



# GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

Old Testament—The Prophets



Community  
**Bible**  
Experience



## DEAR GROUP LEADER,

We're delighted that you're a part of Community Bible Experience.

"Reading big" for eight weeks will stretch your group in powerful ways. This guide has everything you need to lead them through this eight-week journey.

Whether you find the prospect of reading the Old Testament exciting, daunting, or maybe a bit of both, we promise you this: it may not be easy, but when we immerse ourselves in the redemptive power of God's Word, we'll discover our place in His story.

You don't have to have all the answers to be a great discussion group leader. Just think of your weekly gatherings more like a book club than a traditional Bible study, and come ready to explore the Bible with your fellow readers.

Thank you for sharing this journey with us.

# CONTENTS

## About this journey

A better Bible experience	4
How it works	4
The Books of the Bible	5

## Preparing for the journey

Five tips for reading	6
Planning your weekly gatherings	7
Seven conversation starters	8
Five tips for weekly gatherings	9
The Prophets reading plan	10

## Weekly discussion guides

<b>Week 1:</b> Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah	14
<b>Week 2:</b> Isaiah	15
<b>Week 3:</b> Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah	16
<b>Week 4:</b> Jeremiah	17
<b>Week 5:</b> Jeremiah	18
<b>Week 6:</b> Obadiah, Ezekiel	19
<b>Week 7:</b> Ezekiel	20
<b>Week 8:</b> Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi	21

## After the journey

Four tips for finishing strong	22
Oakwood testimonies on CBE	23

# ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

## A better Bible experience

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What would happen if we actually read the Bible? Not a verse here or there, but the whole Bible?

What if, instead of going it alone, we could have a real conversation about the Bible—one anyone can join, no matter where they are in their faith journey?

Community Bible Experience is about reading the Bible as it was meant to be read—whole books, in community. It will take your group beyond Bible study, beyond reading in fragments, and beyond reading in isolation.

Discover the complete story. For eight weeks, let's read big, read real, and read together!

READ BIG.  
READ REAL.  
READ TOGETHER.

## How it works

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1. **Read big.** You'll cover all that the Jewish Old Testament calls The Prophets in 8 weeks—reading 5 days a week, around 15 pages a day. The average day's reading takes 30 minutes or so to complete.
2. **Read real.** You'll use a special presentation of the Scriptures, called *The Books of the Bible*. It's designed to feel more like reading the original.
3. **Read together.** Your group will meet once a week for a book club-style conversation about the Bible.



# ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

## The Books of the Bible

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During Community Bible Experience, you'll read from a unique presentation of Scripture called *The Books of the Bible*.

When you open your copy, the first thing you'll notice is that this is no ordinary Bible. There are no chapter or verse numbers. No study notes or cross references. No red lettering.

That's because none of these features are original to the Scriptures. Most were added centuries later to help us find things. But the Bible isn't a reference book; first and foremost, it's a story. It's a collection of books, each of which was meant to be experienced as a whole. Modern Bible formatting imposes a different structure on the text, one that encourages us to read in fragments.

*The Books of the Bible* is designed to be read from beginning to end. We've stripped away centuries of added formatting, leaving behind nothing but pure Bible text in a presentation that's easier to read and understand.

We've formatted each book so you can see the natural section breaks put there by the authors.

*The Books of the Bible* features the complete text in the NIV®, the most widely read contemporary English translation of the Bible.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Five tips for reading

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1. **Read what you can.** Don't get discouraged if you fall behind. Keep at it, even if you don't make it all the way through each day's reading. If you have trouble keeping up, listening to the audio version can help.
2. **Read every day.** Plan on reading five days a week, Monday – Friday. The pace is a little intense, but reading large portions of Scripture is also incredibly rewarding. (And remember, you only have to keep this pace up for eight weeks!)
3. **Be fully present.** Avoid distraction while reading. (Turns out we're not that good at multitasking...) Instead, devote your full attention to the text.
4. **Read the book intros.** *The Books of the Bible* includes brief introductions or "invitations" to each book, unpacking the context and literary structure of what you're about to read. Trust us, they're well worth your time.
5. **Don't worry about the parts you don't understand.** The goal is to read big, not to catch every detail. You can always go back and study a specific passage in greater detail later. For now, take in the big picture; let that be your focus for the next eight weeks.

