

**BIBLE READING DAY 1, SUNDAY: FEBRUARY 27**

**Beginning of His Story**

***John 1:1–5; 10-14; 16-18; Luke 1:1-56***

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was in fact God. He was present with God in the beginning, and through him all things came into being. Apart from him was nothing made of all that was created. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*He came to the things of his own creation, and his own people did not accept him. But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become sons of God, to those who trust in his name, who are born—not of bloods nor of the desire of the flesh or of man, but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. And we saw his glory—the glory of the only begotten Son from the Father.*

*And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; but the only begotten Son, who is in the presence of the Father, has made him known.*

*Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

*In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest of the division of Abijah named Zechariah whose wife Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron. They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.*

*And it came to pass that while Zechariah was serving as priest before God during the time when his division was on duty, it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the sanctuary of the Lord in the temple to burn incense. All the people were praying in the court of the temple, outside the sanctuary, at the time of the burning of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Now when Zechariah saw him, he was startled and became afraid. But the angel said, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth. He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink, and will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, for he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

*“How can I be sure of this?” said Zechariah, “for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”*

*“I am Gabriel,” answered the angel, “who stand in the presence of God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you these good tidings. And now, because you did not believe my words, which surely will be fulfilled in the appointed time, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this comes to pass.”*

Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he remained so long in the sanctuary. But when he came out and was unable to speak to them, they knew that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary; for he made signs to them and remained unable to speak.

When the days of his service were ended, Zechariah returned to his home; and after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived. And she remained in seclusion five months, saying, "This is what the Lord has done for me, now that he has looked on me with favor, to take away my disgrace among the people."

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David; and the maiden's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

But she was greatly troubled at the saying and wondered what such a greeting could mean.

"Do not be afraid, Mary," said the angel, "for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you are to call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David; he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

"How can this be," said Mary, "since I have no husband?"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," said the angel, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Behold, your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

And the angel departed from her.

And in those days Mary rose and went with haste into the hill country to a city of Judah and entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe leaped in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is such an honor mine, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there shall be brought to pass all that was told her from the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor upon the humble estate of his handmaid. Behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered the proud. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering mercy, even as he promised to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her own home.

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"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

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Chuck Swindoll

### Approximate Timeline of Jesus's Public Ministry

EARLY LIFE	EARLY MINISTRY	FIRST PASS-OVER	SUMMER	FIRST BOOTHS	WINTER	SECOND PASS-OVER	SUMMER	FIRST BOOTHS	WINTER	SECOND PASS-OVER	SUMMER	SPRING	WINTER	FINAL PASS-OVER

## DEVOTIONAL DAY 1 (SUNDAY FEBRUARY 27)

### New Beginning

*Based on John 1:1-5; 10-14; 16-18; Luke 1:1-56*

How long does it take to create something new? The fifty days from today to Easter (also called “Resurrection Sunday”) is a great opportunity to create a new habit. Reading the Bible every day will create new thoughts in your mind. And new thoughts in your mind just might lead to creating new feelings in your heart. New thoughts and new feelings will surely create some new actions in your life.

“*In the beginning*” reminds us not only of John 1:1, but also Genesis 1:1. Just by the spoken word of God, He created the heavens and the earth and all of creation in just six days. John 1:1 and 14 uses the word “Word” to refer to Jesus. His Word, Jesus, is “spoken” into us through salvation. But it will take more than a lifetime for that Word to truly bring us to be like Him.

The next fifty days will also be an opportunity to create a certain spiritual and Biblical unity in our church membership by getting us in sync with the hearts and minds of the other members around us. But just how long does it really take to build a new habit?

Phillippa Lally is a health psychology researcher at University College London. In a study published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, Lally and her research team decided to figure out just how long it takes to form a habit. The answer?

On average, it takes more than two months before a new behavior becomes automatic — 66 days to be exact. And how long it takes a new habit to form can vary widely depending on the behavior, the person, and the circumstances. In Lally’s study, it took anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit.

God’s Word (Jesus) and God’s word (the Bible) can also be “spoken” into our hearts, changing us from the inside out. Religion tries to change us from the outside in, with rules, regulations, and our own efforts trying to please God. And as you may have learned, religion alone cannot truly change us. But a relationship with God can. Our passage today says that as many of us who receive Jesus, He gives to us the power to become a child of God, simply by trusting in His name. Now that is a relationship that will change us.

When Patty and I married, she had just finished grad school and I had another year of seminary to finish. It wasn’t a good time to start a family. In about three years, we were established in good jobs, had bought a home, and we were ready to “nest”. But things didn’t happen in the natural way. A few trips to the doctor, and some fertility drugs, and a couple of years of waiting, and our son John was on his way to our home. New things offer so much potential and promise.

My new relationships as a husband with my wife and as a dad with a son, and then another, and another, and even another son have indeed changed me. But as much as those things have changed me, God’s Incarnate Word, Jesus, and His written word, the Bible, have changed me even more. Today’s passage speaks of God’s creation of the new. What is the potential for your life? What could God create in you, in these next 50 days?

**Dear God, my life is not finished. I would like you to create new habits, feelings, and actions in me. Please refine me with Your Holy Spirit, using Your Bible as His tool. I am in Your hands.**

--By Dr. Randy Wallace

**WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE TO WHAT YOU HAVE READ:**

**WHAT DID GOD SAY TO ME?**

**PRAYER: WHAT DID I SAY TO GOD?**

**ACTS OF PRAYER: ADORATION, CONFESSION, THANKSGIVING, SUPPLICATION** (How God Can Supply Needs)

**A**

**C**

**T**

**S**