



A ONE-YEAR GUIDE

THE
**BIBLE
RECAP**

TARA-LEIGH COBBLE

“*The Bible Recap* is about to be your go-to resource for reading through the Bible in one year. Each day you will see the character of God through Scripture jump off the page, and your heart and relationship with God will be forever changed in the best ways possible.”

—Jamie Ivey, bestselling author and host of *The Happy Hour with Jamie Ivey* podcast

“Tara-Leigh gets me excited to read the Bible. Period. I have found a trusted guide to walk me into deeper understanding of the Scriptures. Humble, approachable, and wise, Tara-Leigh leads us into the larger narrative of the Bible with humor, truth, and accuracy.”

—Michael Dean McDonald, director of global focus and strategic relationships, the Bible Project

“I have been a Bible reader for years, but Tara-Leigh has opened greater depth and understanding to my Bible engagement through *The Bible Recap*. This resource is one of my top recommendations for anyone looking to plunder the goodness of God’s Word in bite-size portions. Read, discover, and enjoy!”

—Lauren McAfee, ministry investments at Hobby Lobby Corporate, and author of *Not What You Think*

“Tara-Leigh has the most insightful audio commentary of the Bible in the world! You better believe this book is an incredible resource. She’s thoroughly done her homework and does an awesome job of presenting the reader with a helpful guide to the Bible. I’ve been a fan of hers for quite a while because she makes me a bigger fan of Jesus and His Word.”

—Jonathan Pokluda, lead pastor, Harris Creek Baptist Church

“I have the greatest desire to read the Bible, but I often resist doing it because I need help understanding what I am reading, how it pertains to my life, and how I can grasp the character of God in Scripture. I am so thankful for *The Bible Recap*, first because it provides a reading plan, and second because it has given me such a deep look into the narrative of Scripture and the presence of God. It has completely deepened my time with the Lord!”

—Lauren Scruggs Kennedy, *New York Times* bestselling author, lifestyle blogger, and founder of LSK, LSK Foundation, and Stranded

“Tara-Leigh’s love for Christ and His church is poured over every single page of this book like perfume from a broken alabaster jar. As a companion to the Word itself, *The Bible Recap* works like a key to unlock room after room in God’s hallway of mysteries. I am confident this will be a powerful resource for God seekers and God lovers for years to come.”

—Lee McDerment, Greenville campus pastor, NewSpring Church

“As a young believer I was taught to love good worship and good preaching, but no one taught me how to love (and understand) the Bible for myself. *The Bible Recap* has helped stir in me a love and a desire for God’s Word, and I wish I had it earlier in my journey. I am making this my year of the Bible by joining my friend Tara-Leigh, and I encourage you to do the same!”

—Nick Hall, founder and chief communicator, Pulse

“Tara-Leigh approaches the Bible with humility, passion, and a deep desire to exalt God. With an approachable style and rich content, *The Bible Recap* will help you fall in love with God’s Word and, ultimately, who it points to—Jesus Christ.”

—David Bowden, founder, Spoken Gospel

“Understanding the Bible is paramount in our lives, and Tara-Leigh Cobble is amazing at teaching others to understand the Bible and its truth. This is a much-read!”

—Cheryl Scruggs, biblical marriage counselor, podcast host, and coauthor of *I Do Again*

“I love *The Bible Recap* because it is eternally valuable and immediately practical! My family has truly appreciated this resource.”

—Brad Cooper, lead pastor, NewSpring Church

“Tara-Leigh is one of those people you could sit and discuss the Bible with for hours and walk away with your soul both satisfied and hungry for more. Now she’s captured these chats in a format we can carry with us. *The Bible Recap* will not only give you a greater understanding of Scripture, but it’s sure to enhance your love for the God who penned it.”

