

JANUARY 4 - 31, 2026

THE GRAND NARRATIVE

EPOCH 6
THE HEALER



21 DAYS OF
PRAYER & FASTING

IN THE BEGINNING... THERE WAS NOTHING.

Then, in a declaration that shook eternity
—God said,

“LET THERE BE LIGHT”

Before time began, a story was written...

A story of creation and chaos, of covenants and kings, of exiles and redeemers, of battles—both seen and unseen.

Across the pages of Scripture, woven through generations, one narrative emerges—GRAND in scope, eternal in significance.

This is not just ancient history. This is not just a book.

This... is the heart of God moving through every page, every person, every promise.

From Genesis to Revelation, The Grand Narrative is our story—A journey from darkness to light, from brokenness to restoration,

From the garden... to the grave... to glory.

To glory

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JANUARY 4, 2026

PARALYZED NO MORE

BIBLE BASIS:

Mark 2:1-12; Matt. 9:1-8

KEY VERSE:

Matthew 11:28

BIG IDEA:

Jesus has power over sin, so
we can give our sins to Him.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

PARALYZED NO MORE

OPENING QUESTION:

Can you describe a moment in your life when you felt “stuck” or unable to move forward—emotionally, spiritually, or even physically? What helped you overcome that moment?

KEY SCRIPTURE:

- Mark 2:1-12 (NIV)
- Matthew 9:1-8 (NIV)
- Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

MAIN POINTS:

1. Jesus has authority to forgive sins, addressing our deepest need.
2. Our faith—both individual and communal—plays a role in coming to Jesus for healing and forgiveness.
3. We are called to respond to Jesus' invitation to bring our burdens and sins to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what areas of your life do you relate to the paralyzed man—where do you feel stuck or helpless?
2. Why do you think Jesus first responded to the paralyzed man by forgiving his sins, before healing his body (Mark 2:5 NIV)?
3. How can we bring our sins and burdens to Jesus practically this week?
4. How can our group help each other experience Jesus' forgiveness and freedom from "paralysis"?
5. What is one step you will take this week to trust Jesus with your struggles or sins?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Jesus knows our greatest needs and He has the authority to meet them.
2. Forgiveness is often the first step toward true healing.
3. Faith can be strengthened through community prayer and support.
4. When we bring our sins to Jesus, we experience freedom and restoration.
5. Jesus' power extends beyond physical healing to wholeness and peace.

NEXT STEPS:

1. This week, identify one area in your life where you feel "paralyzed" and bring it honestly in prayer to Jesus.
2. Commit Matthew 11:28 (NIV)—"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"—to memory.
3. Find a prayer/accountability partner in the group to check in and support each other.
4. Set aside time daily to confess your burdens/sins to Christ, practicing spiritual openness.
5. Reach out to someone outside the group who might feel "stuck"—offer to listen, pray, or invite them to join next week.

WEEK 23

JANUARY 5

Reading Matthew 25-26 | Parables of readiness; Last Supper; Gethsemane

JANUARY 6

Reading Mark 14, Luke 22 | Plot against Jesus; Passover; arrest

JANUARY 7

Reading Matthew 27-28, Mark 15-16 | Trial, crucifixion, resurrection

JANUARY 8

Reading Luke 4-5 | Jesus' ministry begins; first disciples called

JANUARY 9

Reading Luke 6-7 | Choosing apostles; sermon on plain; centurion's faith

JANUARY 10

Reading Luke 8-9 | Parables; Jairus' daughter; feeding 5000

JANUARY 11, 2026

DINNER WITH SINNERS

BIBLE BASIS:

Matthew 9:9-13

KEY VERSE:

Romans 3:23

BIG IDEA:

Jesus heals us from our sins,
so we can follow Him even
though we're sinners.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

DINNER WITH SINNERS

OPENING QUESTION:

When you think about the people you spend time with, do you ever feel like they're "too far gone" or "not church material"? Why or why not?

