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Greg Haslam – Senior Pastor, Westminster Chapel, London, UK

THE BIBLE

IN 100 PAGES

**SEEING THE BIG PICTURE
IN GOD'S GREAT STORY**

PHIL MOORE

**MONARCH
BOOKS**

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INTRODUCTION: SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Life is short and life is busy. It's very easy to miss the big picture. Some people spend their whole lives climbing up a ladder, only to discover far too late that the ladder has been leaning against the wrong wall.

Nobody ever intends to neglect the things which really matter. We get caught in the headlights of a busy world, like a rabbit on a busy highway, and we freeze. We allow other people to dictate what should fill up our thinking time. A study conducted by the University of Southern California in 2011 suggests we are bombarded with enough information every day to fill the pages of 174 newspapers. It's no wonder that we shut down our senses and ignore many of the messages which cry out for our attention.

Most people want to discover the message of the Bible. The problem is simply that they are too busy. They view the Bible in the same way that I view Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: I know I ought to read it but, frankly, it just looks far too long. That's why I have written this book to help you, whether you are a believer or a non-believer who is simply curious about the book which has shaped so much of what is good in Western culture. As Richard Dawkins, who is certainly no lover of religion, told the King James Bible Trust in February 2010: *"We are a Christian culture. We come from a Christian culture, and not to know the King James Bible is to be, in some small way, barbarian."*

The Bible is unique among the writings of the world. It was written across 2,000 years by at least 44 different authors in 3 languages in 9 countries in 3

continents.¹ It speaks with the varied voices of kings and nomads and shepherds and generals and queens and mothers and poets and thinkers and fishermen – but it also speaks with one consistent voice from start to finish. The reason we get confused when we read the Bible is that we miss the big picture of this start-to-finish story. We are like the person who comes into a room halfway through a movie and then starts complaining that the plot is hard to follow. That’s why I have summarized the overarching message of the Bible’s 66 books, 1,189 chapters and 31,102 verses into just 100 pages for you. I want to help you to see the big picture in the world’s greatest story so that you can discover your own place in the story too.

So get ready for a fast-paced journey through the book which has sold more copies, created more leaders, inspired more poetry, shaped more laws and changed more lives than any other book in history. Get ready to be challenged and encouraged and enlightened and provoked by the big picture of its message. The German monk and Bible scholar Martin Luther claimed that *“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”* My prayer is that, as you read this book, the living message of the Bible will captivate your own heart too.

Phil Moore

London, April 2014

¹ The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the exception of a few chapters in Daniel and Ezra and one verse in Jeremiah, which are all in Aramaic. The New Testament was written entirely in Greek.

PART 1 CREATURES

GENESIS 1–11 CREATION TO 2200 BC

The Bible begins with God. It's very simple. It doesn't try to convince us that God exists. It doesn't feel it has to. It simply informs us that *"In the beginning God..."*

These first four words of the Bible launch into a chapter which celebrates the incomparable greatness of the Creator God. Genesis 1 tells us ten times that *"God said,"* and it informs us that as a result *"it was so."* God doesn't sweat or struggle to create the world. Even though cosmologists tell us that there are at least 170 billion galaxies in the universe, Genesis 1:16 only uses two Hebrew words when it tells us that *"He also made the stars."* The Bible begins with a mighty declaration that God is God and we are not. God is the Creator and we are his creatures. That's the big picture.

Humans only step onto the stage of world history as God is putting the finishing touches to his work of creation. He creates Adam and Eve in his own image,

but what really strikes us is how very different they are from their Creator. The Lord never grows tired or weary (Isaiah 40:28), but humans do. We have to stop at least three times a day to eat food and recharge our strength. God never needs to sleep (Psalm 121:4), but we do. Even if we manage to pull the occasional all-nighter, we always end up paying for it later. The rhythm of our lives cries out that God is God and we are not. We need to spend half of our short lives sleeping, eating and relaxing. That's not just weird. It is deliberate.

