



5-DAY BIBLE READING PLAN & DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Tension Before Take Off

Based on Zechariah 4 • Message by Pastor Arthur J. James
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How to Use This Guide

Each day includes a Scripture reading, a short devotional reflection, three reflection questions, and a personal declaration to speak aloud over your life. This guide is designed for

- Personal daily devotional time
- Small group or Life Group discussion
- Family devotions
- Individual journaling and prayer

DAY 1

When God Sees What You Cannot

Zechariah 4:1–10 (NLT)

“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin.” — Zechariah 4:10

Read

Zechariah 4:1–10 (NLT)

Reflect

Zechariah is startled out of sleep by an angel who shows him a golden lampstand fed by an endless supply of oil from two olive trees. The angel’s message is revolutionary: this is not a human construction project. This is a Spirit project. Zerubbabel’s hands would lay the foundation and his hands would finish it — but only because of the Spirit of the Lord.

You are reading this at a moment when something in your life may look unimpressive, unfinished, or too small to matter. God says: don’t judge it by its size. He is the one who laid the foundation in your life. He will be the one who completes it. Your job is not to force the finish — your job is to hold the plumb line today.

Reflection Questions

1. What “small beginning” in your life have you been tempted to give up on or be ashamed of?
2. What does it mean to you that the Lord “rejoices to see the work begin” — not just when it’s finished?
3. How is God calling you to trust His Spirit today rather than your own strength or resources?

My Response / Journal Space:

 **TODAY'S DECLARATION:** *I will not despise what God has started in me. His Spirit is my supply, and He rejoices over every step of faith I take.*

DAY 2

The Mountain Is Already Moving

Zechariah 4:6–7; 2 Corinthians 4:7–10

“What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!” — Zechariah 4:7

Read

Zechariah 4:6–7; 2 Corinthians 4:7–10

Reflect

The people saw a mountain of opposition: political resistance, limited resources, critical neighbors, the weight of the past. God saw a plain. The mountain that looms large in front of your assignment — the financial pressure, the opposition, the disappointment, the delay — is not bigger than the Spirit of the Lord who goes before you.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians that we carry treasure in jars of clay — ordinary, breakable, unimpressive containers. The point is not the jar. The point is that the extraordinary power belongs to God, not to us. Your limitations are not disqualifications. They are the very conditions that make God’s power most visible.

? Reflection Questions

4. What “mountain” feels like it is blocking your calling or next step right now?
5. How does Paul’s imagery of “jars of clay” change the way you see your weaknesses?
6. Is there something God is asking you to declare over before you see the evidence?

My Response / Journal Space:

 **TODAY'S DECLARATION:** *The mountain before me is subject to the Spirit of God. I carry His treasure, and His power is perfected through my weakness.*

DAY 3

Faith That Takes Off

Hebrews 11:1, 6; Romans 4:17–21

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” — Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

Read

Hebrews 11:1, 6; Romans 4:17–21

Reflect

Abraham is the great model of faith in a season of small beginnings. God called him the “father of many nations” when he had no children and his body was “as good as dead.” Abraham did not waver — not because his circumstances were promising, but because he was “fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised” (Romans 4:21).

Take-off requires this kind of faith. It is not optimism — it is the settled conviction that God’s word is more real than what you can currently observe. Faith is the runway. Without it, the plane never leaves the ground. You will never have enough visible evidence to guarantee take-off. At some point you must trust the One who designed the aircraft.

? Reflection Questions

7. Where is God asking you to take a step of faith before the evidence catches up?
8. What promise of God do you need to stake your life on this season?
9. How is God inviting you to move from “waiting to believe” to “believing while you wait”?

My Response / Journal Space:

 **TODAY'S DECLARATION:** *I walk by faith and not by sight. God’s promises are the substance I stand on, even before I see them fulfilled.*

DAY 4

The Process Is the Preparation

James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3–5; Philippians 1:6

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

Read

James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3–5; Philippians 1:6

Reflect

Nobody loves the process. We love the destination. But Scripture is consistent: the process — the testing, the waiting, the refining — is not an obstacle to God’s purpose. It is part of the purpose. James calls it “the testing of your faith” that produces steadfastness. Paul says tribulation produces perseverance, which produces character, which produces hope.

For the bi-vocational pastor, the marketplace leader, the minister who is also a parent and a professional: the tension you carry is not a sign that something is wrong. It may be the very fire in which God is forging something in you that cannot be produced any other way. The process is the preparation. Don’t despise the season you are in — God is doing His deepest work here.

Reflection Questions

10. What season of your life felt like a delay, but you later saw was divine preparation?
11. What character quality is God developing in you through the tension of this season?
12. How does Philippians 1:6 shift your perspective on what is “unfinished” in your life?

My Response / Journal Space:

 **TODAY'S DECLARATION:** *God who started this work in me will complete it. The process is not my enemy — it is His training ground, and I trust His timing.*

DAY 5

Pick Up the Plumb Line

Zechariah 4:9–10; Nehemiah 2:17–18; Galatians 6:9

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” — Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

Read

Zechariah 4:9–10; Nehemiah 2:17–18; Galatians 6:9

Reflect

Zerubbabel’s hands laid the foundation. Zerubbabel’s hands would also finish it. The plumb line is the tool that checks whether each stone is set correctly. It requires showing up, holding the line, checking the work, and making it right — one stone at a time.


Nehemiah used the same principle. He didn’t wait for perfect conditions or complete certainty. He surveyed the rubble, cast the vision, and said: “Let us rebuild.” And the people’s hearts were strengthened to do the good work.

This is your take-off invitation. Not a spectator’s pass, but a worker’s call. Pick up the plumb line. Show up for the assignment. Do the next right thing. The harvest does not come to the field that was never planted. And God, who sees every stone set in faith, will rejoice over the completed work.

Reflection Questions

13. What specific action is God calling you to take this week that you have been delaying?
14. Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear the encouragement, “Let us rebuild”?
15. How will you celebrate even the small progress you make this week, as an act of gratitude to God?

My Response / Journal Space:

 **TODAY'S DECLARATION:** *I will not grow weary. I will pick up the plumb line today and trust God for the harvest. My obedience is the runway, and God is my take-off.*