



# Weekly Booster

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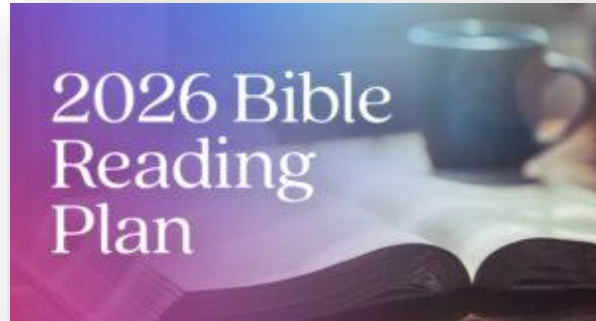
Terry Stafford, Linda Haldane,

Margaret Brady, Deb Finlay,

Jeff Hiser, Pastor David

*Our Vision: **Growing** as disciples of Jesus while **connecting** with others and **servicing** our community.*

This week is "A Year In Review." Attached are pictures from this past year along with with two articles to start the new year.



## Kick Off 2026 With A Guilt-Free, Grace-Saturated Bible-Reading Plan!

Words and context matter, y'all! And since so many of us are about to embark on a new Bible reading plan for 2026, it behooves us to remember that both the divine *context* and *content* of Scripture are saturated with grace and have the supernatural power to kick our guilt to the proverbial curb!

For example, at first glance, the words in Deuteronomy 22:8 prompt a brow raise and maybe even a twinge of concern:

When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof.

Because goodness gracious, how many of us modern-day Christians have parapets (railings) around our roofs? Yikes! Does that mean we need to call a contractor and have a fence fastened to the top of our home asap lest we get zapped into a grease spot of oblivion by holy lightning? Nope. But why? Because the socio-historical context of these words is vastly different than how this idea would be applied in our modern culture.

During the Old Testament era, people lived in homes with flat roofs. Plus, the interior of their homes was relatively small, so they often gathered on rooftops. And during those elevated shindigs, there was always a chance someone could get too close to the edge and fall off. Therefore, a railing—aka: parapet—was a very good idea.

The ancient *practice* of having a parapet around one's roof is *descriptive* and culturally bound. But the *principle* God gave His people about establishing boundaries to ensure the physical safety of other people is *prescriptive* and transcultural.

Here's an example of how I live now in light of the principle God established in Deuteronomy 22:8. When friends and family visit us at our farmette in rural Tennessee during the wintertime, I ask them to park at the bottom of our steep driveway just in case it gets icy while we're eating dinner or playing a game or swapping stories around the firepit. Then we'll tote them up and down the mini-mountain-disguised-as-a-driveway in our trusty John Deere Gator so they don't have to worry about their cars sliding and possibly tangling with a tree when they arrive or depart!

Of course, our finite minds are too small to perfectly comprehend every single contextual nuance of Scripture. But it behooves us to remember that just like the "rail around your roof" imperative in Deuteronomy, all of God's Words are *redemptive*. Holy Writ must be read, studied, understood, and applied under the canopy of his unconditional love for humanity.

The Bible is not a textbook or a rulebook or a collection of benign morality tales. At its core, it's a divine *love story*. It's promissory, not punitive. From cover to cover (or first screen to last screen if you're a digital Bible banger), the metanarrative of Scripture points to the restorative mercy God has made available to His very messy, mistake-prone image bearers.

This redemptive love story began when God handed Moses two stone tablets full of words on top of Mount Sinai:

When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18).

Over the next 1500ish-year time period, forty-some people were *inspired* by God to inscribe the rest of the Bible. Then God *inspired* still others to translate those original biblical texts—which were written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic—into other languages, beginning with Latin, then English, and so on. To date, the entire Bible has been translated into almost 800 languages. The New Testament has been translated into almost 2,000 different languages. And at least one book of the Bible has been translated into almost 4,000 of the 7,000+ known languages in the world.<sup>1</sup>

But don't forget, our holy, trinitarian God is the one who *exhaled* the words of the Bible. He is the one who breathed these life-giving, life-changing promises and parameters into existence! Which is illustrated by the unique Greek term, *theopneustos* (the root word *theos* refers to "God" and *pneō*, meaning "to blow," or "to breathe out"). Paul used this term in his second letter to his disciple, Timothy, to describe Scripture's supernatural genesis:

*All Scripture is God-breathed* and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis mine).