**"I really looked at the Bible differently by reading for the big picture. It was good for me to put all the pieces in one connected story."**

– an Oakwood participant

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Planning your weekly gatherings

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Groups/"book clubs" should meet once a week during Community Bible Experience. The next few pages cover some of the basics to help you make the most of your weekly gatherings.

### **When should we meet?**

Any time during the week works—just jump in and discuss what you've read since your last time together. There are no readings assigned for Saturday and Sunday, which makes the weekend a good time to get together.

### **How often should we meet?**

Plan on meeting eight times during your reading journey. Some groups enjoy a final wrap-up celebration together after they've completed the eight weeks.

### **How much time should we spend together?**

Most discussion groups meet for 60–90 minutes each week, but feel free to adjust this based on the needs of your group.

### **What will we cover?**

Here's a general outline of each week's discussion time, which you can adapt as needed:

- Introduction (15-20 minutes, first week only) and Check-In (15-20 minutes, starting week 2)
- Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)
- Preparing for the week ahead (15-30 minutes)

See pages 14–21 for a week-by-week guide.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Seven conversation starters

Each week, participants will share their reflections on the text with their discussion groups, using these seven simple prompts:

1. What's something you've noticed **for the first time**?
2. What **questions** did you have?
3. Was there anything that **bothered** you?
4. What did you learn about **loving God**?
5. What did you learn about **loving others**?
6. If this is God speaking to you, how will you **apply it** to your life? ("I will...")
7. Who will you **share with** before we meet again?

Okay, these are a bit different from your average Bible study questions. Then again, this isn't your average Bible study. When people read whole books of the Bible, they notice things for the first time. They may have questions they never thought to ask before. They may even come across things that trouble them. These discussion prompts are meant to help readers navigate the text without giving them all the answers. They're an invitation to wrestle with the Bible and ponder its implications for how we live.

Encourage your group to treat weekly gatherings more like a book club than a Bible study, to allow the discussion to be free-flowing and wide-ranging.

**Starting week two...** Check-In: Since we last met, how did your "I will..." and sharing go?  
(from questions 6 and 7)

"I so enjoyed  
hearing how fellow  
believers wrestled  
with God's Word and  
being able to  
discuss our  
struggles out-loud."

– an Oakwood participant



# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Five tips for weekly gatherings

This may be one of the easiest discussion groups you've ever led. You don't have to have all the answers; you just need to get the ball rolling each week. Chances are, participants will come full of things to talk about. Here are five tips for a great book-club experience.

**1. Don't stress.**

You don't have to do any advance preparation to lead your group on this journey. Just do your best to keep up with each week's reading.

**2. Think "book club."**

Participants will come with different perspectives, backgrounds, and assumptions. Some may be new to the Bible; others may be lifelong students. Your job isn't to settle every debate or answer every question. Let the Bible speak for itself, and let each person absorb the story as it unfolds. Group members may come to each week's gathering with lots of specific questions. That's OK! Try to focus your conversation on the big picture—where the overall story is moving and the part we're invited to play in it. To help, you can suggest your group keeps a "parking lot" list of questions to explore further after your eight-week journey. You can even submit these for our **Q&A Lunch on March 1!**

**3. Give everyone a voice.**

Encourage everyone to join the conversation, but don't pressure someone to share if they don't want to. Make sure no one inadvertently monopolizes the conversation. If they do, invite some of the quieter participants to chime in.

**4. Share the reins.**

Anyone can facilitate a Community Bible Experience discussion group. If you feel like a change of pace, invite another member to guide the conversation for that week. This is a great way to help emerging leaders grow!

**5. Watch the overview videos together.**

There are overview videos for each book from **The Bible Project**. (Select the video that aligns with the reading, or else view videos at the YouTube links provided on pp. 14-21). Take a few moments to watch these videos together, so you can prepare for what you're about to read, or are currently reading. We'll give suggestions in the weekly discussion guide on when to view which videos.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## The Prophets—Old Testament

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Read five days a week, Monday through Friday. Most readings take around 30 minutes to complete. Some daily readings are longer or shorter, because each one ends at the close of a book or a natural section break within a book. Section breaks are indicated by line spaces—the bigger the space, the bigger the break.

### **Week 1: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah**

This week, we'll come into close contact with the good, the bad, and the ugly of several of God's messengers and the people they delivered messages to. We'll get to know the hearts and life stories of four minor prophets (they're only called "minor" because their books are shorter—*it's not like the minor leagues*) and begin to walk with a major prophet called Isaiah.

