to be a blessing to the world (12:1-5).

Yet in Abram’s eyes, there is one big problem to God’s plan. He and his wife Sarai are childless and already beyond normal childbearing years. But this isn’t an obstacle for God. God tells Abram to get out of his tent and look at the stars and try to count them. “So shall your offspring be,” he tells Abram.

And then God makes a covenant with Abram. (Interesting to note that the covenant was sealed as Abram was sleeping (15:12,18). It is God who makes the covenant. It is rooted in his character and word not ours.) The covenant is the cornerstone of the Old Testament. Abram’s descendants became “the people of Israel.” They traced their special standing as God’s people back to this covenant God made.

However, this ancient story is not just Abram’s story, it is our story as well. In the New Testament, God makes a new covenant with all those who accept the grace offered through Jesus and commit to following him as Lord. Paul tells us that all those who are in Christ are Abraham’s descendants and heirs to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29). Christ-followers are “the people of God” who are blessed in order to be a blessing.

**Turn the Page**:

We are part of the story of Genesis 12! As Christ-followers, we enjoy the blessings of the promise God made to Abraham. Yet, we aren’t blessed to sit around and enjoy our blessings. God has blessed us to be a blessing to the world...to be the community through which he fulfills his mission of hpftwbtG. “Turn the Page” by seeing all that you’ve been given as a blessing meant to bless the world. We could get practical with this by using the B.L.E.S.S. practices. This challenge will also lead into the Small Group Commissioning.

The previous COMMUNITY message: [Expanding Circles](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1e0IN_gbVH7ik7jr-Pe69EUzklK_IaT5a) could be a resource for this talk.

**Docent Requests**:

* Commentary on Genesis 12:1-5 and Genesis 15:1-21.
* Insight on how ancient people would have understood the significance of a covenant.
* Quotes/Insights from spiritual writers on the significance of this covenant to the overall story of the Bible.

**WEEK 3  | NOVEMBER 4 | FROM STRIVING TO SURRENDERED**

**Primary Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34 (Jacob and Esau), Genesis 27 (Jacob Takes Esau’s Blessing), Genesis 32-33 (Jacob Wrestles with God and Jacob Meets Esau)**

**Additional Scripture: Colossians 3:12-14, Romans 5:10, Romans 12:17-18**

**Message Big Idea**“Turn the Page” by surrendering control of your life to God.

*12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. -Colossians 3:12-14*

*10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! -Romans 5:10*

*17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. -Romans 12:17-18*

**Bible Overview**
 The Patriarchs (Genesis 12-50) - Abraham, The Covenant, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph, 12 Tribes

**Key Story**
 Jacob and Esau

**Message Description**

Life gets messy. One of the ways Scripture reflects real life is the way it describes the relational rifts that occur as the story of God’s people moves forward. Early on in this message, help me think about a relational rift in my life.

Abram (who we talked about last week) is renamed “Abraham” and he and his wife have a son named Isaac. Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, become the parents of twins...Jacob and Esau. We don’t even get through the birth story before hints of trouble appear as Jacob, the second born, is given a name that means “he deceives.”

And he lives up to his name. With the help of his mother, Jacob deceives his dying father and steals the blessing out from under his older brother (Genesis 27). In anger, Esau forms a plot to kill his brother which prompts Rebekah to send Jacob away to live with his uncle Laban. Jacob lives with Laban’s family for twenty years and the uncle and nephew take turns deceiving one another. Finally, God prompts Jacob to return home (31:3) and so he sets out to attempt to reconcile with his brother.

Along the way, Jacob sends messengers ahead to Esau to let him know his is coming. The messengers return letting Jacob know Esau has set out to meet him...with 400 men! The night before they are to meet, we come across one of the most fascinating stories in the Bible...Jacob wrestles with God.

In this message, we’ll look at this wrestling match and consider using it as a metaphor for what we go through when are in a relational mess.

* Jacob feels unsettled. We feel unsettled. We, too, wrestle with God often resisting what we know he’d want us to do.
* Jacob names the location of this wrestling match “Peniel” which means “face of God” because he believed he came face to face with God. Maybe a reminder that reconciliation requires a “face-to-face”...not just with God but with the other person?
* Jacob leaves the encounter with a limp. Reconciliation doesn’t mean that we’ll leave a relational rift unscathed.

Despite all the tension building to this moment, Genesis 33 tells a beautiful story of two brothers reconciled. Their story reminds us that it is never too late to reconcile.

