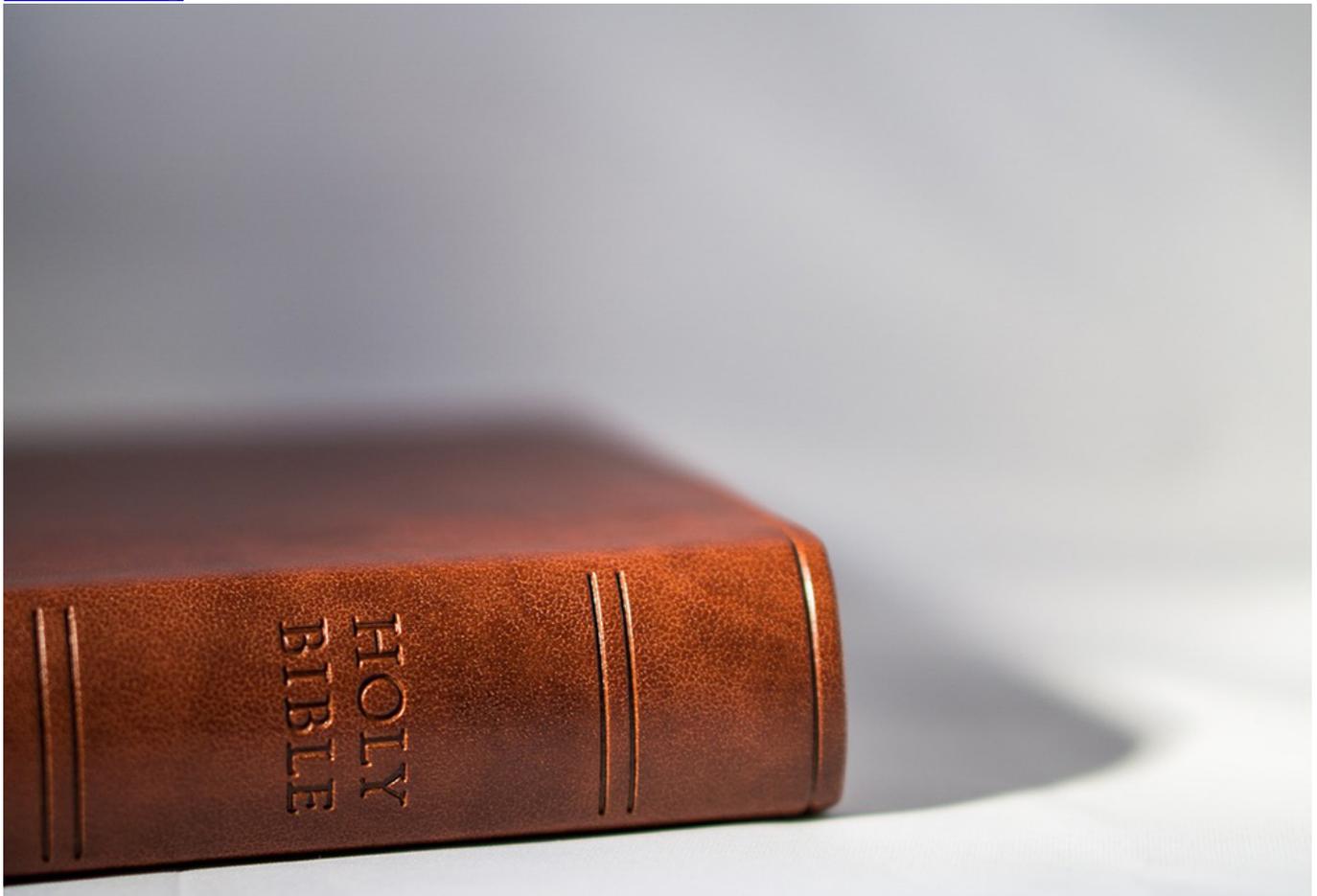


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Sometimes the world changes with an unexpected glance by a bored boy during a bitter winter.