Day 1	pages 1-12
Day 2	pages 12-34
Day 3	pages 34-51
Day 4	pages 53-67
Day 5	pages 69-84

### **Week 2: Isaiah**

We're digging into the "Gospel According to Isaiah" this week. We'll hear the groans and see the glory. You might notice an interesting parallel between the first chunk of Isaiah's writing, which emphasizes our human weaknesses and desperate need for God, with the Old Testament's overall message and the latter part's hopeful message of salvation with the New Testament.

Day 6	pages 84-96
Day 7	pages 96-115
Day 8	pages 115-136
Day 9	pages 136-146
Day 10	pages 146-160

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## The Prophets—Old Testament

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### **Week 3: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah**

We interact with three more minor prophets this week, who brought messages of warning, turnaround, and course correction. We also meet Jeremiah, so famous for his soft heart of compassion and empathy that he's been nicknamed the Weeping Prophet.

Day 11	pages 160-172
Day 12	pages 173-183
Day 13	pages 183-195
Day 14	pages 195-205
Day 15	pages 207-232

### **Week 4: Jeremiah**

As we continue to read Jeremiah's writing this week, you will encounter great passion, depth, and feeling. He's also a master at using divinely-inspired object lessons to help God's people see and sense the seriousness of life apart from Him and the power of life lived in relationship with the LORD.

Day 16	pages 233-243
Day 17	pages 243-255
Day 18	pages 255-268
Day 19	pages 268-278
Day 20	pages 279-292

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## The Prophets—Old Testament

### Week 5: Jeremiah

Jeremiah has so much to share in the way of wisdom, words, and weeping, that we get to hear from him several weeks in a row! Could you imagine being called to prophetic ministry at about 20 years old and continuing in that work for the rest of your adult life, forty years or more, most often speaking to a people who didn't care to listen? Jeremiah expresses an emotional depth and raw reality of pain in his own troubles and the challenges he sees coming over the horizon for God's people who refuse to return to Him.

Day 21	pages 292-306
Day 22	pages 307-315
Day 23	pages 315-326
Day 24	pages 326-339
Day 25	pages 340-354

### Week 6: Obadiah, Ezekiel

This week, we'll meet the prophet who wrote the shortest book of the Old Testament and whose name means "worshipper of Yahweh." We'll encounter a priest, brokenhearted over the emptiness of the religious system he sees churning around him and the dead spiritual state of God's people. Both will prophesy, issuing a call to turn from pride and false religion to encounter the true Spirit of love and life!

Day 26	pages 355-368
Day 27	pages 368-378
Day 28	pages 378-386
Day 29	pages 386-397
Day 30	pages 397-403

You're invited to join us tonight, Friday, February 21, for our CBE Worship Fully at Oakwood (original music, art, spoken word inspired by *the Prophets*), art gallery opens at 6:30 pm - worship gathering begins at 7 pm!

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## The Prophets—Old Testament

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### **Week 7: Ezekiel**

Ezekiel lived among Jewish exiles in Babylon at a settlement along the river Kebar. He started his message-delivery service five years after arriving and continued prophesying for at least 22 years. Needless to say, his Spirit-inspired words we'll read this week drip with amazing imagery and are saturated with timeless truths!

Day 31	pages 403-411
Day 32	pages 411-419
Day 33	pages 419-427
Day 34	pages 427-436
Day 35	pages 436-444

### **Week 8: Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi**

Four minor prophets will bring us home this week. We'll encounter a wide range of messages the Spirit of the Lord impressed on their hearts to deliver—words of wisdom, warning, principle, and promise—even looking ahead to future generations and across history into our time!

Day 37	pages 445-459
Day 37	pages 459-466
Day 38	pages 467-477
Day 39	pages 479-484
Day 40	catch-up day

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 1: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah

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### Introduction (15-20 minutes)

Be sure to cover the following points at your first gathering:

- Introduce Community Bible Experience by sharing the information on pages 4-6 of this guide.
- Discuss the challenge of reading 15 pages a day. Remind participants that most readings take around 30 minutes to complete—about the same time it takes to watch a short TV show.
- Invite each group member to share what they hope to get from their journey through *The Prophets* of the Old Testament.

