

MILK & HONEY

MILK & HONEY

edited by

JOEL R. BEEKE



REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Milk and Honey

©2010 by Joel R. Beeke

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Direct your requests to the publisher at the following addresses:

Reformation Heritage Books
2965 Leonard Street, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246
orders@heritagebooks.org
www.heritagebooks.org

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Milk and honey / edited by Joel R. Beeke.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-60178-111-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Bible—Devotional literature. 2. Devotional calendars—Reformed Church. 3. Reformed Church—Prayers and devotions. I. Beeke, Joel R., 1952-

BS491.5.M56 2010

242'.2—dc22

2010042936

Printed in the United States of America

10 11 12 13 14 15/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For additional Reformed literature, both new and used, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or e-mail address.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
January <i>Genesis</i> — JOEL R. BEEKE	1
February <i>Exodus</i> — GERALD M. BILKES	25
March <i>Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings,</i> <i>1 & 2 Chronicles</i> — HUGH M. CARTWRIGHT	67
April <i>The Psalms</i> — JERROLD H. LEWIS	101
May <i>Ecclesiastes</i> — ROY MOHON	133
June <i>Isaiah</i> — DIRK J. BUDDING	167
July <i>Hosea</i> — DAVID P. MURRAY	199
August <i>The Gospels</i> — MAURICE J. ROBERTS	233
September <i>The Gospels</i> — DAVID H. KRANENDONK	267
October <i>Acts</i> — DAVID SILVERSIDES	299
November <i>Romans</i> — BARTEL ELSHOUT	333
December <i>1 & 2 Peter, Revelation</i> — DAVID CAMPBELL	365

We are delighted to offer this new daily devotional, *Milk and Honey*, as an interdenominational work with an international flavor. Why another devotional? After reading many of the classic devotionals written by godly men of the past, such as Robert Hawker, J. C. Ryle, Charles Spurgeon, Octavius Winslow, we felt a need to have one written by contemporary authors who stand in the same Reformed, experiential tradition. Rooted in the European Reformation, this tradition was expanded and refined by the English Puritans, the Scottish Covenanters, and the Dutch Further Reformation divines. This heritage is ably represented by men such as John Bunyan, Wilhelmus á Brakel, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Jonathan Edwards, and Archibald Alexander.

This Reformed tradition strives to be thoroughly biblical in doctrine, life, and worship. At its roots is a preaching and pastoral ministry that is warmly experiential, realistically discriminating, and boldly evangelistic—both in its uncovering law work as well as in its freeness by which Christ and His benefits are offered to saints and sinners. Building on this tradition, this devotional seeks to provide spiritual lessons based on sound exegesis and helpful applications drawn from the Scripture passage under consideration.

The contributors hail from various Reformed denominations in Scotland, England, Canada, and the United States. It is our prayer that the Head of the Church would eventually bring the denominations they serve closer together for the unity and well-being of His church and kingdom. What a witness to the world it would be to see brothers and sisters in the Lord as united ecclesiastically as they already are spiritually.

The contributors have been assigned a variety of Bible books to write on, reflecting the numerous and diverse lessons offered in Scripture. They and we covet the applicatory work of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious operations uncover us to our sin and apply Christ in His person and work.

The title *Milk and Honey* was chosen because it symbolizes our basic need for solid spiritual food and sweet communion with the Triune God through Christ. The devotional offers a variety of styles and lessons based on the passage being explained. Each contributor was given freedom in this regard and we trust that you will enjoy the variety they offer. Some of the contributors have selected portions throughout the Bible book or books assigned. Others have focused on a part of a book or a theme in the book. Some have focused

on one particular verse for each meditation, others have focused on several verses, including their context. Some devotions are decidedly experiential, while others are more practical. The aim has been to provide a balanced diet.

We thank each of the contributors for their hard and capable work. We express our gratefulness to Joel Beeke for editing this book as well as his staff at Reformation Heritage Books for seeing it through to publication. We pray that believers will be nourished and that sinners will be awakened and led to receive Christ and all His benefits through reading this book. Then God's name will truly be glorified.

