

THE 52-WEEK

# Bible Challenge

→ *& Study*

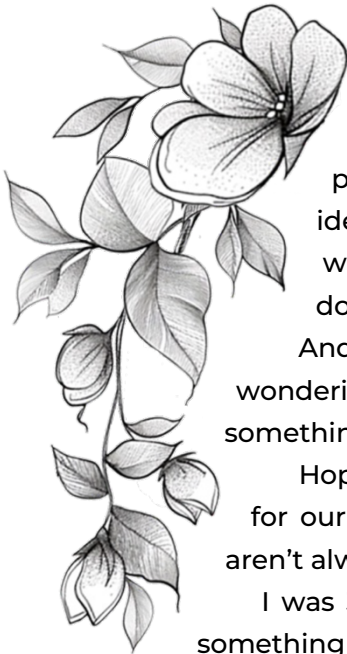
Read the Bible from  
Cover to Cover

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# Introduction

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The kitchen smelled faintly of coffee and fresh paint. Fabric samples spilled across the table beside magazines folded at the corners, each page filled with beautiful rooms and endless ideas. Life moved around me in all the ordinary ways—the hum of the dishwasher, little footsteps down the hallway, supper waiting to be made.

And there I stood beneath the kitchen lights, quietly wondering if perhaps it was finally time to become something more.

Hopes and dreams are good. But the hopes we carry for our future and the dreams we build for ourselves aren't always aligned with the plans God has for us.

I was 34 years old. Wasn't it finally time to step into something bigger? Credentials sounded important. Maybe a framed certificate hanging on the wall. Business cards tucked neatly into my purse. A career built around the thing I loved most.

Not because I didn't love my life.

Oh, I did.

I loved being a wife and a mother. I loved the beauty of home and the goodness of ordinary days. I loved fluffing pillows, painting walls, choosing fabrics, and creating warmth inside the four walls God had given us. Decorating wasn't just a hobby to me—it was something that completely captured my imagination.

Even with the small budget we had, I found ways to create breathtaking décor. Digging through thrift stores, hunting through piles of fabric, searching garage sales for the one defining piece that would pull an entire room together.

Rarely a day passed without a glue gun or a paintbrush in hand. There was always something to paint. Something to make. Something new to design.

And if I'm being truthful, I reveled in the dropped jaws a little more than I should have.

Our home was dressed to impress, and the more impressed people seemed to be, the more driven I was to do more.

My dream finally felt as though it was preparing for takeoff. I signed up for a course at the college, paid for my first semester, and began imagining where this new path might lead.

But somewhere in the middle of all that excitement, something quieter had begun slipping away unnoticed.

My first love.

Not because the things filling my days were bad. They weren't bad at all. They were beautiful things. God-given things. Making a home. Raising my children. Loving my husband well. Creating beauty inside the walls we lived in.

But somewhere along the way, those good things had slowly crowded out the deeper thing.

Where did God fit into all of it?

Where was my hunger for Him?

My passion for His Word?

My desire to simply sit at His feet and know Him?

Suddenly the kitchen was more than a room.

The floor beneath my feet more than laminate and scattered crumbs and ordinary life. I was standing at the meeting place of two roads that

stretched out before me—one leading deeper into my own ambitions, the other leading quietly back to the feet of my Lord.

And there, beneath the hum of everyday life, in the sacred hush of an ordinary afternoon, I realized I had a decision to make.

Not between good and bad.

Not between home and career.

But between chasing a dream for myself or pursuing the heart of God above everything else.

And in the quietness of that moment, I chose Him.

All the hours I had planned to pour into college courses, assignments, and building a future for myself—I would simply hand over to Him. Just one year, I told myself. One year set aside to immerse myself in Scripture and study the God I had quietly drifted away from.

And looking back now, I can see how gracious the Lord was in that season.

I had one little girl who loved long afternoon naps, sleeping peacefully for nearly three hours every day. Another child was off at school. And somehow, that old sofa in our living room became holy ground to me.

That's where I met with God.

Afternoon after afternoon, Bible open in my lap, I began to read.

And read.

And read.

Old Testament in the afternoons.

New Testament just before bed.

At first, I understood very little of it. I remember reading the pages over and over, struggling to make sense of what I was seeing. The King James Version especially seemed so far beyond me back then. I could barely make sense of the words, never mind imagine myself writing books of my own someday.

I was a B-minus student at best.

But something kept drawing me back.

Piece by piece, the picture slowly came into focus, the way a massive puzzle slowly reveals itself one section at a time. The more I read, the more I wanted to keep digging. Into the Hebrew. Into the Greek. Into the history and meaning behind every passage.

Not because I wanted credentials.

Not because I wanted recognition.

Simply because I wanted Him.

I never could have imagined where that one year would eventually lead. Writing Bible studies for women. Sitting across from women whose books I once held in my hands, interviewing voices like Lysa TerKeurst and Lisa Whelchel for our online magazine. Even co-authoring a book with Candace Cameron Bure—things that never once crossed my mind back then.