—Davey Blackburn, author, speaker, and podcaster, Nothing is Wasted Ministries

“I am in awe of Tara-Leigh Cobble’s passion and knack for teaching us all how to better understand God. Her fresh, quick, powerful teaching resonates with millions for a reason: It’s good! She has created an engaging and easy-to-understand guide that strengthens your faith and leaves you feeling hopeful and excited about the Word of God.”

—Valorie Burton, bestselling author of *Successful Women Think Differently* and CEO of the CaPP Institute

THE
BIBLE
RECAP

THE BIBLE RECAP

A ONE-YEAR GUIDE
TO READING AND UNDERSTANDING
THE ENTIRE BIBLE

TARA-LEIGH COBBLE



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This book is dedicated to every person who has tried and failed countless times to read the Bible, who has almost given up on understanding God and His Word, and who is here, trying one more time—with equal parts hope, fear, and skepticism—to draw near to the God of the universe.

May you come to know and love Him more and to understand that despite all your failures, He has never given up on pursuing you with love to this very page.

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

—Philippians 1:6

A Letter from Tara-Leigh Cobble

For years I struggled with Bible reading even though I was in full-time ministry. Not only was Scripture challenging to understand, but the challenge also left me with a lack of desire. Every day I felt defeated before I even started, and many days I didn't start at all. Eventually, I learned I was making three primary mistakes that held me back from understanding and loving Scripture.

Mistake #1

My first major mistake was looking for myself. I viewed the Bible as a big to-do list, and if I checked all the right boxes, God would respond by fulfilling all my desires. I approached the Bible primarily to get my application points, feel like a good, moral person, and move on. Reading Scripture as a story about God—not me—felt unnatural at first, so I started asking myself a few questions to narrow my focus:

- What does God say or do in this passage?
- What does this reveal about what God loves?
- What does this reveal about what God hates?
- What does this reveal about what motivates God to do what He does?
- In all of that, what attributes of God are displayed?

The questions we ask of the Bible impact the wisdom we glean from it. Reading the Bible is not a means to self-help or an attempt to earn God's favor. It's an opportunity to behold the beauty of God and be drawn in by Him.

Mistake #2

My second major mistake stemmed from mistake #1. Since I was only looking for the steps I needed to take to appease God and have a perfect, joy-filled

life, I hovered over the same passages of Scripture and disregarded the rest. There were so many old laws we no longer follow and passages about people with names I couldn't pronounce—those parts confused or bored me. But my standard approach had me dropping down in the middle of a movie and staying for five minutes, with no real idea of the story line or who the characters were, and hoping to understand it. Not only is it impossible to understand something when you handle it that way, but it's also impossible to love it.

To correct this mistake, I decided to read through Scripture chronologically, not front to back. I wanted to see the overall story line or metanarrative. I began each book by identifying who wrote it, when they wrote it, whom they wrote it to, and what style they wrote it in. The Bible has sixty-six individual books that together tell one story, but they're from a wide variety of vantage points and styles—narrative history, poetry, prophecy—and much to my initial dismay, the bulk of it is not promises or action points. Most of it serves to tell me a story about God and His unshakeable love for His people.

Reading the story in order and paying attention to the context helped me make sense of verses that appear to contradict each other. I also learned how to sift through the confusing passages to find God's character.

Mistake #3

My first two mistakes worked together to create my other major mistake: drawing conclusions about God before I'd read the whole Bible. Since I had primarily read Scripture for selfish reasons, I was impatient and didn't take time to read it all. That was a dangerous approach because I didn't have all the information. I was tempted to build a theology around one verse without knowing what other verses had to say. I was tempted to read every verse as a command, even if the verse was just describing what was happening. I wanted quick answers, and I didn't take the time to consider context or evaluate the verses against the rest of Scripture to see the fullness of God's revealed counsel.

The Bible is the story of God pursuing His people despite their sin. Bit by bit, we see Him giving them more information about who He is and who He is making them into. But it isn't all revealed at once, because they can't handle it all at once. He's patient with them, giving them baby steps. For instance, it's easy to read through parts of the Old Testament and conclude that God is angry and wants to kill anyone who disobeys Him. But when we zoom out and read the whole story, we see a through line of grace and mercy and rescue.