It was a few days after Christmas of 1963. My father was in England and we would be moving there soon. For now, Dover, Delaware, was home. I was 8, the oldest of four children. My mother did her best to keep us entertained while the snow outside was piled roof-high and the temperatures were plummeting. I had tired of playing with the toys I received for Christmas. I was bored, and made the mistake of telling my mother that I was bored. She gave me a look, *the* look. The look that said if I did not find something to do, she would find something for me to do and I probably wouldn't like it.

I told her I wanted to go outside, but she said no. She told me to find something to do inside. Other than some new socks, all that remained for me under the Christmas tree were a couple of books my grandparents had sent me: the first two Hardy Boys mysteries. I sighed, and approached the books with resigned indifference.

Finding a quiet, comfortable corner away from my siblings, I opened the first book. A glance. My life changed forever at that moment. Nothing would ever be the same. I became a reader, a life-long, unapologetic reader. A book lover. I discovered then and there that living in a story could feel more real than playing outside in the snow with friends. As Stephen King described it, I had discovered "a uniquely portable magic."

Now it's many years later, and I've been invited to write an annual devotional. The project involves writing reflections throughout the liturgical year based on the daily readings of the church calendar.

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I find that the Bible, at its heart, is a magnificent story; and, as with any good story, it is easy to get caught up in it. There are wars, times of peace, great moments of sacrifice and courage, bewildering acts of cruelty and betrayal, passionate love stories, heroes to swoon over and villains evil enough to cause you sleepless nights. The Bible is as fantastic as "The Lord of the Rings" and "A Game of Thrones," but also as real and relatable as the evening news.

As I made my way through the year of reading and writing, I took note of some of what I discovered for myself. Here are five of the more memorable takeaways for me.

1. The humanity of Jesus is astounding. Think about it: God became a human being to fully reveal himself to us. That means we find God "right here," not "out there." Another implication is that whatever makes us more human makes us more like God. Whatever engages our minds, our energy, our creativity; whatever makes us wiser, more generous, more grateful; whatever broadens our spirits and gives space for our talents — all of this makes us more like God.

2. God goes to great lengths to reassure us not to be afraid. The Bible tells us not to be afraid between 100 and 300 times, depending on translations and versions accessed. Clearly, this is a central truth God wishes to get across to us. So let us take God at his word, and try not to let fear overwhelm us.

3. God promises he will always be with us. There is an undeniable message of return within Scripture. Not only will God not abandon us, but he will accompany us, even when we might not be aware he is with us. And he will never forget, forsake, or lose one of his own. That is God's promise and God always keeps his promises.

4. God chooses flawed, imperfect people to perform unimaginably great and transformative feats. He may choose you, too! Look at some of the characters who have dealings with Jesus: a grieving father, a woman with chronic illness, frustrated fishermen, jealous disciples, a corrupt public official, an adulterous woman about to be stoned, desperate beggars, sinners, outcasts. These flawed, imperfect people work on behalf of the kingdom of God with astounding results. Well, you are part of that parade of flawed and imperfect people God wants to call upon to help to do the work that needs to be done. God takes the humble of heart and creates the heroes he needs to bring about his kingdom.

5. Finally, love is at the heart of all things. There can be no greater truth that arises from a close encounter with the Bible. It is in fact an epic love story about God, forever in pursuit of his faithless flock. Fortunately for us, we know love wins. But we are also participants in this ongoing and living story, this epic tale of a loving God reaching out to his chosen people. We have a part to play, roles to fulfill, destinies to accept.

The story of God's people is still being told, and we are now the chosen people. Your part and mine in this great story is crucial. How will you respond to the invitation to find your soul's destiny in God's unfolding story of love for his chosen people?

Editor's note: *This article is adapted from the introduction of the author's book [2024: A Book of Grace-Filled Days](#) and is used with permission.*