Genesis 1 underlines this difference by reminding us six times that the Hebrew day began and ended with nightfall. It is a statement that, by the time we get to work in the morning, God has already punched a twelve-hour shift without us! In case we miss this, God decrees that the seventh day of creation will be a day of rest, a Sabbath. He does not do so because he is tired from six days of exertion. Jesus tells us in Mark 2:27 that *"The Sabbath was made for humans"*. God wanted Adam and Eve to begin their lives resting in a garden they had not planted, picking fruit they had not grown and enjoying food they had not cultivated. The weekly Sabbath would remind them to *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10). God is the Creator and we are his creatures. That's the message of Part 1 of the Bible.

This was the issue which the Devil targeted when he disguised himself as a snake and came to tempt Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. They should have known better than to trust a talking snake, but the Devil's

message was one which people always like to hear. He encouraged them to play at being God.

The Devil encouraged Adam and Eve to doubt God's Word, asking them, "*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*" He encouraged them to distrust God's character, maligning his motives by suggesting that "*God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.*" Finally he denied God's Word outright: "*You will not die.*" When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they fell under the curse of sin. The bitter aftertaste of the Devil's food was death and sickness and stress and pain and toil – the very opposite of relaxing in the perfect world which God had created.

This sets the scene for the rest of Genesis 1–11. The human population grows and people choose whether to rest in the fact that they are God's dependent creatures or to fight against him in order to become little gods themselves. We can tell that we are still caught up in the struggle from the way that we react when we read the words "dependent creatures". We get offended by the suggestion that we are dependent upon anyone, but that's precisely the point. We could not survive an hour without the breath or heartbeat which God gives us. Even when we play at being little gods, we are only able to do so because the Creator God sustains us in his patient love.

Adam and Eve try to cover over their sin by making clothes from fig leaves, but they can no more save themselves than create themselves. The fully clothed Adam confesses to God that "*I was afraid*

because I was naked." They only find forgiveness when the Creator God reveals that he is the Saviour God too. He kills an innocent animal – the first death in the Garden of Eden – and covers their nakedness with clothing made from the hide of the world's first blood sacrifice.

Adam and Eve teach their children that this is how sin must always be forgiven. When their eldest son Cain tries to impress God with the work of his own hands, God points to his younger brother Abel's sacrifice of an innocent lamb and asks him: *"Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?"*¹ Cain is faced with a choice: Will he accept that God is God and he is not? He prefers to be a self-assertive murderer than a dependent creature. He kills his brother and founds a dynasty of rebels who try to act like little human gods.

Cain's dynasty is known as "the sons of men". It culminates in the self-centred boasting of Lamech: *"I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me."* Their rage against God turns into rage against anyone who reminds them that the universe does not revolve around them at all.

But Adam and Eve have another son named Seth. His dynasty is known as "the sons of God" because they *"began to call on the name of the Lord."* We are told that Enoch *"walked faithfully with God"* and that Noah *"was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God."* These events happened

¹ This sacrificial lamb pointed to the death of Jesus on the cross. That's why Jesus in Luke 11:50–51 calls Abel the first prophet, despite the fact that Abel does not speak a single word in the Bible.

many thousands of years ago but they are just as relevant today. Seth's family were the first believers, the first to confess gladly that God is God and we are not. God prized their worship so highly that he gave them a starring role in Part 1 of the Bible's story.

Then, in Genesis 6, something terrible happens: *"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose."* Seth's family stopped worshipping God as dependent creatures and married into Cain's self-assertive family.

"I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them," God told Noah. *"Make yourself an ark."* It seemed like a ridiculous command, an impossible command, but Noah believed God and obeyed. In contrast to the violent self-assertiveness, self-centredness and self-worship of his neighbours, we are told twice that *"Noah did everything just as God commanded him."* Once Noah had built his massive boat, God saved his entire family by ensuring that it floated. Genesis 7:16 reminds us that he is the Saviour God by telling us that *"the Lord shut him in."*

Nowadays many people laugh at the story of Noah and his ark, but to do so ignores the fact that a version of this story appears in the ancient writings of all the world's great cultures – as far back as the Mesopotamian epics of Atrahasis and Gilgamesh and the Ancient Greek story of Deucalion, as far west as the Aztecs of Central America, and as far east as the Aborigines of Australia. It is a historical event which teaches us three vital lessons at the start of the Bible.

