

June 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10am Worship - Pastor Yuri (The Story) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	1	2 7am Men's Prayer Meeting 12pm Women's Prayer Meeting	3 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>The Story</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	4	5	6 1-4pm Baking Club
7 10am Worship - Pastor Yuri (The Story) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	8	9 7am Men's Prayer Meeting 12pm Women's Prayer Meeting	10 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>The Story</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	11	12	13
14 10am Worship - Pastor Yuri (The Story) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	15	16 7am Men's Prayer Meeting 12pm Women's Prayer Meeting	17 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>The Story</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	18	19	20 7:30pm UGM
21 Communion 10am Worship - Pastor Yuri (The Story) 11:15am Faith Formation/Prayer Meeting 12pm BBYOL	22	23 7am Men's Prayer Meeting 12pm Women's Prayer Meeting	24 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>The Story</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	25	26	27 8:30am Men's Prayer Fellowship
28 10am Worship - Pastor Yuri (The Story) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	29	30 7am Men's Prayer Meeting 12pm Women's Prayer Meeting	1 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>The Story</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	2	3	4



Bethesda Church

Newsletter

Congregational Letter

June 2026

Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. — Ezekiel 3:3

This summer I have a serious challenge for you: I want you to READ!

One way you can tell that the world is becoming less Christian is by how little people are reading. It's not that they can't read, of course. They just don't.

Why do I call this trend unchristian, perhaps even sinful? Because writing is a gift from God himself. So God's people have always prized reading. Some ancient peoples may have been nostalgic for a pre-literate age, but the Jews never were. Christians largely adopted the Jews' love for the written word. Again, because it comes from God himself.

Modern thinkers see writing as an early “technology”, a human invention. But none of the ancients thought of it that way. They all knew that it was a divine gift. Still, pagan peoples saw it as a mixed blessing. The Bible, on the other hand, does not describe the written word either as an invention or as a mixed blessing.

Language itself is attributed to God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) That is, language, like the whole universe, is simply one aspect of God's rationality. It's not an accidental byproduct of human evolution! No, language is an expression of God's internal life of love: the Bible consistently portrays the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit as being involved in an eternal conversation¹. That being so, it's no surprise that God spoke the universe into existence. Just as naturally, God verbally commissioned Adam almost immediately after he formed him “out of the dust of the earth” (Gen 2:7). Made in God's image, carrying God's own breath in his lungs, Adam never had to learn how to speak. He was a sophisticated wordsmith from the get go: “whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name...” (Gen 2:19). Adam's first recorded words are a clever, allusive love song to his wife (Gen 2:23). “Eve” (*Chava* = Life-Giver) is the only name that Adam gave that we still know.

Unlike pagan mythologies, the Bible doesn't speculate about when humans started writing things down or how that came about. But the fact that the Bible exists at all (given that it consistently exalts written language) is proof that God not only validates and highly values text, *he uses it himself*. God literally inscribed the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (twice! See Ex 31:18 & 34:1). Later, he caused something that looked like “the fingers of a human hand” to write a judgement against King Belshazzar “on the plaster of the wall” in a script that only Daniel was able to read (Dan 5:5; 25-28). Revelation speaks of “books” being opened on the Day of Judgement (in addition to the well-known “Book of Life”).

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¹ e.g. Ps 110:4 = Father→Son; Rom 8:34 = Son→Father; 1 Cor 2:10-11 = Spirit↔Father; John 16:13-15 = All→All!

Among other things, these books (or scrolls) seem to contain our personal stories: both what we did (Rev 20:12) as well as “all the days ordained” for us (Ps 139:16). This doesn’t just mean how many days we will enjoy, but what happens in each one of them. David prays for God to record his “tears” (Ps 56:8). Similarly, the scroll that Ezekiel is commanded to eat in the passage above is loaded on both sides with “words of lament and mourning and woe” (Ezek 2:9), although ironically to Ezekiel it tastes “as sweet as honey”! (But see Rev 10:9-10 for a suggestion that God’s words don’t always sit well...whatever the taste!) Way back in Exodus 32:32-33, Moses (and God) were already speaking together of “God’s book”—this was not the tablets, the Bible, nor the “Book of Life”, but something else, likely something more along the lines of the scroll of the record of our lives that David had in his mind.

So again: if written language belongs to God, if it is neither a human innovation nor (all things considered) a mixed blessing, is it so surprising that over and over again God commands his people to keep a record of what he did for us, and said to us, or that he wants us to read it frequently? God expected the kings of Israel to write out a whole copy of the Law for personal reference (Deut 18:18-19). He decrees that everyone write his commandments on the doorframes of their houses, tying them to their hands and foreheads (Deut 6:8-9)! Of course, this isn’t meant to be taken literally. It means that we are supposed to actively get God’s words through our thick skulls (foreheads), so that we do what he says (hands) whenever and wherever we go (doorframes). Jesus quotes Moses in saying that “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”. That is, we are supposed to “eat” God’s Word, but not to just to consume and discard it since he also speaks of putting his law “in our minds” and “writing it on our hearts” (Jer 31:33). In other words, the goal of reading and writing is to make what we read stick, to change us from the inside out. But that process starts from the outside in, with the written page.