### Reflecting on the previous week (variable minutes)

Depending upon when you meet, there is either no prior reading to discuss this week or a portion. Plan accordingly! Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to the Prophets by watching the ["How to read the Bible: The Prophets"](#) video from *The Bible Project*. *The Bible Project* also provides a ["Bible Overviews: Old Testament"](#) series. You can encourage your group to watch the overview videos for the prophets you're reading each week.

Encourage your group to take the time to read the introductory pages in *The Books of the Bible—The Prophets*.

Remind your group that each Sunday morning message at Oakwood will preview the week's reading in advance!

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 2: Isaiah

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### Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to the prophets for next week by choosing one of the overview videos to watch, encouraging your group to watch the others on their own. You could also watch [Isaiah 40-66](#), which recaps this week's reading, part of the "[Bible Overviews: Old Testament](#)" series produced by *The Bible Project*.

Encourage your group to read the Invitations, setting the stage for each book you'll begin this week.

Invite your group to mark their calendars for the **CBE Worship Fully on Friday, February 21**, at Oakwood (original music, art, spoken word inspired by our reading in *The Prophets*).

Art gallery opens at 6:30 pm; music and spoken word begins at 7 pm. Calling creatives of every kind: you are invited to contribute a piece of artwork, writing, or music inspired by your reading in *The Prophets* as part of that evening! You are welcome to contribute any creative expression the Lord inspires through your reading!

Register online to attend by searching CBE at [oakwoodnow.org](https://oakwoodnow.org). Consider participating as a group!

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 3: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Go deeper with your group into Jeremiah by choosing to watch the overview or encourage your group to watch on their own.

For **Jeremiah**, part of the “**Bible Overviews Old Testament**” series produced by *The Bible Project*

Encourage your group to read the Invitation to Jeremiah on pp. 233-235.

Remember to invite your group to mark their calendars for **CBE Worship Fully on Friday, February 21** (Art gallery, 6:30 pm; event, 7 pm). To learn more, connect with Marcus: [marcus@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:marcus@oakwoodnow.org)/(262) 367-1212.

**Register online to attend** by searching CBE at [oakwoodnow.org](http://oakwoodnow.org). Consider participating together as a group!



# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 4: Jeremiah

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### Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)

Go deeper with your group by watching [this video](#), "Exile" part of the "[Biblical Themes](#)" series produced by *The Bible Project*.

Remember to invite your group to mark their calendars for **CBE Worship Fully on Friday, February 21** (Art gallery, 6:30 pm; event, 7 pm). To learn more, connect with Marcus: [marcus@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:marcus@oakwoodnow.org) / (262) 367-1212.

[Register online to attend](#) by searching CBE at [oakwoodnow.org](http://oakwoodnow.org). Consider participating together as a group!

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 5: Jeremiah

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### Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to [Obadiah](#) or [Ezekiel 1-33](#) by watching an overview video, part of the “[Bible Overviews: Old Testament](#)” series produced by *The Bible Project*.

Encourage your group to read the Invitations to Obadiah, p. 355 and Ezekiel, pp. 361-363.

Remind your group: next week **Friday, February 21 is our CBE Worship Fully** (Art gallery, 6:30 pm; event, 7 pm).

It's not too late to create and share a piece of art, music, or spoken word, inspired by your reading in *The Prophets*!

Connect with Tom Hooper: [tom@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:tom@oakwoodnow.org) about music or spoken word

Nicole Hanson: [nicoleishanson@gmail.com](mailto:nicoleishanson@gmail.com) about visual art!

Consider attending together as a group!

Register online to attend by searching CBE at [oakwoodnow.org](http://oakwoodnow.org). Consider participating as a group!



# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 6: Obadiah, Ezekiel

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### Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)

Go deeper with your group into [Ezekiel 34-48](#) by watching the overview video, part of the ["Bible Overviews: Old Testament"](#) series produced by *The Bible Project*.

If they haven't yet, encourage your group to read the Invitation to Ezekiel on pp. 361-363.

Remind your group: THIS **Friday, February 21 is our CBE Worship Fully** (Art gallery, 6:30 pm; event, 7 pm).

It's not too late to create and share a piece of art, music, or spoken word, inspired by your reading in *The Prophets*!

Connect with Tom Hooper: [tom@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:tom@oakwoodnow.org) about music or spoken word

Nicole Hanson: [nicoleishanson@gmail.com](mailto:nicoleishanson@gmail.com) about visual art!

