

Ready to Get Serious About Reading Your Bible?

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So, now you've been convicted to get serious about reading your Bible. Where to start?

MY RECOMMENDATIONS (and that's all they are – not gospel truth!)

Ask a lot of questions of yourself and God:

- How well do you know Jesus, his character, his heart, his message? If you have never read the Bible, start with John or Luke. You should work your way through the gospels and study Jesus.
- How well do you understand the “grand narrative” of the Bible? Do you know the main storylines? If you have gaps in your historical knowledge, then start with Genesis and move forward. You might try a chronological Bible. If you know the “grand narrative” well, then you should feel free to read books and events outside of their place in the chronological storyline.
- Then pick a plan and **START READING**. Keep reading until you have read the whole Bible. Then start over again. Keep doing this for the rest of your life!

Know yourself and what you need to stay on track.

- Do you need a checklist of some sort? (Most of us need something!)
- Do you prefer to read only 1 book at a time, or can you follow multiple books at the same time?
- How much time are you willing to set aside for reading every day? Does that include journaling and prayer time too or not?
- Make a plan that you can stick to and find success in. If you get stuck (say, in Leviticus) then change your plan, skip that part, or ask someone to help you find a way to make that part more interesting and applicable.
- Ask a friend or mentor to keep you **accountable**.

To read through the whole Bible in a year you need to read 3-4 chapters a day, which takes about 30 minutes (and that leaves time for a little journaling, but no rabbit trails!).

Once you have picked a place to start:

- Think of a question to ask as you read along. Something like: How is the character of God revealed in this book? What does love (or mercy or friendship or justice or obedience or etc.) look like in this book? What can I learn about the character of man (or sin, etc.) in this book?
- Read a little background information on a book before you start - most Bibles have a 2 paragraph section in the front of each book with the author, audience, time, key themes.
- Jot a few notes in your journal everyday – chapter themes, key people, key issues, something that was important or new to you. Resist the urge to write everything down!
- **Write in your Bible!** It's ok! And it'll help you remember and find things later.
- Read, read, read – **keep reading**.
- Ask God to use what you are reading in your life, to give you an opportunity to apply or share what you've read. Seeing the usefulness is very motivating!

SOME RESOURCES:

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLES

The passages are arranged in chronological order, with prophets & psalms mixed into the historical narrative, etc. This type of Bible is extremely helpful to get the overall picture of events. I like this version (below) best because the references are in the margin, which is helpful when Kings and Chronicles are merged and the gospels are also merged... yet it does not disrupt the flow of the narrative. I recommend this type of Bible for the historical narrative only - not for long-term study because the essence of the individual books (author, audience, key message, context) can be lost.

ONE YEAR BIBLES

The passages in these Bibles are grouped into daily readings – usually 2-3 chapters of Old Testament, 1 chapter of New Testament, a psalm, and some verses from Proverbs. Some people love these because it helps you not get stuck in a “boring section”.

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLANS

These checklists come in two styles: (A) Mixed readings from OT, NT, and Psalms everyday or (B) One book at a time, usually 3-4 chapters a day. If you google Bible reading plans you will surely find something that suits you.

Downloadable pdf reading plans – Chronological, One Year, NT in one year, etc.

http://www.heartlight.org/devotionals/reading_plans/

Emailed reading plan every day, many varied plans:

<http://www.bibleplan.org/>

Chapter checklist for whole Bible (I'll email this to you!)

MY FAVORITE COMMENTARY SET

Two volumes (OT & NT) with good textual and cultural commentary and enough maps and background to keep most of us busy. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: 2 Volume set, by Walvoord & Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary.