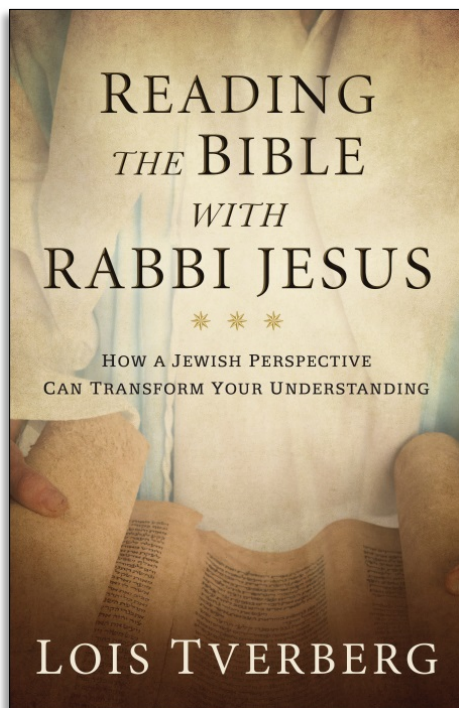


Author Equips Readers with Tools to Read the Bible as a First-Century Disciple

Wrinkles and grey hair in the mirror. Rain in the forecast. Gaining a clothing size. Modern Bible readers view all of these as negatives, but in the biblical world, just the opposite would have been true. Old age was an advantage when elders were chosen as leaders, and rain was an occasion for rejoicing in the parched Middle East. Beauty was associated with gaining weight because hunger was a common struggle. Cultural differences large and small separate modern readers from how the Bible “thinks.”



In her new book *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus: How a Jewish Perspective Can Transform Your Understanding*, bestselling author Lois Tverberg digs into a rich repository of knowledge to shed light on many puzzling passages whose cultural meaning would otherwise escape us. By illuminating the language, culture and imagery of the Bible, Tverberg equips modern readers to read the Bible as Jesus and his disciples would have. In the process, she helps readers realize that the Bible speaks with a “Jewish accent.” By opening reader’s eyes to the way Middle Eastern people would have understood Jesus, Tverberg takes them on a journey that will deepen their love of this very Jewish book, enriching their lives in the process.

“God often expressed his truth to ancient listeners in ways that shepherds and desert wanderers would understand,” writes Tverberg, “in metaphors that escape the modern reader. Sensitizing ourselves to the Bible’s age-old imagery will allow us to read it with new eyes. Often this perspective brings into focus the merciful, self-sacrificing Father whom Christ knew and loved rather than the harsh caricature of a God many see there.”

From exploring the meaning of Hebrew words to examining Jesus’ Jewish way of making bold messianic claims, *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus* is a cultural guide that helps readers grasp how Middle Easterners approached life, God and each other. Full of fascinating insights drawn from research and her own experience, Tverberg equips readers to experience the Bible in ways that will enrich their lives and deepen their understanding.

Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus:
How a Jewish Perspective Can Transform Your Understanding
by Lois Tverberg

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About the Author



Lois Tverberg has been speaking and writing about the Jewish background of Christianity for the past 20 years. Her passion is to translate the Bible's ancient setting into fresh insights that deepen and strengthen Christian faith. She is cofounder of the En-Gedi Resource Center, an educational ministry with a goal of deepening Christian understanding of the Bible in its original context. A former professor, Tverberg currently lives in Holland, Michigan, and speaks at churches, conferences, and retreats. Learn more at www.ourrabbijesus.com.

Praise for *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus*

"In her delightful style, Lois Tverberg engagingly leads us across cultures to begin to envision a different worldview, a worldview more consistent with the world of most of Scripture. In so doing, she brings alive biblical texts from the inside."

—**Craig S. Keener**, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

"Thanks to the good work of biblical scholars, the historical Jesus of Nazareth is once again situated in his divinely designed Second Temple period Jewish context. The next critical step is to understand that hearing him in his original setting equips us to follow him more faithfully in ours. The latest from Lois Tverberg is a meaningful contribution to that end. Read this book for a more informed reading of The Book."

—**James C. Whitman**, president, Center for Judaic-Christian Studies

"In *Reading the Bible With Rabbi Jesus*, Lois Tverberg opens up the Scriptures we all love and shines a fascinating new light on them. As she gracefully bridges the culture gap between Jesus' first Jewish followers and twenty-first century Christians and unites the Old and New Testaments, I found myself falling in love with the Bible all over again. Lois is a superb teacher, using story and gentle humor to great effect. I devoured this fascinating book.

Highly recommended!"

—**Lynn Austin**, author of *Where We Belong*

"Just what exactly did Jesus share with his disciples on the road to Emmaus? This excellent book unfolds so many valuable truths in the Scriptures that are often ignored or misunderstood. Lois Tverberg is a trustworthy guide whose insightful discoveries provide a delightful appetizer to some of the most exciting passages in the Old Testament. I'm recommending it to everyone I know."

—**Todd Bolen**, professor of biblical studies, The Master's University

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"Lois Tverberg is back with her most insightful work yet. Every chapter takes us on a journey of discovery, opening our eyes to astounding realities and clarifying confusing or misunderstood passages that have significant impact in our reading of the Bible and our relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Christian should read this book!"

—**Brad Gray**, author of *Make Your Mark* and founder of Walking The Text Ministries

"Though the truth in the written Word of God transcends time, place, and culture, understanding the Bible's context adds depth of meaning to every jot and tittle it contains. Lois Tverberg is an apt guide to the Jewish context of the Bible, and her mix of thoughtful research and relatable application will help readers discover new riches within its pages. She offers an entry ramp to the time, place, and culture in which the Bible was first given with the goal of enriching not only personal reading and study but also strengthening the church in her identity and mission here and now. Highly recommended!"

