BIBLE JOURNEY

A shared plan for reading, exploring, and reflecting on Scripture

WHEN	Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. | 90 minutes
WHERE	First Congregational Church of Webster Groves | Parlor
PLANNERS	Pastor Dave, Danny Smith, and Rebecca Novak

Come with the Bible that speaks to you, an open mind, and a willingness to listen for the movement of God's Spirit.

Our Vision

Bible Journey is an invitation to encounter Scripture with reverence, curiosity, and spiritual openness. We hope to reintroduce people to the Bible in ways that may help them fall in love with Jesus and fall in love with the Bible. We honor the text, those who wrote it, and the faithful communities whose respect for God and inspiration to embody faith carried these writings through history.

We take the Bible seriously, but not necessarily literally, allowing it to become a conversation among its writers, interpreters through the ages, and ourselves today. Through study, prayer, and spiritual practice, we hope to deepen our awareness of our spiritual being and our connection with God's Holy Spirit.

Our Purpose

- To read the Bible as a connected journey rather than as isolated passages.
- To understand each passage in its historical, literary, and spiritual setting.
- To explore meaning through trusted commentators and the insights of participants.
- To engage the spiritual and theological imagination as we consider how Scripture speaks into our lives.
- To reflect on whether and how a passage draws us closer to God and may move us toward change.
- To discern hope, love, strength, and other positive attributes within the text.

How We Will Explore Scripture

1. **Context and Observation:** We will establish the historical context and pay attention to language, phrases, structure, and other details that shape the passage.
2. **Interpretation:** We will consider insights from commentators and participants, asking what the passage meant in its original setting and what meaning we find in it now.
3. **Application:** We will use our spiritual or theological imagination to consider how the passage may apply in our own lives. Some historically, architecturally, or dietarily specific portions may make this movement more challenging, and we will approach them thoughtfully.
4. **Reflection:** We will complete the hermeneutical arc between the passage's usefulness in the time it was written and its significance today.

Questions That Will Guide Us

- What did you notice?
- What meaning did you find, or what did this portion mean to you?
- How might Jesus have interpreted this passage? Does it encourage the reader to act in ways that are Christlike?
- What feelings arise as you reflect on this passage?
    - What might the Spirit be saying through these passages?
    - Collectively, as one body, recite: "Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people. Thanks be to God."
- Does this passage bring you closer to God? If so, how?
- Is there something about yourself that you feel moved to change because of reading and reflecting?
- What hope, love, strength, or other positive quality might you take away from this passage?

> ***A note about feelings:*** *Some passages have been used by people in ways that shame others and may therefore be triggering. We will distinguish the meaning and motivation of the text itself from the ways people have used it. We will acknowledge the feelings that arise without allowing feelings alone to determine our interpretation. At the same time, the relationship some people experience between feeling, and spirit may invite deeper exploration of a passage's meaning.*

What to Expect at a Gathering

Each 90-minute gathering will open and close with prayer. After a brief one-word check-in, the leader will guide a one- to five-minute meditation that includes breathing and welcoming the Holy Spirit. The leader may occasionally draw upon Ignatian spiritual practices and exercises, or other guided meditation, to encourage spiritual imagination.

The leader will introduce the planned reading with a synopsis and then guide the group through observation, meaning, and, when appropriate, reflection on how Jesus might interpret the passage, followed by discernment of what the Spirit may be saying. We will conclude the discussion by identifying a helpful, hopeful, or strengthening takeaway. The final 20 minutes will be reserved for prayer requests and closing prayer.

Our Quarterly Rhythm

The first gathering in each quarter will include introductions or reintroductions among group members. New participants are welcome at any time, including if they join in the middle of a series.

Bible Journey Reading Plan

We will read the Hebrew Scriptures in the order of the Hebrew Bible: The Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim), rather than in the Septuagint-derived order commonly used in Christian Bibles. We will then enter the New Testament and read it in chronological order. The detailed schedule below covers the Law and Former Prophets through 2 Kings. A complete reading-order overview appears after the schedule.