First, it shows us that God takes it very seriously when we sin by pretending to be little gods. Second, it warns us that God has set a judgment day for sin. In 2 Peter 3 we are warned us that *“in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” Jesus promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word... the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”* Third, it assures us that God has made a way for sinful people to be forgiven. Men and women who try to be like God will be destroyed, but God became a carpenter like Noah so that whoever trusts in the blood of Jesus can be saved.

If anybody might have been tempted to get stressed out and over-busy then it was Noah when he led his family out of the ark after the Flood. The whole of human civilization had been destroyed and he was in charge of its reconstruction. He had the mother of all to-do lists. Yet the first thing he did when he stepped out of the ark was absolutely nothing. He resolved to live as God had always intended humans to live. He put down his hammer and his axe and he lifted up his empty hands to God in worship.

We are in desperate need of the message of Genesis 1–11. We belong to one of the most stressed-out and self-centred generations in human history. God invites us at the start of the Bible to make a choice

between Adam's fig leaves and God's blood sacrifice, between Cain's hard work and Abel's faith, and between Lamech's pride and Noah's obedience.

Will we act like little gods or will we accept that we are creatures whose happiness is bound up in the fact that God is God and we are not?

PART 2 FAMILY

GENESIS 12–50 AND JOB 2200 BC TO 1805 BC

Things fall apart. They did in Noah's family, anyway. Soon after they left the ark they started acting like the family of Cain. Genesis 1–11 ends with a resurgent human race boasting at the building site of the Tower of Babel: *"Let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves."* God thwarts their plans by dividing them into the different nations of the world, and then he starts looking for a new family to succeed that of Seth and Noah.

God's choice is very surprising, but it also makes perfect sense. He does not look for an impressive founder for his new family. He chooses a complete nobody because zeroes find it easier than heroes to admit that God is God and we are not. This is a particularly important principle if you are reading this book as a non-Christian. Don't be put off by the

failings of many Christians. That misses the point. Christians are a bunch of nobodies who are following a great Somebody! Don't go to the opposite extreme and assume that you could never turn to God because your lifestyle is not as virtuous as some of your Christian friends' lifestyles. That misses the point too. God chooses nobodies and he takes responsibility for turning them into the people he created them to be.

Abraham is a complete nobody. He is an idolater. Joshua 24:2 recalls that *"Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River Euphrates and worshipped other gods."* Abraham worships creatures instead of his Creator. What is more, he is heir to the builders of Babel. He lives in Ur of the Chaldees, the largest city in the world, which was famous for its ziggurat tower and for the fact that its rulers claimed they were gods. He is so thoroughly immersed in Babel's culture that he marries his sister and thinks this also gives him the right to have sex with her slave-girl. Abraham is shameful. You wouldn't want him in your neighbourhood. Yet the Lord chooses him to be the founder of the Family of God.

If you understand a little bit about ancient culture, then you will fathom Abraham's shortcomings even more. Because I am a twenty-first-century Westerner, I love my four children equally – my daughter just as much as my three sons. But the ancient world was a very different place. The firstborn son was everything. A father's other sons and daughters were also-rans. Abraham was about sixty years younger than his

older brother. He was an afterthought, a mistake, an absolute nobody.¹ To make things even worse, he was infertile. Whatever else God was looking for in the founder of his new family, the ability to have children was essential. Abraham was childless at the age of seventy-five. Hebrews 11:12 doesn't pull its punches when it tells us that he was "*as good as dead.*"

That's the big picture of Part 2 of the Bible. God isn't looking for followers who are brilliant. He is looking for people who admit that they are nobodies and who believe that God is the great Somebody. He is looking for people who are willing to gamble everything on the fact that God is God and they are not.

