



BIG PICTURE

Lenten Guide

Day 1 - Sunday, February 22, 2026

Welcome: Each day in this Message series, you will receive an email looking at the big picture of God's relationship with humanity, and asking you to see yourself as part of that "Big Picture." We will provide some background connecting the day's passage to the previous days, and then ask you to read a passage from scripture. Although a link is provided for those of you who read online, consider reading the passages from a physical Bible. Our hope is that by highlighting some of the major people and events, you will feel more comfortable and confident in understanding the bible, but also be able to hear God speaking to you today.

Background: There are two stories of creation in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. Note that neither story is told in the modern genres of scientific fact, or as an eyewitness account found in journalism. Instead, they are written to grapple with the big questions of life like where did we come from, why are we here, and why sin exists. We will read the second story of creation.

Read: God Creates: Gen 2:4-25

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gen%202%3A4-25&version=NABRE>

Notice: As you read, notice the centrality of human beings in God's creation, that God seems to have wired human beings for companionship with others, and that death, sin and shame were not intended by God to be part of the life God envisioned for humanity. What else stands out to you in this story of creation?

Reflect: God gives humanity a tremendous amount of responsibility and freedom. What responsibilities has God entrusted to you? What people has he given to you for companionship? What good things does God want you to have? Thank God for these things.

Day 2 - Monday, February 23, 2026

Background: We pick up with Adam and Eve in the garden living contentedly, with daily walks with God in the breezy time of the day, until an outsider (the serpent) raises doubt and discord by telling lies.

Read: The Fall: Gen 3 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/3>

Notice: The serpent tempts Adam and Eve with good things (knowledge) that God did not intend for humanity. Having fallen to temptation, Adam and Eve immediately experience shame, regret, and fear. They then try to avoid responsibility by hiding and blaming others. God assigns consequences which include toil, pain, and death, However, God also protects them by clothing them.

Reflect: If you were Adam or Eve, do you think you would have resisted the serpent's temptation? Have you ever been tempted by a good thing intended for someone else? What most tempts you to choose your own way over God's way?

Day 3 - Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Background: We continue to explore the consequences of sin. Within one generation, we have gone from the disobedience of wanting to be like God to the murder of one's brother.

Read: Cain and Abel: Gen 4:1-6

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gen%204%3A1-16&version=NABRE>

Notice: God seems to arbitrarily reject the offering of the older brother Cain, while accepting the offering of the younger brother Abel. Cain responds with jealousy and anger, and is warned by God that he can both redeem himself and that sin does not have to win out. Nonetheless, Cain gives in to his anger, kills his brother, and then tries to avoid the responsibility. God demonstrates both justice, by punishing Cain and mercy, by putting a mark of protection on Cain so that no one could kill him.

Reflect: Could God have prevented Abel's murder without limiting Cain's freedom? How do you use your freedom wisely when you experience jealousy or anger? How do you extend both justice and mercy to someone who has offended you?

Day 4 - Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Background: We have jumped ahead generations to Noah, a descendent of Adam's son Seth. The earth has become so full of wickedness that God regrets creating humanity. But finding one righteous man, Noah, God opts to start over with a great flood, saving only Noah and his family. (Note that two authors wrote the story of Noah with slightly different details, which were compiled into one story, so you will see both repetition and inconsistencies in the details.)

Read: Noah Prepares for the Flood: Gen 6:5-7:1

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gen%206%3A5-7%3A1&version=NABRE>

Notice: In this story God experiences deep frustration and regret, but relents in his plan to wipe out all of humanity, deciding instead to save Noah and his family because of Noah's singular righteousness.

Reflect: If God were to decide the fate of humanity based on your righteousness, would humanity survive? If not, what sinful behaviours / habits exist in you? How can you use this Lent to address those habits and behaviours?

Day 5 - Thursday, February 26, 2026

Background: We jump ahead to after the flood, when the floodwaters have receded so that Noah and his family can disembark.

Read: Covenant after the Flood: Gen 8:15-9:13

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gen%208%3A15-9%3A13&version=NABRE>

Notice: In the story, Noah's first action is to offer a sacrifice to God in thanksgiving, continuing his pattern of right relationship with God. God in turn repeats the mandate to be fertile and multiply and makes a covenant to never again allow a flood to destroy every living being. Although Noah is righteous, there is no guarantee that after the flood humanity will not fall back into a pattern of sin. The covenant (i.e., promise) God makes doesn't depend on humanity's faithfulness. It instead relies on God's trustworthiness to do what he says he will.

Reflect: How often do you express gratitude to God for all the ways he supports and sustains you? How is your relationship with God a covenant? What promises has God made to you, and are they dependent on whether you are faithful and righteous?

Day 6 - Friday, February 27, 2026

Background: We have skipped over the story of the tower of Babel and arrived at the Call of Abram (later renamed Abraham). He is a descendent of Noah. This story is one of the first biblical stories we might put on a historic timeline, around 2000 BC, which is several hundred years after the Great pyramids were built in Egypt. Abram's family originally lived in Ur (near where Eden would have been located and modern day Iraq), but was living in Haran (modern day Turkey) when he was called to the promised land (modern day Israel and beyond). Abram was 75 years old when God called him.

Read: The Call of Abram: Gen 12:1-9

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen%2012%3A1-9&version=NABRE>

Notice: God calls Abram to move to a new place, where he will become the father of a great nation. Although the main focus of this promise is about the land, there is also the first hint of a chosen people - and the purpose is described in verse 3 -- they are to be a blessing to the rest of humanity. Put another way, God's plan to restore humanity is to start with one family and one nation. Abram takes his family, and begins the journey. Like Noah, when he arrives, Abram immediately builds an altar to thank God.

Reflect: If God called you to a new place or new career or role in life, would you go as willingly as Abram did? How are you, your family, or our church a blessing to the people around you? Without physically building an altar, how can you thank God today?

Day 7- Saturday, February 28, 2026

Background: We have moved ahead again, skipping time Abram spent in Egypt during a famine where he acquired wealth and livestock, return to the promised land, and an invasion by foreign kings which Abram was able to defeat. We come to the covenant God makes with Abram. Ten years have passed so Abram is now 85.

Read: Covenant with Abram: Gen 15
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/15>

Notice: God and Abram have a close personal relationship - Abram is able to express his deep fear and God is able to reassure him, restoring Abram's trust in God. Nor does God seem upset by Abram's fears and doubt, and reassures him he will have his own child as an heir. Then in a vision, God foreshadows Israel's enslavement in Egypt and their return to the promised land.

Reflect: Are you able to express your fears and doubts to God? Has that led you to greater trust in God? Spend some time today in prayer sharing with God one of your deep worries and ask him to increase your trust that he will help you.