KEY SCRIPTURE:

- Matthew 9:9-13 (NIV)
- Romans 3:23 (NIV)

MAIN POINTS:

1. Jesus calls us to follow Him, no matter our past or reputation.
2. Everyone is in need of Jesus' forgiveness, because all have sinned.
3. Jesus came to heal and restore sinners, not to separate from them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you recall a time when you felt unworthy or disqualified from being close to Jesus? What happened?
2. In Matthew 9:9-13, why do you think Jesus chose to eat with tax collectors and sinners, even when criticized by religious leaders?
3. How does recognizing that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23 NIV) change the way we treat others who may not know Jesus yet?
4. What might it look like for our group to welcome and include people others might ignore?
5. How can you personally break down barriers between yourself and those who seem far from God this week?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Jesus calls people regardless of their backgrounds, flaws, or public opinions about them.
2. Everyone—no matter how "bad" or "good"—is in need of God's grace (Romans 3:23 NIV).
3. Following Jesus means associating with those who need Him most, not avoiding them out of fear or judgment.
4. Healing and forgiveness are open to anyone willing to come to Jesus.
5. The church should reflect Jesus' heart by being a place of welcome, grace, and restoration for all.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Identify someone in your life who feels far from God and pray for an opportunity to reach out to them this week.
2. Memorize Romans 3:23 (NIV) as a reminder of our need for Jesus: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
3. Share with an accountability partner or the group how you stepped out in grace towards someone this week.
4. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any prejudices or barriers in your own heart that may keep you from loving others as Jesus does.
5. As a group, plan a service or outreach activity that intentionally includes people who might feel excluded or overlooked by the church.

WEEK 24

JANUARY 12

Reading Luke 10-11 | Sending the seventy; Good Samaritan; Lord's Prayer

JANUARY 13

Reading Luke 12-13 | Warnings about greed; parables of kingdom

JANUARY 14

Reading Luke 14-15 | Great banquet; lost sheep, coin, and son

JANUARY 15

Reading Luke 16-17 | Rich man and Lazarus; ten lepers

JANUARY 16

Reading Luke 18-19 | Persistent widow; Zacchaeus

JANUARY 17

Reading Luke 20-21 | Questions of authority; signs of the end

JANUARY 18, 2026

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

BIBLE BASIS:

Matthew 18:21-35

KEY VERSE:

Colossians 3:13b

BIG IDEA:

Jesus forgives us, so we should forgive others.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT—FORGIVENESS AS A WAY OF LIFE

OPENING QUESTION:

Can you think of a time when it was difficult for you to forgive someone? What thoughts or feelings made it hard?

KEY SCRIPTURE:

- Matthew 18:21-35 (Parable of the Unforgiving Servant)
- Colossians 3:13b: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

MAIN POINTS:

1. Jesus teaches that our forgiveness of others should have no limits.
2. We have been forgiven a debt we could never repay.
3. God expects us to extend the same grace to others that He has given to us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When you think of the forgiveness you have received from God, how does it change your perspective on forgiving others?
2. In Matthew 18:21-22, how does Jesus respond to Peter's question about how often we should forgive?
3. What practical steps can we take to forgive someone who has hurt us deeply?
4. How does holding onto unforgiveness affect relationships within the church or your family?
5. What is one area in your life where God may be challenging you to practice greater forgiveness this week?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Jesus doesn't put a cap on forgiveness—we are called to forgive "seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22 NIV).
2. God has forgiven each of us far more than anyone will ever owe us.
3. Unforgiveness keeps us in spiritual chains, but forgiveness sets us free.
4. Forgiving others isn't always easy, but it's possible through God's strength and example.
5. Extending forgiveness is both an act of obedience to God and a reflection of His love to others.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Identify one person you are struggling to forgive and pray for them daily this week.
2. Memorize Colossians 3:13b—"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
3. Share your forgiveness journey with a trusted friend for encouragement and accountability.
4. Ask God daily to soften your heart toward others who have wronged you.
5. Seek opportunities to bring peace and reconciliation where there is conflict in your community.