Consider attending together as a group!

Invite your group to mark their calendars and join us for an informal CBE Q&A with some of our Oakwood leaders on Sunday, March 1, at 11:45 am, after second service, downstairs in the Gathering Place at Oakwood where we'll discuss your submitted questions regarding what you've read from *The Prophets*. [Register online to attend and submit your questions](#) by searching CBE@oakwoodnow.org. Consider participating together as a group!

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 7: Ezekiel

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to the prophets ahead by choosing one of the video overviews to watch, encouraging your group to watch the others on their own.

For **Haggai**, part of the **"Bible Overviews: Old Testament"** series produced by *The Bible Project*

For **Zechariah**, part of the **"Bible Overviews: Old Testament"** series produced by *The Bible Project*

For **Joel**, part of the **"Bible Overviews: Old Testament"** series produced by *The Bible Project*

For **Malachi**, part of the **"Bible Overviews: Old Testament"** series produced by *The Bible Project*

Remind your group to mark their calendars and join us for an informal CBE Q&A with some of our Oakwood leaders on Sunday, March 1, at 11:45 am, after second service, downstairs in the Gathering Place at Oakwood where we'll discuss your submitted questions regarding what you've read from *The Prophets*. **Register online to attend and submit your questions** by searching CBE@oakwoodnow.org. Consider participating together as a group!

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 8: Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide.

### **Final Reflections (15-20 minutes)**

Give each person a chance to verbally share how their journey through *The Prophets* of the Old Testament has:

- impacted them...
- shaped their understanding of the Bible...
- prompted change in their life...
- caused them to love God more...
- caused them to love others more...
- inspired them to reach out to share...

Ask each person to also write down their responses to these same questions. As the leader, collect those responses in an envelope and drop off at the Oakwood office. Prayerfully rejoice!

Wrap up your study by watching this video on [“Literary Styles in the Bible,”](#) produced by *The Bible Project*.

And don't forget to CELEBRATE your achievement together! Reading through *The Prophets* of the Old Testament in just eight weeks is a major accomplishment!

# AFTER THE JOURNEY

## Four tips for finishing strong

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Here are four things you can do to finish your prophetic journey as strong as you started it:

1. **Encourage everyone to finish.**

If some participants feel behind in their reading that's okay. Encourage everyone to keep reading through *The Prophets* of the Old Testament, even if it takes an extra week or two.

2. **Take time to reflect.**

Try to meet one last time after CBE is done, if possible, so everyone has a chance to reflect on their journey and celebrate.

3. **Share your story.**

Your experience can encourage others to try reading the Bible. Encourage members of your group to share their stories by emailing them to [info@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:info@oakwoodnow.org). Be sure, as the leader, to get written responses to this prompt:

**Here's how this journey through The Prophets has**

- impacted me...
- shaped my understanding of the Bible...
- prompted change in my life...
- caused me to love God more...
- caused me to love others more...
- inspired me to reach out to share...

## Oakwood comments on Community Bible Experience

"Reading the Bible isn't scary and confusing any longer. It's enjoyable, way less confusing, addicting, and wonderful!"

"Scripture is living and relevant. Following Jesus means to do so with others to appreciate fully what the Word says."

"Doing it together as a group meant that we each got different things from it. It was helpful to meet together to discuss because it let us fill in the gaps of the things that you didn't pick up on when you initially read."

"I was consistently reading my Bible for the first time in my spiritual walk."

"CBE got me excited about reading the Bible again. I loved the daily emails as well as the audio reading. I liked taking a broad sweep without having to analyze things verse by verse."

"For me, it was the way that CBE was meant to be done in community. I feel we had a chance to experience love for each other."

"Reminded me of the different angles and views...peering into God's Word and how He speaks from different angles. Wonderful to read in "community," sharing together what God is pressing on our hearts... learning and growing and encouraging each other. Thanks...it's a privilege to follow the King!"

"Not sure why, but the no-numbers, full lines of Scripture swept me up in the story...I commonly, inadvertently read further than a particular day's reading! I was much more aware of the original readers and their situation than I've been in the past...and am all the more grateful that God loves us enough to give us His Word in written form."

"The version was easy to read. It was a fresh way to hear and read the Word. Every day some section of Scripture would speak to my heart. I plan to read this version again and use it in devotional times."