—**Michelle Van Loon**, author of *Moments & Days: How Our Holy Celebrations Shape Our Faith*

"In *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus*, Lois Tverberg gives us a front row seat at the feet of Jesus as familiar passages in the Bible come alive. By taking us on a journey into the culture of the first century and the Hebraic mindset of Jesus, Lois teaches us how to bend our ear to hear the Galilean accent of our Jewish Rabbi. Open your Bible, grab a highlighter, and dive into the world of the first century like never before."

—**Robby Gallaty**, pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church and author of *The Forgotten Jesus*

"Lois Tverberg has written still another classic. *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus* compliments her *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus*, but goes beyond. Tverberg clarifies what it meant to study 'Moses and all the Prophets' with the sage from Galilee, Yeshua of Nazareth. For those who want to know what it was like to be one of Jesus' inner circle of disciples and sit down with him to study Scripture, Tverberg's new book is the place to start."

—**David N. Bivin**, founder and editor of Jerusalem Perspective

"'How odd of God / To choose the Jews.' It is not certain who wrote that epigram and why, but what is certain is that God did indeed choose the Jews to show us what he is like. His Son Yeshua, whom we know as Jesus, was a Jew. How wonderfully and mysteriously strange is the incarnation! That the infinite maker of heaven and earth would definitively reveal himself in a particular man, of a particular ethnicity, in a particular culture, who spoke a particular language, in a particular time and place in history. Lois Tverberg's splendid book explores that divine oddity with clarity, good humor, and even startling insight, showing how Jesus the first century Jew is oddly the Savior and Lord of all peoples in all times and places."

—**Ben Patterson**, campus pastor, Westmont College

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Suggested Interview Questions

- 1) How can cultural differences “get in the way” of how we read the Bible? What do you mean by understanding how the Bible “thinks?”
- 2) What are some of the “big picture ideas” that we need to know about?
- 3) You mention an acronym, “WEIRD,” that psychologists coined for the ways that that American culture is unusual compared to the rest of the world. How do you think this comes into play in reading the Bible?
- 4) How is Hebrew different from English? Could you give us examples of Hebrew words that deepen our understanding of the Bible? Or solve problems for modern readers who are trying to grasp the original intent of the biblical writers?
- 5) You write about how we read about Daniel’s fast as if God was helping him lose weight, when his diet actually made him fat. Tell us about that.
- 6) There’s a chapter titled “Greek Brain, Hebrew Brain” where you discuss the difference between Western vs. Eastern thought. How does this influence how we read the Bible?
- 7) Many people wonder why the Bible contains so many meaningless lists of names. What is significant about the genealogies, culturally? Why were they included?
- 8) How does our perspective change if we read the Bible as a “we” instead of merely as an individual?
- 9) You tell about a Christian scholar who theorized that Paul knew his Scriptures by memory. Christian scholars were very skeptical, but Jewish scholars strongly agreed with him. Why was this story important to you?
- 10) How has studying the Jewishness of Jesus impacted your faith in Christ?
- 11) You’ve written a couple of other books before this one that have similar titles – *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* and *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus*. How do they relate to this new book?
- 12) You’ve been studying the Jewish background of Christianity for over 20 years. What is one of the most important insights you’ve learned?

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Selected Excerpts from *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus*

Traveling across Time and Culture (Pages 18-19)

We'll listen again with first-century ears to the way Jesus spoke to his contemporaries, making it crystal clear that God's promises were and are met in him. By examining how Jesus fulfilled the prophets' expectations, we'll discover startling truths about Christ's mission and our role as his disciples.

We will be equipped to read Scripture with more insight and inspiration by grasping the perspective of its original audience. We'll take a fresh look at key biblical ideas from an Eastern perspective. We'll go on a journey back in time to help us understand how the Jewish people approached life, enabling us to rediscover wisdom that's been largely forgotten and allowing us to read God's Word with depth and insight for our lives today.

The Puzzle of the Gospel (Pages 51-52)

The most surprising discovery I made about ancient kingship is that I had been misunderstanding the word *gospel* throughout the New Testament. I knew that *gospel* meant "good news" and, like most, assumed that the good news is that we have forgiveness of sins because of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross.

But, in fact, the Greek word for gospel, *euangelion* (literally, "good news"), in the New Testament also comes from terminology that was used in regards to kings and their dominions. When a new king was crowned, the *euangelion* was the announcement that the monarch had taken the throne, that a new kingdom had taken power.

Why is this called "good news"? Because an announcement of *euangelion* was good news to the empire and its cheering citizens, even though enemies and dissidents would find it quite terrible. How happy you are as the hearer is not the point. The news is good for the king and his kingdom.

Strictly speaking, the gospel, the *euangelion*, is simply that God had appointed Jesus as his chosen King.

God's Communal Commands (Pages 143-144)

When you realize how foundational the Sabbath was to Israel's radical social ethics, it's really quite stunning. All of life's rhythms were to revolve around celebrating the indescribable joy of the day when the whips ceased cracking, the shackles fell off, and the cell doors swung open toward freedom. Week after week, season after season, year after year, God was commanding Israel to remember his extravagant, rescuing love by extending that redemption to others.

During Jesus' ministry, he also stressed that the appropriate response to God's forgiveness is to extend it to others. If we've been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents, we can't shake down our debtors for a few denarii. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven, just as Israel was to release others in order to remember its own release from bondage. When we realize our sin and how much we have been set free from, and we share this overwhelming forgiveness with others, God will fill our lives with his love.

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