It required patience to hold my questions and conclusions with an open

hand and continue to ask God to guide me in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding as I read each day. Some of the questions I had in Leviticus weren't answered until Hebrews. But all good relationships require patience, and they develop over time. It's worth holding some things with an open hand and waiting until God reveals more of Himself.

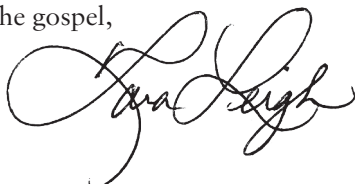
I spent years trying to build my life around a book I hadn't read about a God I didn't know. But now that I really know Him, I want to help others know Him better too!

By the way, I'm not an academic. I didn't go to seminary, and I'll only occasionally mention what the original Hebrew might mean, and even then, chances are I don't know how to pronounce it. I've learned much of what I know by studying and listening to a variety of scholars, so any wisdom you find in this book certainly didn't originate with me, but if you do happen to spot an error, it's likely mine.

Overall, my approach in this book will be less like a scholarly Bible commentary and more like an overview and a highlight reel rolled into one. What that means is, I'm less inclined to tell you about archaeological details and more inclined to point to the character of God as revealed in that day's reading. I want to help you learn how to find and see and know God and His character more than anything else. I don't care if you never know what year the temple was built and destroyed and rebuilt and redestroyed—those are great details to be aware of, but they will never serve you like the personal knowledge of God. They will never bring you joy or sustain you in trials. They will never draw you in to spend more time with God out of sheer joy and delight.

Here's what I'm imagining for you this year: Picture yourself being drawn to God and His character instead of feeling alienated by the God of the Old Testament. Imagine understanding the motives behind His actions instead of feeling confused or even frustrated by what He does. Picture yourself actually hearing from God in His Word directly and feeling closer to and more intimate with Him than you ever have before—just because you've committed to spending the first 1 percent of your day with Him. If all you gain from this is one new insight about God, that insight could change the rest of your life and your relationship with Him. And no matter how your circumstances change, I believe your joy will grow deeper and richer, because you will be spending time with Him—and He's where the joy is!

For the gospel,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tara Leigh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, elegant loops.

How to Use This Book

This book is arranged according to a one-year chronological plan, but you don't have to buy a chronological Bible. In fact, I encourage you not to because it's probably laid out differently than the plan we are doing. Each day's reading is listed at the top of each day in the book. Unlike a front-to-back plan (canonical), or plans that have you read from both the Old and New Testaments each day, the chronological plan takes you through the story of Scripture as it happened. Since Bibles aren't laid out in order, this plan will occasionally have you flipping back and forth a bit. You can go to thebiblerecap.com/start for a free printable calendar to chart your progress.

When it comes to Bible translations, it seems like everyone has a favorite among the many options. Some people prefer readability while others prefer precision. The ESV (English Standard Version) is what we'll be quoting primarily, and it has a great mix of both. While it's not necessarily the most readable translation, I've chosen it instead of other translations that are slightly easier to read because it is a "word-for-word" translation. The options that are slightly easier to read—like the New Living Translation or the New International Version—are often "phrase-for-phrase" translations. And some versions, like *The Message*, for instance, are best read as commentaries because they're more of a retelling than a translation.

Each day, you'll read the assigned chapters in the Bible. When something stands out at you as meaningful or encouraging, take note of it in your journal. When you're confused about something you read, write a question about it in your journal so you can research it later.

After you finish reading the day's Bible chapters, come back to this book to get a summary and highlight reel along with some explanations of the more confusing parts of the text. The D-Group team has also built a list of free resources for you on our website that correspond to the days of this

plan: thebiblerecap.com/links. We'll include a footnote in the days that have resources so you'll know when to look for those.

Each day in this book ends with a section called Today's God Shot, which points to one place where God's attributes are on display in that day's reading. It's called a God Shot because it's a snapshot of God's character. I encourage you to look for your own God Shot each day too. He's on every page of Scripture, so keep your eyes peeled for things that reveal Him to you—what He says and does, what He loves and hates, and what motivates Him to do what He does.

As we move through these books, the tone and feel will change regularly. That's because some of these books are written in a wide range of literary genres, such as narrative history, poetry and wisdom literature, prophecy, and letter. They were written over several hundred years by dozens of different writers, but they all have a cohesive theme in the metanarrative. As you begin each new book, take time to research who wrote each book, to whom they wrote it, when they wrote it, and the literary style in which it was written. Those details may seem unimportant, but they set the scene for reading it as it was meant to be read, which is the only way to truly understand it—and that's our goal! Let's get started!

**THE
RECAPS
AND
CHRONOLOGICAL
READING PLAN**

GENESIS 1–3

Genesis is a book of the law; it's not a science book or a history book, though it does tell us a lot about history. While Scripture is 100 percent true, it isn't always 100 percent literal. It's important to hold our scientific conclusions or opinions with an open hand. It's even important to hold our questions with an open hand, because this book isn't necessarily here to answer them; it's here to reveal GOD. Today's reading is a good example. Some people believe the days of creation were prolonged periods of time lasting tens of thousands of years. This is called the day-age theory, and it's held by many old earth creationists. Most young earth creationists believe God created the earth in six literal days. What's clear in Scripture is that God is the Creator; none of this was an accident.

In 1:26, God refers to Himself in the plural form: "Let us make man in our image." All three persons of the Trinity are present and active at creation: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. The Father gives the creation commands, the Son does the manual labor of creation (John 1:3), and the Spirit hovers over creation, sustaining and approving of it. They work in tandem toward the same goal. It's important to note that Jesus doesn't just show up on the scene when He's born in a manger in the New Testament. Before God the Son took on the name Jesus, He resided in heaven with the Father. He's been here all along. In fact, we'll see Him a lot in the Old Testament. Be on the lookout for Him!

In 2:4, the word *LORD* is in all caps; this is different from when we see the word spelled *Lord* or *lord*. All lowercase *lord* can refer to anyone who is in charge, like your landlord. When it's capitalized as *Lord*, it means "Adonai," the Hebrew word for *Master*, which is a proper name of God, not just a general term. When you see all-caps *LORD*, it represents an ancient Hebrew spelling of YHWH. It has no vowels, so when we try to pronounce it, it sounds like

For more information on today's reading, see thebiblerecap.com/links.

“Yahweh” or “Jehovah.” This is God’s personal name. By telling us His name, He’s showing us *right out of the gate* that He wants to be personal with His creation. He’s not setting Himself apart as one not to be known or spoken to. He tells mankind His name! Despite that, it doesn’t bring Him to our level. YHWH is still Lord (Master), after all.

Later, we see the fall of mankind in the sin of Adam and Eve. Because God is sovereign and isn’t confined to time, nothing surprises Him. Their sin doesn’t thwart His plan—His plan accounted for their sin. In 2:17 He tells them, “*In the day that you eat of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die.*” He didn’t say *if*; He said *when*; it implies certainty. The rest of Scripture supports this, letting us know that God wasn’t relegated to plan B after they ate the fruit; it was always plan A.

When Eve questions God’s goodness, she buys the lie that He’s holding out on her and decides she’d make a better god. That’s when the world was first fractured by sin, and it’s still fracturing. Not only do we still believe and act on the same lies, but the curses pronounced over Adam and Eve still resonate in our world today. Part of Eve’s curse is that her desire will be to control and rule over Adam. Part of Adam’s curse is that what he’s in charge of cultivating will work against him. We see this tension alive today: In general, women tend toward control and men tend toward passivity.

