

Reading Plan

July

Covenant

Week Fourteen

Monthly Description

YHWH desires that all of humanity would be reconciled into relationship with him. This relationship between God and his human family is called covenant. In covenant, God promises to care for and bless his people and we, his people, promise loyalty to him.

Earthly Family

Note: Daily descriptions in **bold**.

Weekly Description:

God's design for his human creation was to flourish within the structure of family. We were created to be a part of God's cosmic family and to enjoy family relationships with one another, particularly the covenant family known as the *ekklesia* or "church." This week we will look at Scriptures that illuminate God's best design for us, his covenant people.

Each daily reading ends with a selection of a Scripture containing a thematic phrase that is repeated all throughout the Bible. This phrase is at the very heart of the whole story of Scripture, revealing what God fundamentally wants from us: that he would be our God and that we would be his people.

Weekly Video:

The Story of the Bible

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/>

Day One:

It's important to remind ourselves that when God created the universe he didn't *need* humankind to manage it. God is all-powerful ("omnipotent") and simultaneously present everywhere ("omnipresent") and could have tended to the sacred space of Eden just fine. The reason this is important to understand is that God did not form humanity out of necessity. He *chose* us. He *wanted* us in his cosmic family. And he set Adam and Eve in sacred space where they could not only steward his creation on his behalf, but enjoy relationship with him in his presence. Eden was not simply a neatly-kept park. It was a place of divine encounter and it was in that place of encounter where YHWH chose to place his earthly family.

Genesis 1:1-31 (ESV)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. ²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Exodus 6:7 (ESV)

⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

To read more about the family of God, see John 1; 1 John 3; Eph. 2.

Day Two: Covenant Guides God's Family

The Covenants

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/covenants/>

The Ten Commandments are not isolated, arbitrary rules YHWH expected his people to keep for no apparent reason. To the Hebrews, the reason for these commandments and the stipulations that followed was abundantly clear: this was how they were to keep their family relationship with YHWH and with one another intact and how they were to pass it on to their children. In fact, if you look at each of the commandments, the first three deal with how one is to relate in family with God. Commandments five through nine deal with cultivating stability in the covenant family. Commandment four, on the Sabbath, functioned as a time where relationship with YHWH and relationship with one another came together. The final commandment dealt with one's heart motivations. The preceding commandments were to be done not for keeping arbitrary laws. Rather, the final commandment underscored that they were to obey God's law out of a family love for one another and devotion to God as the head of their covenant family.

Exodus 20:1-21 (ESV)

And God spoke all these words, saying,

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

¹⁸Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” ²¹The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Leviticus 26:12 (ESV)

¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

To read more about covenant and the family of God, see Ezek. 36; Heb. 8.

Day Three: The Family Meal

It is noteworthy that when God wanted to show us how we are to live in his kingdom family, he did not give us an instruction manual. He didn't give us an e-course. He gave us a meal. The importance of that meal is represented in God's presence with us as we partake, and the urgent instruction Paul gives of being unified with one another. In fact, we will note in today's reading that Paul refers to partaking of the Lord's Supper while at odds or harboring prejudice against your fellow Christian to be partaking in an "unworthy manner"—so much so that we heap judgment upon ourselves by doing it! Jesus instituted this meal of thanksgiving (sometimes called the "eucharist", meaning "thanksgiving") as a unifying point with one another (John 17). It is a reminder that we are his *one* people inasmuch as he is our *one* God.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (ESV)

¹⁷ But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— ³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Zechariah 8:8 (ESV)

⁸ and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

To read more about the Lord’s Supper, see Isa. 53; John 6; Luke 22; Acts 2:42-46.

Day Four: Diversity in God’s Family

Revelation 1-11

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/revelation/>

In today’s reading, John describes a vision of a magnificent and diverse crowd from every corner of the globe singing praises to God. What is important to note that is not explicitly stated in the text is that this grand chorus that John is seeing is a vision of what will take place *after* the final resurrection. In other words, the saints praising the Lamb who were in their resurrected, perfected bodies, were still discernably diverse from John’s vantage point. This reminds us that in Christ, the diversity of his family is something that is God’s *best design* for us. It emphasizes that his perfected and resurrected human family will continue to possess much of the same diversity in our glorified bodies as we do at present. The uniqueness of our cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds, and experiences as members of his family is a testimony to God’s creative genius and is a point to celebrate when we, his *ekklesia*, come together.

Revelation 7:9-17 (ESV)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- 15 “Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
- 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
- 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Hebrews 8:10 (ESV)

- 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

To read more about the diversity of God’s family, see Gal. 3.

Day Five: God Cares About His Family

As we come to the end of this week’s reading, we find in one of the closing scenes of Revelation the same phrase that we have read throughout the Bible. From the giving of the Law to the prophetic ministry of the prophets—from the advent of the new covenant to the certain hope of new creation that awaits us—we see God’s best design for his family. He desires that we would be his people and he also desires to be our God. This is not the longing of an insecure narcissist, but of a loving Father who recognizes that his human family experiences life in its fullest capacity and highest expression when it is immersed in refreshing waters of his life-giving presence. He earnestly desires covenant family with us: that we would be his people and that he would be our God.

Revelation 21:1-3 (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Jeremiah 7:23 (ESV)

²³ But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’

Jeremiah 11:4 (ESV)

⁴ that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God

Jeremiah 30:22 (ESV)

²² And you shall be my people,
and I will be your God.”

Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)

³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 11:20 (ESV)

²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 14:11 (ESV)

¹¹ that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord GOD.”