What Abraham lacks in credentials, he makes up for in faith. He throws out his idols. He waves goodbye to the most civilized city in the world and becomes a nomad, pitching his tent among the hostile inhabitants of Canaan. When God tells him to change his name from Abram to Abraham, he is not simply asking him to add two extra letters to his name. Abraham means *Father-of-Many*, so God is asking the infertile ninety-nine-year-old to declare to his neighbours that he trusts God's promises in spite of their laughter and all the evidence to the contrary.

Genesis 15:6 tells us that "*Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*" He gambled everything on the faithfulness of God and he reaped

¹ Terah became father to Haran aged 70 and father to Abraham aged 130 (Genesis 11:26, 32; 12:4). That's why Haran died long before Abraham and why Abraham treated his nephew, Lot, more like a brother (13:8).

the reward. When he was aged 100, the Lord gave him a son and made him the founder of the Family of God. The life of Abraham reminds us that the kind of faith which marks the members of God's Family is always spelt R-I-S-K.

Abraham's son Isaac is an absolute nobody too. He is not the firstborn, since Abraham has sinfully conceived another child by having sex with his wife's slave-girl. Isaac is a bad husband, allowing the king of the Philistines to take his wife into his harem rather than risking his own neck in order to defend her honour. He is a bad father, provoking his younger son to anger by making it clear that he loves his older son much more.

Nevertheless, Isaac is the kind of person God can use. Despite his many failings, he believes God and risks everything to follow him. We tend to focus on the fact that Isaac is duped into blessing the wrong son with all the promises God made to Abraham, but Hebrews 11:20 focuses on the fact that he blessed his children with those promises at all: "*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.*" Isaac had many flaws but his heart was full of faith to see the fulfilment of what God had spoken over his family.

When we read Genesis 22, we tend to focus on Abraham's faith in offering Isaac as a sacrifice to God, but the Jewish historian Josephus tells us that this event took place when Isaac was aged 25 and his father was aged 125.² When a 25-year-old wrestles with a 125-year-old, there can only be one outcome, so Genesis 22 is as much about Isaac's faith as it is

² Josephus Flavius in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (1.13.2–4).

about his father's. As he climbs Mount Moriah, the hill which has a famous outcrop known as Calvary, he asks his father, *"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* He lies down willingly on the altar because he trusts his father when he replies, *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."* God intervenes by providing a sheep to die in Isaac's place, because Jesus would die in our place on that same mountain 2,000 years later.

Don't miss the big picture in the story. God is looking for nobodies who will put their faith in the Gospel and gamble everything to follow him.

Isaac's son Jacob is the biggest nobody of them all. He is not the firstborn son and he is a dishonest schemer. In the earliest written book of the Bible, God praises a non-Hebrew contemporary of Jacob by asking, *"Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil"* (Job 1:8). Jacob is indeed nothing like him. He takes advantage of his blind father, he double-crosses his older brother and he tries to wrestle God into submission instead of bowing down before him.

But Jacob believes God and risks everything to follow him. While Esau asserts himself over creation with his bow and arrows, Jacob meditates on the promises which the Creator God made to his father. The New Testament is astonishingly generous towards Jacob. It tells us that his scheming and his wrestling were acts of flawed but fervent faith. He reaps years of pain and sorrow because he tries to follow God in the wrong way, but he ends his life as gloriously as

Abraham and Isaac. Hebrews 11:21 tells us that *“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshipped.”* God doesn’t expect you to be impressive; he simply expects you to respond to his promises with raw faith.

Jacob’s son Joseph is a nobody too. He isn’t the firstborn; he is the eleventh-born! He is so untactful towards his older brothers when he boasts about his dreams that they fake his death and sell him to slave-traders who are bound for Egypt. Yet Joseph believes God and risks everything to follow him. When his master’s wife attempts to seduce him, he asks her, *“How... could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* When she is offended and has him thrown into a dungeon, he does not grow resentful towards God. When Pharaoh’s butler and baker have troubled dreams, he does not say, *“Don’t talk to me about dreams; I had dreams once and look where they landed me!”* Instead, he trusts God, even forgiving his brothers by asking them, *“Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* Because he trusts God in adversity, Joseph becomes the Egyptian prime minister and saves both his family and the most powerful nation in the world.