TODAY’S GOD SHOT

God is our Creator and the Lord over everything, but despite His lordship and His perfection, He’s merciful toward the sinners He’s in relationship with. He said they’d die if they ate of the fruit, but He lets them live! He doesn’t strike them down on the spot. Any time we see God hedge on His promises, it’s always on the side of mercy. He doesn’t break promises; He exceeds them. We see it again in 3:9–10, when they’re hiding from Him and lying to Him. Before they even repent, He pursues them out of His great love. At the height of their sin, He continues to show them both mercy and discipline. It’s such a gift to them and to us that He doesn’t give up on pursuing us, because He’s where the joy is!

GENESIS 4–7

Yesterday, when God finished creating, He declared it *very good*, but that's different from being perfect and complete. Imperfect man can't live up to God's standard of perfection, and that's evident in Cain's murder of Abel. This happened about 2,500 years before God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, but Cain still knew murder was wrong; he even feared other people killing him in response to it (4:14).

People often wonder whom Cain married. Adam and Eve had lots of children after Cain and Abel, so it's likely he married one of his sisters or nieces. The scientific reason incest isn't problematic here is that there's no genetic load yet. God doesn't ban incest until much later, and up until that point it serves as a tool to populate the earth. This doesn't mean God changed; it shows He has an orderly plan. Only He can know the point when genetic mutations will be a problem, so only He will know when incest has served its purpose and has crossed into dangerous territory.

The phrase *sons of God* (6:4) is one way Scripture refers to angels. The prevailing view of ancient Jews was that *sons of God* referred to fallen angels who, in this text, took human wives and had kids with them, creating a crossbreed of angels and humans known as Nephilim. Scripture says angels in heaven don't procreate, but that could be because (a) the angels in heaven are the elect angels who live under God's rule and don't rebel against Him, and/or (b) all angels referred to in Scripture are male, so they can't procreate among themselves. But if they procreated with human females, then theoretically this kind of crossbreeding would be possible. If that's the case, there's a strong chance the presence of the Nephilim contributes to the increasing wickedness on the earth.

Why would fallen angels do this? Here's a theory: The angels who lived in heaven with God knew His plan from before creation was to send God

For more information on today's reading, see thebiblerecap.com/links.

the Son to earth as a human named Jesus to redeem and restore everything; but then they rebelled against God and His kingdom, so they tried to thwart and counterfeit His plan to deceive His people. It's possible the enemy is trying to corrupt the human bloodline to prevent the birth of the Messiah by counterfeiting the supernatural-natural union. We don't have all the information here, so we hold this with an open hand. But if this *did* happen the way the ancient Jews understood it, it makes sense that God would wipe out the crossbreed population via the flood. And in this scenario, the only family whose bloodline hasn't been infiltrated by fallen angels is Noah's, so God preserves them. Regardless of what happened, God sets apart this family, these particular descendants of Adam, as the family He is in relationship with.

The ark God has Noah build is one-and-a-half football fields long, the width of a six-lane interstate, and as tall as a four-story building. Noah probably takes the tiniest of each kind of animal, and there are more breeds of animals now, but God certainly knows the ark is the perfect size to hold whatever He needs it to hold. It probably doesn't smell great, though.

Then God mentions the word *covenant* for the first time. He singles out Noah as the start of this covenant; He's continuing to work through this one family of people. Before the flood comes, He tells Noah this is only the beginning of their relationship—he's not going to die in the waters. If the timeline is spot-on, the flood happened 1,656 years after Adam was created.

TODAY'S GOD SHOT

God's sovereignty is on display here. Nothing can thwart His will. Nothing can keep Him from His plan to rescue the people He entered into relationship with. The enemy's attempts to thwart the bloodline of Christ don't prevail. God is even sovereign over weather and creation. He's at work in all things to restore fallen humanity in relationship with Himself. What incredible news—He's where the joy is!