So that is my first challenge to you: this summer I WANT YOU TO SEE HOW MUCH OF THE BIBLE YOU CAN READ! For this challenge an audio version is perfectly acceptable, since it’s the best way to push through a lot of text. You may not remember or understand all of it, but some of it you will (certainly more than if you do nothing!!) In any case, that is what I will be using (in addition to my usual, slower, paper reading). My favourite audio version is the NIVUK version read by David Suchet (an English actor who most famously portrayed *Hercule Poirot* on TV and is a Jewish believer in Jesus). You can find many free audio versions on the “YouVersion” app. “Through the Word” is another very helpful Bible reading app with a customized plan to get you through the Bible in a way that may hold your attention more easily. Elly is also working on a new Bible reading checklist to keep track of where you are. (I find colouring in boxes gives me a sense of accomplishment!)

The Bible also points out the value of books that are not divinely inspired. The Old Testament history books, for instance, are always citing their sources and suggesting to their first readers that they check out other books to get more information (e.g. Josh 10:13; Num 21:14; 1 Ki 14:28; 2 Ch 32:22). Daniel, Ezra, and Esther quote the proclamations of Gentile kings. Ezra even copies down a letter from hostile agents asking the Persian emperor Darius to search the royal archives in order to prove that the Jews are not authorized to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 5:17 – SPOILER ALERT: the imperial archives vindicate the builders!) The Psalms (and many other biblical books) regularly reference pagan myths, typically to mock them or to highlight the differences between the one, true God and the many false ones. The book of Proverbs was influenced by Egyptian wisdom literature. Paul quotes Greek playwrights and philosophers. Those are just a handful examples off the top of my head. They barely scratch the surface of the Bible’s extrabiblical allusions.

God’s people have always read widely.

So that is my second challenge to you: to READ OTHER BOOKS this summer! The three I’m suggesting are short and worth your time. They are: A.W. Tozer’s *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*, John Owen’s *The Mortification of Sin* (a modernized, abridged version), and John Bunyan’s classic *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

They are all in the public domain and available for free online, but we are also making them available to you on paper for a small suggested donation to cover the cost of printing. To obtain a copy of any of these books, look for the sign up sheet on the back table this summer!

To round out this letter, I’ll leave you with a little taste of Tozer’s *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*. Next month, John Owen! — **Pastor Yuri**

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

— A. W. TOZER (ADAPTED by Pastor Yuri)

Now, what is the Holy Spirit? Not who, but what? The Holy Spirit is not enthusiasm. I have found enthusiasm that hummed with excitement and the Holy Spirit was nowhere to be found there at all. Neither is the Holy Spirit another name for genius. Now what is He?

He is a Person. Put that down in capital letters—that the Holy Spirit is not only a Being having another mode of existence, but He is Himself a Person, with all the qualities and powers of personality. He is not matter, but He is substance. The Holy Spirit has will and intelligence and feeling and knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think and hear and speak and desire the same as any person has.

You may say, “I believe all that. You surely don’t think you are telling us anything new!” Many of us have grown up on the theology that accepts the Holy Spirit as a Person, but for some reason it never did us any good. We are as empty as ever, we are as joyless as ever, we are as far (contd.)

from peace as ever, we are as weak as ever. What I want to do is to tell you the old things, but while I am doing it, to encourage your heart to make them yours now, and to walk into the living, throbbing, vibrating heart of them, so that from here on your life will be altogether different.

So the Spirit is a Person. That’s what He is. Now, who is He?

The historic church has said that He is God. The Spirit is God, existing in another mode of being than ourselves. He exists as a spirit and not as matter, for He is not matter, but He is God. He is a Person. It was so believed by the whole Church of Christ down through the years. It was so sung by the hymnists back in the days of the first hymn writers. It is so taught in the Book, all through the Old Testament and the New, and I have given you only a few proof texts.

Now what follows from all this? Ah, there is an unseen Deity present, a knowing, feeling Personality, and He is indivisible from the Father and the Son, so that if you were to be suddenly transferred to heaven itself you wouldn’t be any closer to God than you are now. Changing your geographical location would not bring you any nearer to God nor God any nearer to you, because the indivisible Trinity is present, and all that the Son is the Holy Ghost is, and all that the Father is the Holy Ghost is, and the Holy Ghost is in His Church.

What will we find him to be like? He will be exactly like Jesus. You have read your New Testament, and you know what Jesus is like, and the Holy Spirit is exactly like Jesus, for Jesus was God and the Spirit is God, and the Father is exactly like the Son; and you can know what Jesus is like by knowing what the Father is like, and you can know what the Spirit is like by knowing what Jesus is like.

Nobody ever need to be afraid of Jesus, because He is the epitome of love, kindness, geniality, warm attractiveness and sweetness. And that is exactly what the Holy Ghost is, for He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Amen.