Part 2 of the Bible therefore ends by inviting its readers to become part of the Family of God themselves. Joseph tricks his brothers into admitting that they are nobodies who need to believe in God’s blood sacrifice and risk everything to follow him.³ At

³ See Genesis 41:16; 42:21–22, 28; 44:16, 32–33. Judah was the ancestor of Jesus, so his willingness to sacrifice his own life for that of Benjamin points towards Jesus’ death on the cross for us.

the end of Genesis, Joseph calls them to leave their homes and come to Egypt, re-enacting the same call which God issued to their great-grandfather in Ur of the Chaldees. Whether you consider yourself a Christian or a non-Christian ultimately doesn't matter. What matters is whether you believe enough in God to gamble everything on following him. That's the thing which has always marked the Family of God. It still marks God's Family today.

PART 3 DIFFERENT

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY 1805 BC TO 1406 BC

The descendants of Abraham didn't find it easy to live in Egypt. They felt as out of place as a Justin Bieber fan at a Metallica concert. The Egyptians did not like them, refused to eat with them, and eventually enslaved them.

During the four hundred years which pass between the death of Joseph and the Exodus, God's Family of believers becomes a nation of Hebrew slaves.¹ The Israelites discover that God's calling makes them as different from their neighbours as their God is different from their neighbours' idols.

To the casual observer, the Egyptians look stronger than ever at the start of the book of Exodus. In around 1566 BC, a new pharaoh ends centuries of

¹ *Exodus* is the Greek word for *exit*. *Leviticus* is Greek for *things relating to the Levites*. *Numbers* is named after the two big censuses of Israel in chapters 1 and 26.

infighting by establishing himself as the first ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty and of the New Kingdom. He enslaves the Hebrews and uses them as the workforce for a massive wave of civic construction. Egypt becomes a superpower with the world's largest empire and Egypt's gods appear to be the rulers and shapers of world history. But the casual observer completely misses the big picture. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are the historical record of the early years of the Hebrew nation from God's perspective. These four books declare on every page that Israel's God is different from the idols of the nations, and that those who follow him must become very different too.

In the early chapters of Exodus, God demonstrates that he is far smarter than any of his rivals. When Pharaoh oppresses and enslaves the Hebrews, God uses it to scatter and multiply them throughout the whole of Egypt. When Pharaoh commits genocide against them, God uses it to infiltrate a Hebrew baby into the heart of the Egyptian royal family. Moses becomes the leader of the Hebrews and the author of the Pentateuch,² but before God can use him he has to learn the same lesson as his ancestors. When his pride persuades him that he can rescue God's Family from slavery on his own, he enters forty years of exile in the desert, where he learns true humility and faith. By the time God appears to him at the burning bush in Exodus 3 and reveals himself as *Yahweh*, or *the*

² The five books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – are collectively known as the Pentateuch. This is simply the Greek word for a *Story-in-Five-Volumes*.

Lord, Moses is fully aware that he is a nobody who needs to believe in his Creator and risk everything to follow him.

This awareness enables Moses to orchestrate the greatest escape story in world history. He makes the long trip back home and enters Pharaoh's throne room to command him to let his Hebrew slaves go. When Pharaoh refuses, Moses unleashes a series of miracles which demonstrate how different Israel's God is from Egypt's idols. The plagues confront, among others, the snake-goddess Wadjet, the Nile-god Hapy, the frog-goddess Heket, the cow-goddess Hathor, and the sun-god Amun-Ra.³ Finally, God confronts the biggest idol of them all: the hope which the ancient world placed in their firstborn sons. Pharaoh begins the contest by asking in Exodus 5:2, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go?*" He ends the contest as a corpse floating face down in the Red Sea along with the rest of his mighty chariot army.