Yet while Scripture was divinely breathed, it can be completely butchered by humans. Which was pretty much Peter's point when he wrote the following about Paul's New Testament epistles:

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

In other words, God's Word can be misunderstood and manipulated. It can be used to produce guilt instead of to reveal grace. This was also our Savior's point when Jesus admonished the Pharisees for being clueless Bible bangers:

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me (John 5:39).

In other words, those first-century religious elitists had "mastered" the rules of the Old Testament, but they'd missed the main point in the process: having a relationship with the Messiah!

Which brings us to a few practical tips regarding how we can dive deeper into God's divine love letter this year and not distort it or miss the Messiah along the literary way:

- Pray for discernment *before* reading this divine love story
- Read God's words with gratitude and humility
- Consider the author's original audience and the socio-historical context
- Engage in God's Word privately *and* communally

Dr. Craig Keener is both a theological scholar and a mentor (his book *Spirit Hermeneutics* will put high octane gas into your Bible reading tank). Dr. Keener says this about God's Word: "If you get out of the Bible what you're expecting to get, you need to change your expectations!"

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Keener's assertion! I'm 62 years old and have been reading the Bible from my earliest memories, yet God's story just keeps getting "bigger and better" the more I read it. His promises are more revelatory, more inspirational, and more transformational to me now than ever before. In fact, I'm convinced the "Yes, Jesus loves me" refrain in our hearts and minds will get loud enough to transform us and the world around us as we learn to better understand, appreciate, and believe the part that says, "the Bible tells me so"!



### Time For Renewal

It is hard to believe we are at the end of one year and the start of a New Year. The Old Testament describes the Jewish New Year as the Feast of Trumpets, a day of rest, remembrance, and repentance, as commanded in Leviticus 23:24-25 and Numbers 29:1. The New Testament does not mention a “New Year” as the Old Testament does for the Jews. There may be many reasons for this, but one is that Christians are to be continually renewed. Rom. 12:2 puts it this way, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The Christian is to be continually renewed by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and the blood of Christ (1 Jn. 1:7) and to live in such a way that our lives are transformed and our minds are renewed. Although God does the renewing, it requires cooperation on our part. If a Christian is to be transformed and experience spiritual renewal, we must put ourselves in the places that will bring spiritual renewal.

We should draw together with fellow believers, finding encouragement and being uplifted in worship and Bible study (Hebrews 10:24-25). The Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7) is more than a ritual; it is a meaningful opportunity to remember and renew our love for the Savior. Singing praises and heartfelt prayer (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 6:18) not only honors God but also refreshes our spirit. Serving others with our gifts and abilities (Galatians 6:10) brings joy and fulfillment, knowing our actions are pleasing to the Lord.

Spiritual renewal is not confined to a single day—it is a daily discipline. However, New Year’s Day serves as a powerful reminder of our need for renewal. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Let us welcome the New Year as an opportunity to renew our minds, our hearts, and our commitment to living transformed lives for Christ.

*Adapted by Mark T. Tonkery, Norval Park church of Christ, Zanesville, OH.. Bulletin Digest Newsletter. P.O. Box 831, Judsonia, AK 72081. December 22, 2025*

## Call to Worship

**Leader: Arise, shine, for your light has come,**

**People: Come, thrill and rejoice.**

**L: Arise, shine, for your light has come,**

**P: and the glory of the lord has risen upon you.**

**L: Come, see and be radiant.**

**P: Come, thrill and rejoice.**

**Message – “New Creation”**

### **Songs**

**Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise #103**

**Shout to the Lord #2074**

**Morning Has Broken #145**

### **Birthdays & Anniversaries this week**

4<sup>th</sup> – JoDayle Irvin

5<sup>th</sup> – Wesley Walter

6<sup>th</sup> – Jessica Jones

**No Sunday School this week, January 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Noisy Offering for January will go to “Sleep in Heavenly Peace”**

**Communion Sunday**

**\*\*Help needed after service Sunday to take down and put away the Christmas decorations.**