We’ll also want to disclaim what we’re not talking about today right up front. Sometimes reconciliation is not the goal (i.e. instances of abuse). How do I know if I should pursue reconciliation or not? We should provide practical guidance on this from trusted experts.

The most important story of reconciliation is the story of us being reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). We are the beneficiaries of God’s decision to reconcile. He took initiative. He took the first step. And he can give us the courage and strength to reconcile with others.

**Turn the Page**
 “Turn the Page” by taking a step to reconcile with someone. Provide some practical examples of what a “step” might look like. Remind us that sometimes we will try, but the other person won’t reciprocate. The important thing is we do what we can do to pursue peace (Romans 12:17-18).

**Docent Requests**

* The significance of “the birthright” in Genesis 25:19-34.
* The significance of “the blessing” in Genesis 27.
* Commentary on Genesis 32:22-32.
* Practical, wise counsel on when reconciliation is and isn’t appropriate (Henry Cloud might be a good source for this.)

**WEEK 4  | NOVEMBER 11 | FROM FEAR TO FAITH**

**Primary Scripture: Exodus 3-4:17 (Moses and the Burning Bush)**

**Additional Scripture: John 14:16-20, Ephesians 3:16-21**

**Message Big Idea** “Turn the Page” by letting go of fear and stepping out to do what God wants to do through you.

*16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. -John 14:16-20*

*16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. -Ephesians 3:16-21*

**Bible Overview**
 The Exodus and the Promised Land (Exodus - Ruth) Moses, The Exodus, The Law, Joshua, The Promised Land, Judges, Ruth

**Key Story**
 God calls Moses (Exodus 3)

**Message Description**

The Bible is full of unlikely, sometimes reluctant heroes. Today’s story is about one of the most famous characters in Biblical history...yet he started as an unlikely, reluctant hero.

To lead into today’s story, we’ll need to provide a concise, broad overview of Moses’ story:

* Rescued from Pharaoh's hand by his daughter. Raised in the palace.
* Let’s go of privilege to stand up for his people. In anger, commits murder.
* Flees to the desert.

Moses had some failures and it left him feeling inadequate. He went from the luxury of Pharaoh’s palace to tending sheep in the wilderness. But then...

God gets Moses’ attention through a burning bush. God is present in this fire. In the Old Testament, God’s presence is often associated with fire and clouds. In Moses’ story, this imagery appears time and time again (pillar of cloud and fire, on the mountain). God’s presence is with Moses during the entire exodus story.

As God speaks to Moses, he initiates a calling on his life. It’s important to note that God initiates this calling. Often we set our sights on what we want to do and then ask God to bless it. Moses wasn’t even looking for a calling. But God speaks to him and tells him he wants to send Moses back to Egypt to lead his people out of slavery.

Moses isn’t exactly a picture of confidence as this Exodus story begins, but he learns to step out in faith trusting in a God who can do anything. He just keeps doing what God said to do, despite his fear, despite the challenges. He stands confident before Pharaoh not because his self-esteem suddenly shot through the roof, but because he knew God had called him and knew God was with him. He had great faith in God’s ability to work through him.

Might be worth noting that the most common command in Scripture, “Fear not!” is often paired with this reason, “For I am with you!” We can let go of our fear when God is present.

And, today, God’s presence is not limited to a burning bush or a puffy cloud. God is present with the Christ-follower all the time, everywhere through his Spirit inside of us (John 14:16-20).

God calls us all to play a role in his story. If you don’t know what he is calling you to do, ask him for your own burning bush moment. Do you know what he’s calling you to do? Let go of your fear and take the next step because he can do more than you could ever ask or imagine! (Ephesians 3:16-21)

**Turn the Page**: “Turn the Page” by letting go of your fear and stepping out to do what God wants to do through you. We could have a Contribute challenge in this message.

These previous COMMUNITY messages may help in telling Moses’ story: [ICNU Moses](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1zce0v1_osgYcFE2-QSZMU5XMc-u84JFb) and A [Beautiful Meekness](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1BHmVRbPxMm5_3HaBI86TZWpznDntUnIe).

**Docent Requests**

* Commentary on Exodus 3:1-4:17.
* Material on how God’s presence was in fire and clouds in Old Testament accounts. What is the symbolism?
* Examples throughout history of people who overcame their fear to achieve something great.
* Why are we so prone to fear? What are the things we most fear and how do we overcome them?
* What are the major obstacles of fear that keep us stationary?