Rescuers do not always want to live with those they rescue. When I rescue spiders from my bathtub, I immediately show them the door or toss them out of the window. But God is different. He is so determined to turn this nation of Hebrews into his Family that he tells them in Exodus 19:4 that "*You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.*" He is

³ Exodus 12:12 tells us that the Lord used these ten plagues to demonstrate his vast superiority over any of the false gods in the world. Numbers 33:4 tells us that "*the Lord had brought judgment on their gods.*"

more than their Deliverer; he is also their destination. He leads the Hebrews to Mount Sinai and descends to earth in order to set up home at the heart of the Israelite nation. He tells Moses in Exodus 29:45–46 that his great goal in saving them is to “*dwell among the Israelites and be their God... I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them.*” This is such an important insight into God’s character that Moses prays in Exodus 33:15–16, “*If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here... What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?*” God therefore commands the Israelites to build a special tent called a Tabernacle before they leave Mount Sinai, so that his presence can travel with them all the way to the Promised Land.

If the first half of Exodus contains some of the most exciting chapters in the Bible, then the second half of Exodus and the whole of Leviticus contain some of the dullest. Drama gives way to detail about the Jewish Law, and adventure gives way to the architecture of the Tabernacle. Many readers respond by skim-reading these chapters or by giving up on reading the Pentateuch altogether. But this misses the big picture. These chapters are not a digression or an anticlimax. They emphasize that God is different from pagan idols and that when he moves into the neighbourhood everything must change. The ringing cry of these chapters is found in Leviticus 11:45, where God tells the Hebrews, “*I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because*

I am holy." Holy means different. God comes to dwell in the Tabernacle and then teaches his People how to be as different from their neighbours as he is from their neighbours' idols.

These four books are full of *blood sacrifice*. They contain more slaughter than the complete works of Quentin Tarantino. We find this repulsive because we like our meat to come from the supermarket in clean packages, but God catalogues this sacrificial slaughter in painstaking detail because he wants us to grasp that "*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*" (Hebrews 9:22). Sin is repulsive, so God does not want us to fool ourselves that the good works of sincere Muslims and Buddhists and Westerners can ever save them. From the moment he commands the Hebrews to kill a Passover lamb and to smear its blood onto the vertical and horizontal wooden doorframes of their houses, God teaches them that sin can only be forgiven through the future death of his Son on a wooden cross. Every time the Israelites slaughtered an animal at the altar in front of their Tabernacle, they expressed the same primitive faith as Abel and Isaac in "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29).

These four books are full of *rules*. When God comes to live with people, it affects what they can eat, what they can drink, what they can wear, what they can say and who they can sleep with – every single aspect of their lives. Some people misunderstand the purpose of these rules, as if God is telling us to pull our socks up and try to impress him, but Romans

3:20 tells us this is wrong. The purpose of these rules is to show us just how holy God is and just how sinful we are. They showed the Israelites that they were nobodies who needed to cry out to the God who rescued them from slavery to Pharaoh and ask him to rescue them from slavery to sin as well. God responds six times in Leviticus 20–22 with the same amazing promise: “*I am the Lord, who makes you holy.*” God doesn’t just command holiness; he provides holiness for anyone who believes.

That’s why these four books are full of *God’s grace and mercy*. The Lord makes observing the Sabbath one of the Ten Commandments, inviting the Israelites to rest in the fact that he is God and they are not, just as Adam and Eve did in the beginning. He provides them with miraculous food and drink in the desert, and when they start worshipping a golden calf he provides them with forgiveness and a future. When they refuse to show they trust him by risking everything to enter the Promised Land, he protects them for forty years in the desert until their children are old enough to inherit his promises and show that they trust him instead. In the book of Deuteronomy, God renews his covenant with this new generation of Israelites.⁴ Any other god would have given up on the rebellious descendants of Abraham many times throughout the story. But God is different and

⁴ *Deuteronomy* comes from a Greek word which means *Repetition-of-the-Law*. The unfaithfulness of the Israelites did not nullify God’s faithfulness. If we cannot earn our salvation then we cannot unearn it either!