None of it was part of some grand plan I had for myself. I wasn't chasing ministry. I wasn't trying to build a platform or build a name. In fact, it would be almost a decade before God began to use me in that way.

I was just a woman sitting on a sofa, hungry for God.

Maybe that's why I love linking arms with women and walking through Scripture with them today.

Because I know what it feels like to sit with an open Bible and wonder if you'll ever truly understand it. I know what it feels like to hunger for God and not quite know where to begin.

And in many ways, that's the heart behind *The 52-Week Bible Challenge*.

This book was born out of those quiet afternoons on the sofa with my Bible open in my lap. One ordinary year of seeking God through His Word slowly changed the direction of my life.

Not overnight.

Not all at once.

But little by little, passage by passage, the Lord drew me back to Himself.

## Week 13



### *Reading list*

Day 1: Read 1 Samuel 15-16

Day 2: Read 1 Samuel 17-18

Day 3: Read 1 Samuel 19-21

Day 4: Read 1 Samuel 22-24

Day 5: Read 1 Samuel 25-27

Day 6: Read 1 Samuel 28-31

Day 7: Read 2 Samuel 1-3

## Choosing Peace Over Comparison

One of the most beautiful friendships recorded in history is that of David and Jonathan. In 1 Samuel 18:1, we're told that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and he loved him as himself." (KJV)

Jonathan had every reason to dislike David. He was heir to a throne that would one day be given to someone else. He knew David would wear a crown that could have been his. David was receiving attention he wasn't.

But Jonathan chose a different path. Rather than becoming jealous or fearful—demanding or proud—he stepped aside and served David as his lord and his king.

And then, something remarkable happens.

As a symbol of their covenant, Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, his garments, and his weapons, placing them in David's hands. In that moment, he laid down his rights and humbled himself as a servant.

In the same chapter, just a few verses later, we see a sharp contrast as jealousy enters the heart of Saul. What begins as a small seed quickly grows into envy and hatred, changing the course of his life. By the next chapter, Saul is seeking to kill David.

*“A heart at peace gives life to the body,  
but envy rots the bones.”*

Proverbs 14:30, NIV

Jealousy doesn't stay small.

It grows quietly.

It shifts our focus.

It hardens our hearts.

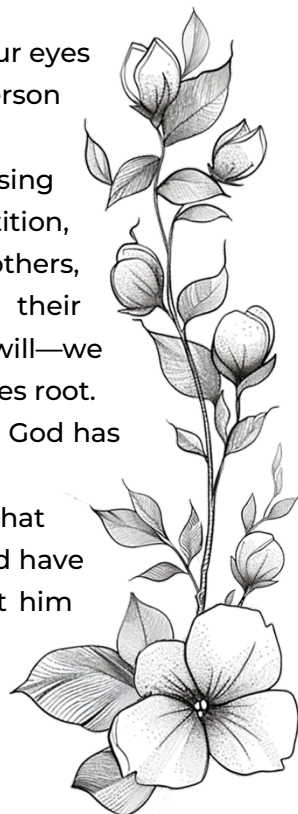
It's a subtle distraction the enemy uses to turn our eyes away from the Lord. Nobody wins there—not the person we're comparing ourselves to, and certainly not us.

So, what does this look like for us? It means choosing generosity over comparison, kindness over competition, and grace over resentment. We look for the good in others, hope for the best, and stay patient with their shortcomings. And when jealousy creeps in—and it will—we bring it before the Lord and deal with it before it takes root.

Because here's the truth: a heart surrendered to God has no room for rivalry.

When we circle back to Jonathan, we see what that kind of heart looks like. He didn't cling to what could have been his. He trusted God's plan, even when it cost him something.

And that kind of trust... will always lead us to love well.





## Did You Know...

David was likely just a teenager when he faced Goliath, a giant who stood over 9 feet tall according to the biblical measurements in 1 Samuel 17. Even Goliath's bronze coat of armor weighed about 125 pounds. Humanly speaking, the battle looked impossible. But David's confidence wasn't in his own strength—it was in the power of the Lord. Interestingly, after defeating Goliath, David used the giant's own sword to cut off his head, and later the sword was kept behind the ephod at Nob as a reminder of God's victory.

## Let's Dig a Bit Deeper

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According to 1 Samuel 16:7, how does God's way of choosing a king differ from the way people judge outwardly?

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In 1 Samuel 17:45–47, whose name did David trust in when he faced Goliath, and what does this teach us about facing the giants in our own lives?

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In 1 Samuel 24:4–7, why did David refuse to harm Saul even when he had the chance, and what can we learn from his restraint?

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## More to Consider...

Did you know that David wasn't the only one in his family to kill a giant? In 2 Samuel 21:20–21, David's nephew Jonathan, the son of Shimeah, killed a giant from Gath who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. These unusual details may have made the giant appear even more intimidating to Israel's enemies. Just as God gave David victory over Goliath, He also strengthened others in David's family to overcome mighty enemies and impossible battles.