WEEK 25

JANUARY 19

Reading Luke 23-24 | Trial, death, resurrection appearances

JANUARY 20

Reading John 3-4 | Nicodemus; woman at the well

JANUARY 21

Reading John 5-6 | Healing at pool; feeding 5000; bread of life

JANUARY 22

Reading John 7-8 | Light of the world; truth sets free

JANUARY 23

Reading John 9-10 | Man born blind; Good Shepherd

JANUARY 24

Reading John 11-12 | Lazarus raised; Mary anoints Jesus

JANUARY 25, 2026

JESUS FORGIVES THE SINNER

BIBLE BASIS:

John 8:1-11

KEY VERSE:

Matthew 7:1

BIG IDEA:

Jesus doesn't look down on us
for being sinners, so we shouldn't
look down on others who sin.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

TOPIC: JESUS FORGIVES THE SINNER

OPENING QUESTION:

Can you recall a time when someone showed you unexpected mercy or forgiveness? How did that impact you?

KEY SCRIPTURE:

- John 8:1-11 (NIV)
- Matthew 7:1 (NIV)

MAIN POINTS:

1. Jesus offers forgiveness instead of condemnation to those caught in sin.
2. We are called to reflect Jesus' attitude by not judging others.
3. Extending grace helps break the cycle of shame and guilt in our lives and in our relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced forgiveness or judgment in your life, and how did it shape your perspective?
2. According to John 8:1-11 (NIV), how did Jesus respond to the woman caught in adultery compared to the crowd? What stands out to you about his words and actions?
3. What does Matthew 7:1 (NIV) teach us about judging others, and how can we put this principle into practice in our day-to-day relationships?
4. As a group, discuss practical ways we can offer grace instead of condemnation—both within our small group and in the wider community.
5. What are some barriers that might keep us from forgiving others, and how can we overcome them together as followers of Jesus?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Jesus' forgiveness is available to everyone, regardless of their past.
2. God's standard is grace, not condemnation.
3. Judging others distracts us from looking at our own need for grace.
4. Living out forgiveness builds stronger, healthier relationships.
5. We are empowered by Christ to extend the same mercy that we have received.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Individually ask God to show you someone you need to forgive this week, and take a first step toward reconciliation.
2. Memorize Matthew 7:1 (NIV): "(1) Do not judge, or you too will be judged."
3. Pair up with someone in your group to encourage each other in resisting the temptation to judge.
4. Spend time each day this week praying for a gracious heart like Jesus.
5. Look for an opportunity to demonstrate tangible forgiveness in your family, workplace, or community.