—Connor and Susan Keuning
Hamilton, Ontario

JANUARY

MILK & HONEY
from Genesis

JOEL R. BEEKE

In the beginning God...

—GENESIS 1:1a

It makes good sense to begin a new year with Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The Greek word “genesis” means origin or beginning—an appropriate term because Genesis traces history from the very beginning of time. All great biblical themes begin here. The truths about God, the world, the creation of man in God’s image, the Sabbath, marriage, the devices of Satan, man’s fall into sin, judgment, election, salvation, justification by faith, Christ and His priesthood, prayer, God’s covenant people, and blessing and cursing are all grounded in Genesis. Man’s complete ruin in sin and God’s perfect remedy in Christ are strikingly presented.

Meditate on this amazing book packed with ancient truth that is still relevant today. Can you think of other major truths that Genesis shows us?

The structure of Genesis clearly shows it is a book of origins. Genesis includes eleven distinct sections, each starting with the word “beginning” or “generations.” The opening words of each section are usually something like: “These are the generations” or “The book of the generations.” These sections include the history of creation (1:1–2:3), heaven and earth (2:4–4:26), Adam (5:1–6:8), Noah (6:9–9:29), Noah’s sons (10:1–11:9), Shem (11:10–26), Terah and Abraham (11:27–25:11), Ishmael (25:12–18), Isaac and his sons (25:19–35:29), Esau (36:1–37:1), and Jacob and Joseph (37:2–50:26).

Genesis takes us through various stages of history to trace God’s design of redemption through the line of His chosen people. Chapters 1–11 provide us with a wide-angle view of the history of mankind, while chapters 12–50 offer a more telescopic view of the history of God’s chosen people in Abraham and his family.

Without Genesis, the Bible would be seriously impoverished, for Genesis covers at least one-third of human history. Ultimately, it is God’s story—His-story. In Genesis we find special revelation in three-dimensional color and profound doctrinal, practical, and experiential truth, all directing us to Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.

On New Year’s Day, thank God for His Word, and particularly for the book of Genesis.

In the beginning God...

—GENESIS 1:1a

The purpose of the Bible—Genesis in particular—is to reveal God to us. It is to show us His person and nature, insofar as we are able to know Him, and His plans and works, insofar as we are able to understand them. The very first words in the divine canon—“In the beginning God”—set us in the presence of the living God in whom we live, move, and have our being, both physically and spiritually.

The Bible begins with God. His existence is presupposed as a fact to be believed. With a few strokes of his pen, Moses, the author of Genesis, repudiates atheism (for he declares the existence of God), materialism (for he distinguishes between God and His material creation), pantheism (for he presents God as a personal Creator), and polytheism (for he sets God forth as the only God).

The infinite source of true blessedness is set before us in four words: “In the beginning God....” The purpose of Genesis is to reveal God to us as the Creator and Provider, as the Redeemer and Lord of history. Like all of Scripture, Genesis is not so much a history of man as of God’s sovereign, gracious redemption of fallen sinners.

Genesis is primarily theocentric (God-centered) and only secondarily anthropocentric (man-centered) and geocentric (earth-centered). “In the beginning God” is the foundational truth of Genesis, the Bible, and all theology. False systems of theology begin with man or this earth and attempt to work up to God, whereas true theology begins with God and works down to man.

Genesis is not primarily a book about biology or geology but theology. That does not mean it is scientifically inaccurate. Rather, the focus of the book of Genesis is on God, which sets the foundation for the God-centeredness of the Bible. Genesis is written and designed so that we as needy sinners might come to know and worship God in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent to us unto our everlasting life (John 17:3).

Is God the center and focus of your life? Do you know Him in Jesus Christ?

In the beginning God...

—GENESIS 1:1a

The Genesis 1 creation account is remarkably God-centered. God is the consistent subject of sentence after sentence: “and God said,” “and God saw,” “and God called.”

