

# Best Ways to Read Your Bible this Year

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Dec. 28, 2014

**1 Tim. 4:13** "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

**2 Tim. 2:15** "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of God."

## I. Pick a Time and Be Consistent

- Morning
- Evening
- Lunch Time

## II. Choose a Good Bible Translation that Balances Literal and Readable

- NIV (New International Version)
- NKJV (New King James Version)
- NASB (New American Standard Version)- the most literal, but can be 'wooden'
- ESV (English Standard Version)
- NLT (New Living Translation)
- The Message - is a paraphrase (like the original Living Bible)

A translation seeks to translate word for word. A paraphrase seeks to translate phrases or thoughts, so it can be much more 'loose.'

## III. Read All of the Bible!

- Old Testament – 39 books – big finger pointing forward 'He's coming!'
- New Testament – 27 books – two hands pointing in two directions – 'He came and He's coming again!'
- Old Testament informs, empowers, and illustrates the New Testament

The Old Testament gives examples of real people just like us, facing struggles and joy just like ours! We see accounts great faith, suffering, leadership, romance, courage, forgiveness, despair, and tragedy.

**Job** illustrates what the New Testament says about suffering:

**1 Peter 4:12** "Do not be surprised by the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing has happened..."

**Acts** gives us a historical context for all the other epistles or letters to the church in the NT.

In **Genesis 37-50** we read about the life of Joseph which illustrates **Romans 8:28** that says:

'God causes all things to work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to His purpose'

#### IV. Read Your Bible with All the Right Expectations in Place

2 Timothy 3:16 guides our expectations:

- You should expect to learn **doctrine** -“is profitable for doctrine”
- You should expect to be convicted and **rebuked**-“for reproof”
- You should expect to be **corrected**- “for correction”
- You should expect to form new **habits**- “for instruction in righteousness”

#### V. Read Looking for Big Themes

The Bible is filled with themes such as the sovereignty of God, pride, God being over nations, rulers, and history, etc.

#### VI. Read with Your Mind in Gear and Your Hand in Motion -Asking Questions about the Text

Read thinking and looking for:

- Patterns
- Themes
- Repetition
- Historical markers
- Connections to other passages

For example -

- **Psalms 42-43** ‘Why so downcast, O my soul?’ is asked 3x
- **Book of Hebrews** – word ‘better’ is used 13x
- **Book of Ephesians** – phrase ‘in Christ’ is used 35x
- **Book of Romans** – word ‘justified’ is used more than anywhere else in the Bible

Don’t be afraid to mark and underline things in your Bible. You can read with a red pencil, several colored highlighters, mechanical pencil, etc. If you’re using an electronic device learn how to use the highlighting tools in the apps you use.

Ask yourself a series of questions about what you just read:

- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a portion worth memorizing?

You will get 30-50% more out of your Bible reading when you approach it this way

## VII. Be Ready to Respond in All the Right Ways – Depending on Where You are Reading

The Bible is filled with indicatives that simply tell what God has done and who you are now.

**Ephesians 1:3** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...”

The Bible is equally filled with imperatives that tell us what God expects us to do now in light of all that He’s done for us.

**Ephesians 4:1** “Therefore, walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...”

## VIII. You Better Know How to Go from Gulping Your Spiritual Food to Chewing Slowly

It’s called Scripture memory and meditation.

**Psalm 119:11** "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."

Christians remain weak because they fail to store up in their minds helpful passages from the Word of God. It is in times of stress, sorrow, or temptation, that the Holy Spirit can bring those portions to your remembrance to comfort, warn, and direct you.

Jesus battled Satan in the dessert during his temptation by using Scripture he had memorized! Three times Jesus said, “It is written...” He had it in his heart. He was ready.

Memorization should lead to meditation. Meditation is simply chewing or stewing on something to give something more than just a fleeting thought.

**Psalm 119:15** "I will meditate on Your precepts and contemplate Your ways."

“Meditation begins, but by no means ends, with thinking on Scripture. To meditate properly our souls must reflect upon what our minds have ingested and our hearts must rejoice in what our souls have grasped. We have truly meditated when we slowly read, prayerfully imbibe, and humbly rely upon what God has revealed to us in His Word. Meditation is being attentive to God.” *Pleasures Evermore*, Sam Storms, p.196-197