WEEK 26

JANUARY 26

Reading John 13-14 | Last Supper; washing feet; upper room discourse

JANUARY 27

Reading John 15-16 | Vine and branches; work of Holy Spirit

JANUARY 28

Reading John 17-18 | High priestly prayer; arrest

JANUARY 29

Reading John 19-21 | Crucifixion; resurrection; Peter restored

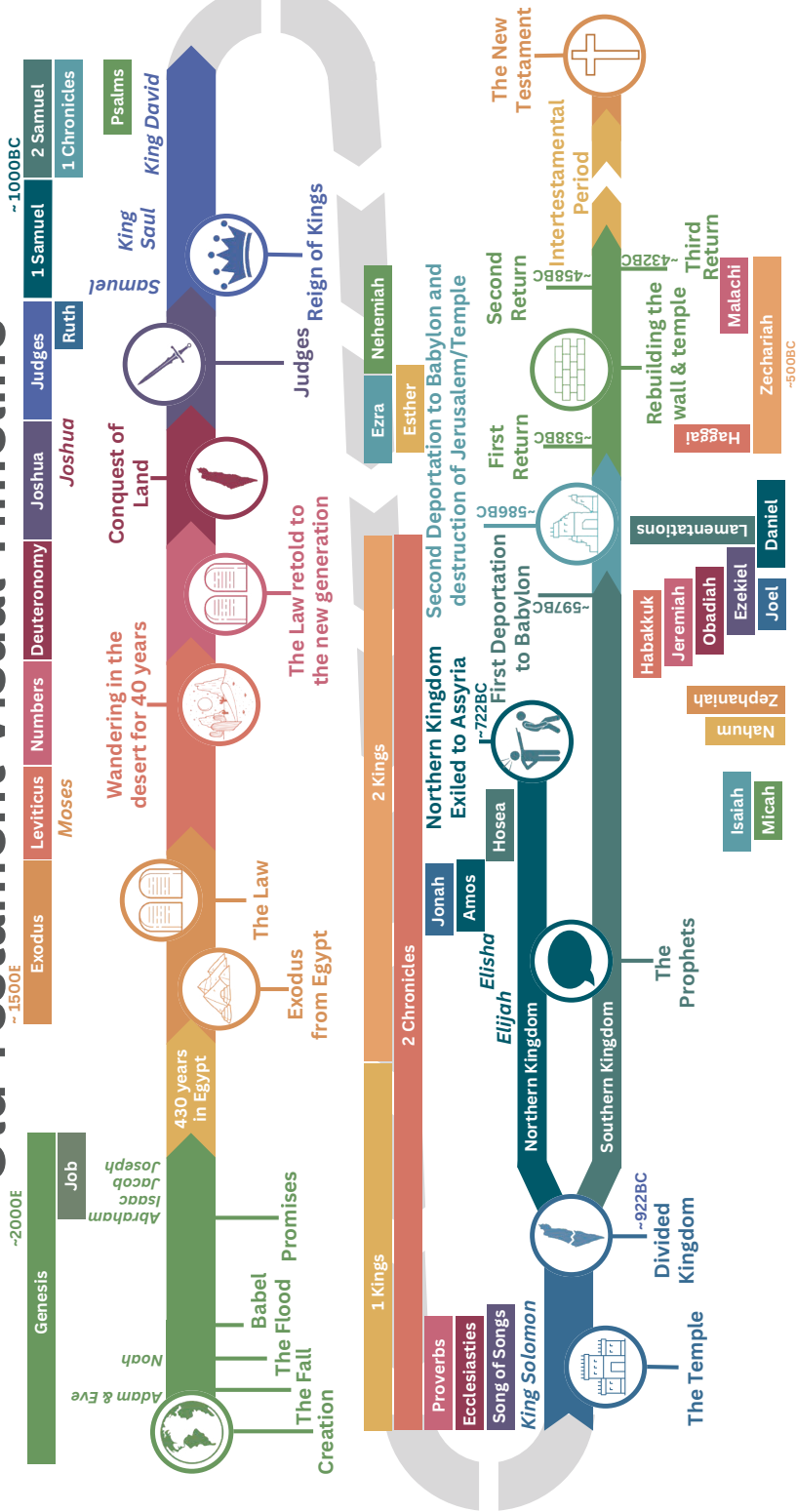
JANUARY 30

Reading Acts 1-2 | Ascension; Pentecost; early church

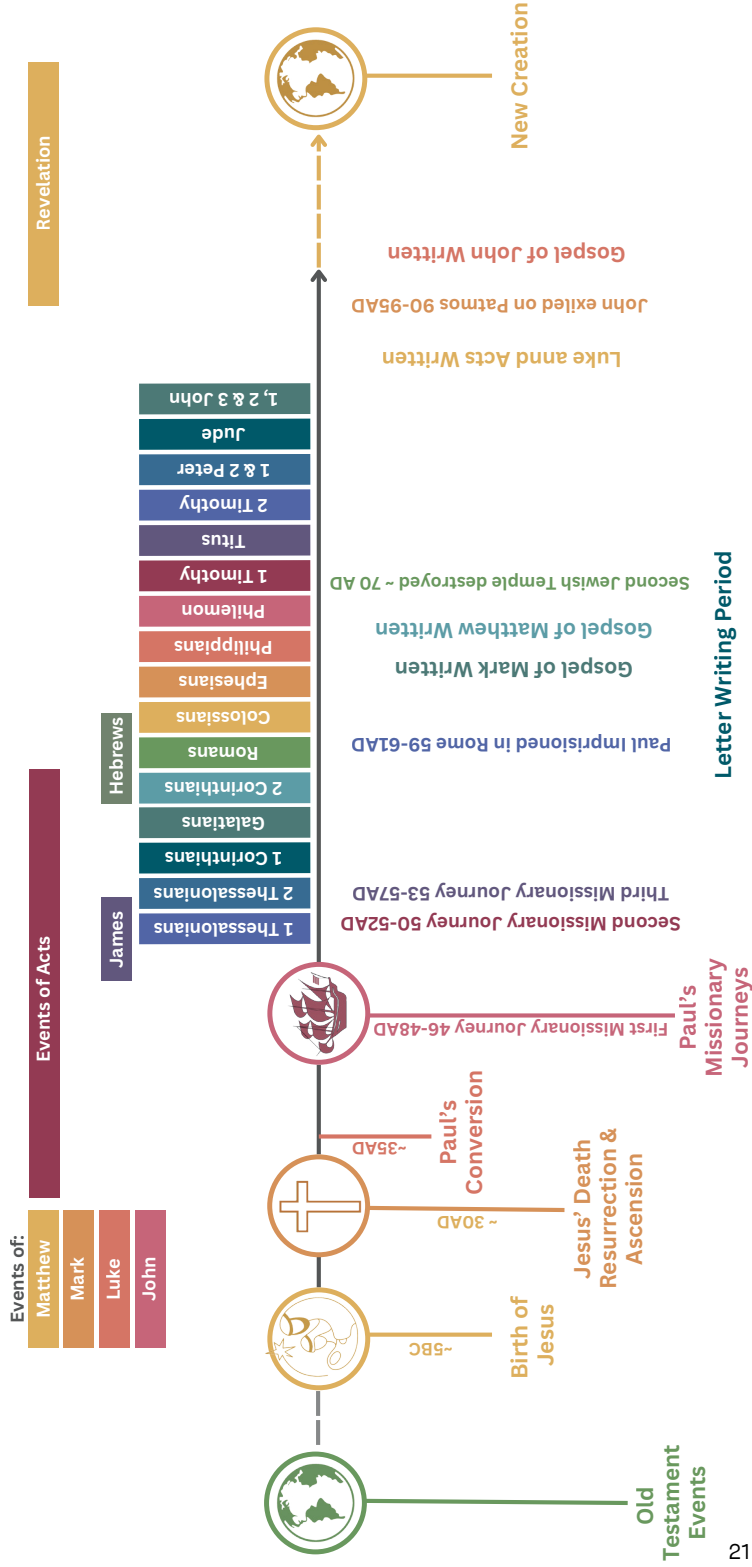
JANUARY 31

Reading Acts 3-4 | Lame man healed; Peter and John arrested

Old Testament Visual Timeline



New Testament Graphic Timeline



WHAT IS FASTING?

As part of these 21 days, we encourage you to consider fasting. You may have never fasted before, but it is Biblical. You can read further about fasting in the following scriptures. (Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:1-14).

One definition of fasting is deliberately abstaining from the normal routines of life. Its purpose is to spend focused time in prayer and the study of God's word, seeking to align our lives with His will.

Ultimately, fasting is more about replacing than abstaining. It is filling our lives with God's Word instead of with food, social media or entertainment. It is finding satisfaction and enjoyment in God and in God alone. Fasting helps us humble ourselves before the Lord and positions us to experience spiritual breakthroughs in our lives.

There are different types of fasts, but first some helpful words from Richard Foster in his classic, *Celebration of Discipline*: "As with all the Disciplines, a progression should be observed; it is wise to learn to walk well before we try to run."

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our "going without" our "hungering for God."

This alone takes time, focus and prayer. Please do not expect to be an "expert" at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand.

4 TYPES OF FAST:

1

COMPLETE FAST: In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option. Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration. Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.

2

SELECTIVE FAST: This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

3

PARTIAL FAST: This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sun-up to sundown.

4

SOUL FAST: This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH CONDITIONS OR ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FASTING THEN YOU SHOULD CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR OR COMMIT TO A NON-FOOD FAST.



CHURCH
— OF THE —
LAKES