All of creation is a revelation of God; it is given so that we might know Him. Creation shows us who God is, what He is like, how He acts, and what is important to Him. Psalm 19:1–2 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.”

Similarly, re-creation, sometimes called new creation, is also God-centered. We are re-created, not just to be born again, but to know God. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

God is the great *subject* of creation, as He is of the whole Bible. That means that He alone is the Author of the creation process as Father (Gen. 1:1), as Son (John 1:1–4), and as Spirit (Gen. 1:2). He speaks and the earth, the heavens, and all that is in them, including man, come into being. That is also true in re-creation, is it not? God raises dead sinners to life. We are saved by His sovereign, initiating grace.

God is also the great *object* of creation. Everything that God does—both in Genesis 1 and throughout Scripture—is for His glory. That is true from eternity past to eternity future. God determined to create all things for His own glory in eternity past, and He is the object of glory in eternity future. In Revelation 4:11, the elders in heaven testify to this: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Likewise, you and I cannot truly live until God becomes the supreme subject and object of our lives. Do you meditate upon Him as the supreme subject? Do you think, speak, and act for His glory so that He may be the supreme object of your faith? “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

In the beginning God...

—GENESIS 1:1a

Genesis 1 teaches us several major truths about God. First, it teaches God's *priority over creation* and His independence of it. "In the beginning God" tells us that God existed before the cosmos existed. Jesus confirmed this by speaking of the glory He had with the Father before the world began (John 17:5).

God did not create the world because He needed man or the world. He is completely self-sufficient; He has need of nothing outside of Himself.

Has the Holy Spirit taught you that God does not need you? God doesn't need helpers or defenders. He doesn't even need worshipers. He doesn't need you and me at all.

Second, God is *eternal*. The Psalmist says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2) and "The heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure" (Ps. 102:25b–26a).

Third, God is infinitely *gracious*. He created the universe in all its glory, and man as the crown of it, because He was pleased in His compassionate grace in Christ to share His joy with people like us. Creation is therefore an expression of the grace of God. We are introduced to God's graciousness here because this is what God is like all the way through Scripture.

In the new creation in Christ, God persists in loving His rebel creatures, not because He has any need of us, but because He longs to share His joy, holiness, righteousness, and beauty with us. He is truly a God of grace.

Finally, God is *beautiful and orderly*. Study the beautiful parallels between the first and fourth days of creation, the second and fifth, and the third and sixth. How much more beautiful God's method of creation is than man's evolutionary theory!

In the beginning God...

—GENESIS 1:1a

We often come to Genesis 1 with a kind of inquisitiveness about creation. Instead, shouldn't we come in a spirit of worship, bowing before the glorious majesty of the God who has created the universe and given us life and breath and all things? Then we will recognize that He has revealed Himself so that He might touch our lives.

One practical effect Genesis 1 ought to have on us is to help us recognize the primacy of God over all of life. If God is the subject of creation, that is, if He occupies a place of primacy in the universe, then the simple, logical conclusion is that He must occupy the same place in our lives, both individually and corporately. That, indeed, is how God intends us to live. The Lord Jesus says it this way: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33a).

We run into all kinds of trouble when we don't embrace this practical principle of bowing before the primacy of God over all of life. For example, think of the primacy of God in our planning. Too often we first decide what we want to do, then approach God for confirmation, hoping that our desires will be acceptable to Him. But the biblical principle is "In the beginning God." That means before we make any plans, we should recognize the right of God over all of our lives. If we truly believe that God's initiative is the foundation of all of our plans, we will understand that our position is to seek grace to discern His will and good pleasure, then to do it, no matter how much self-denial that requires.

When God becomes primary in our plans, situations often change. Difficulties, even seeming impossibilities, are overcome. Doubts are dissipated; deliverance is received.

Are you seeking to bow to the primacy of God in every sphere of your life? Is your limited time, your limited money, your limited energy devoted to the will of God? Do you really want to live by the principle, "In the beginning God"?