Part 1 | Genesis

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
August 5, 2026	Introductory Gathering	Introductions and orientation
August 12	Genesis 1-3	Seven-day creation and Garden creation
August 19	Genesis 4-5	Cain and Abel

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
August 26	Genesis 6-11	From Noah to Babel
September 2	Genesis 12-17	Promises to Abram/Abraham and his family
September 9	Genesis 18:1-25:18	Lot's and Abraham's problematic parenthoods
September 16	Genesis 25:19-36:43	Jacob and Esau
September 23	Genesis 37-46	Joseph and his siblings
September 30	Genesis 47-50	Israel into Egypt

Part 2 | Exodus and Leviticus

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
October 7, 2026	Introductory Gathering	Introductions and orientation
October 14	Exodus 1-15	Into the wilderness
October 21	Exodus 16-34	In the wilderness
October 28	Exodus 35-40	The Tabernacle
November 4	Leviticus 1-10	Aaron and the priesthood
November 11	Leviticus 11-27	Ritual life and health

Part 3 | Numbers

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
January 6, 2027	Numbers 1-6	Encampments and people
January 13	Numbers 7-8	In the Tabernacle
January 20	Numbers 9-19	Anniversary Seder and departure from Sinai
January 27	Numbers 20:1-27:11	Edom, Moab, and Midian

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
February 3	Numbers 27:12-36:13	Joshua and ritual life

Lenten hiatus: *Bible Journey will pause beginning Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2027, and resume on Wednesday, April 7, 2027, the second Wednesday after Easter.*

Part 4 | Deuteronomy

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
April 7, 2027	Resumption Gathering	Reflection on Genesis-Numbers, and why Deuteronomy
April 14	Deuteronomy 1-3	Historical review
April 21	Deuteronomy 4-11	Commandments review
April 28	Deuteronomy 12-18	Law Code, Part 1
May 5	Deuteronomy 19-26	Law Code, Part 2
May 12	Deuteronomy 27-30	Epilogue
May 19	Deuteronomy 31-34	Moses' last bow

Part 5 | Joshua

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	Resumption Gathering	Preparing for the Former Prophets
To be confirmed	Joshua 1-6	Joshua and Jericho
To be confirmed	Joshua 7-12	The conquest of Canaan
To be confirmed	Joshua 13-17	Land distribution, Part 1
To be confirmed	Joshua 18-21	Land distribution, Part 2
To be confirmed	Joshua 22-24	Love God or lose the land

Part 6 | Judges

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	Resumption Gathering	Who were the Judges?
To be confirmed	Judges 1:1-3:6	Was Canaan really conquered?
To be confirmed	Judges 3:7-5:31	Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, and Jael
To be confirmed	Judges 6:1-10:5	Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, and Jair
To be confirmed	Judges 10:6-12:15	Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

Part 6 continued | Judges

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	Judges 13-16	Samson
To be confirmed	Judges 17-21	Israel disintegrates

Part 7 | 1 Samuel

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	Resumption Gathering	Samuel, the final judge, and his influence on Jewish history
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 1-7	Crisis in Israel
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 8-11	King Saul, Part 1
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 12-15	King Saul, Part 2

Part 7 continued | 1 Samuel

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 16-20	David's rise
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 21-26	David the fugitive
To be confirmed	1 Samuel 27-31	Saul falls

Part 7 continued | 2 Samuel

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	2 Samuel 1:1-5:10	David becomes king
To be confirmed	2 Samuel 5:11-8:18	The kingdom unites
To be confirmed	2 Samuel 9-14	But the family doesn't
To be confirmed	2 Samuel 15-20	Absalom's revolt
To be confirmed	2 Samuel 21-24	David's finale

Part 8 | 1 and 2 Kings

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	Resumption Gathering	How a united Israel unraveled
To be confirmed	1 Kings 1-6	Solomon builds the Temple
To be confirmed	1 Kings 7-11	Solomon's glory
To be confirmed	1 Kings 12-18	The divided kingdom
To be confirmed	1 Kings 19-2 Kings 2	Elijah and Elisha

Part 8 continued | 2 Kings

Dates in the source schedule require confirmation. Readings and discussion topics are preserved below.

Date	Reading / Activity	Discussion Focus
To be confirmed	2 Kings 3-10	Don't mess with Elisha
To be confirmed	2 Kings 11-17	The demise of the North
To be confirmed	2 Kings 18-25	The reform of the South, but they lose anyway

Complete Reading Order

The Law (Torah, or Pentateuch)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The Prophets (Nevi'im)

Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The Writings (Ketuvim)

Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

New Testament

1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Corinthians, Philemon and Colossians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, James, Hebrews, Mark, Matthew, Luke and Acts, Jude, Ephesians, 1 Peter, Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), 2 Peter, John, 1, 2, and 3 John, Revelation.

Recommended Bibles and Study Resources

You are welcome to use any Bible that speaks to you. The following are favorites and resources identified by the leaders.

Recommended Bibles

- Pastor Dave's favorites: The Inclusive Bible, by Priests for Equality; Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition (as found in the *New Oxford Annotated Study Bible*); Common English Bible
- Danny's favorites: New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE)
- Rebecca's favorites: New International Version (NIV); The New Interpreter's Study Bible

Suggested Commentaries

- ***Harper's Bible Commentary***. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. (available from Pastor Dave's office library)

- ***HarperCollins Bible Commentary – Revised Edition***. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2000. Basically, an updated version of the 1988 volume above.
- ***The New Interpreter's Bible in Twelve Volumes***. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. (available from the Holaday Library)
- ***The Torah: A Modern Commentary***. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. This commentary is often found in the racks of reform and conservative synagogues. (available from Pastor Dave's office library)

Recommended Devotionals

- Pastor Dave: ***A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants*** by Rueben P. Job, Norman Shawchuck; Nashville: The Upper Room; 1983 – This is a guide for use in *lectio divina* ("sacred reading") and was the one which taught me that practice. By now, many readings in the book are dated, and my daily and Sunday readings come from the Revised Common Lectionary Daily (lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily-readings) instead of the selections in the book. **Daily Meditations** from the Center for Action and Contemplation (cac.org/daily-meditations). **Bread for the Journey**: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith, by Henri J. M. Nouwen; San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997. **Celtic Daily Prayer**: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community; San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2002.
- Danny: Jesus Calling by Sarah Young; Spread Love, Words of Compassion by Mother Teresa
- Rebecca: Our Daily Bread; You Are the Beloved, Daily Meditations for Spiritual Living, Henri J.M. Nouwen

Videos on Our YouTube Channel (@1stChurchWG), by David Denoon

"How and Why to Read the Bible," sermon from September 26, 2021 (21:18) - youtu.be/lnKEpgmhmbY
"Wonder and Wander: Scripture and You," podcast from 2021 - youtu.be/5lLKu3W0u5Q
"Introducing the Bible with Pastor Dave," Confirmation video from 2022 (33:19) - youtu.be/VR0y8H5CTiI
"The Bible and Us," Confirmation video from 2024 (12:24) - youtu.be/3MinBU-Yi7c
"Looking Up a Bible Passage," Confirmation video supplement from 2024 (4:07) - youtu.be/de3mL4Wohdg
"What's in the Bible," Confirmation video from 2024 (15:40) - youtu.be/mdvFcgYZ2YA

Audio

The Interpretive Bible – readings by the Pastor of The Inclusive Bible: First Egalitarian Version by Priests for Equality – go to **https://soundcloud.com/firstchurchwg/sets/the-interpretive-bible**
OR go to **soundcloud.com**, where our handle is **FirstChurchWG**