

Daily Bible Reading Program

The Bible is the main source of our knowledge about God. It is His inspired and authoritative Word that has the power to build faith, hope and truth into our lives. The following Daily Bible Reading Program will help you to work through the Bible systematically so that the Word of God dwells richly in your life and produces joy in your heart.

About The Bible

The Bible was written over 1500 years between about 1400 BC and 95AD. The Old Testament is God's dealings with Israel and consists of 39 books written and collected together over 1000 years from 1400BC to 400BC. Then there was a big gap of 400 years until Jesus was born. The New Testament consists of 27 books written between about 50AD and 95AD and is the record of the life and gospel of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic while the New Testament was written in Greek. Thus the Bible you read is a translation of these original ancient manuscripts which were very carefully preserved and translated.

A Bible Reading Method You Can Use

The following is the bible reading method developed by the Scripture Union movement that promotes daily Bible reading in over 120 countries around the world. It is very simple: Pray, Read, Think, Pray

Pray: Ask God to open up His Word to you. "Lord, open my eyes that I may see wonders from your Word".

Read: Read a short passage of Scripture about ten to fifteen verses or a chapter. Start with the New Testament first and read it in order from Matthew to Revelation.

Think: Think about what you have just read and ask some of the following questions:

1. What does the passage say about God? What does it say about the Father, about the Son and about the Holy Spirit?
2. What does the passage say about life? Does it teach some important principles? Is there a command to obey, a warning to heed, some wise advice for living?
3. What does the passage say about your daily situation? Is there something you should be doing? Does it shed light on your professional life, family life or church participation?
4. Has Jesus spoken to you in a special way through the Bible today? If so what did He say to you?

Pray: Write out a prayer to God based on what you have learned from your Bible reading. Something like "Lord help me to love my neighbor as myself." or whatever lesson you have learned that day.

Where to Start

Where should you start when reading the Scriptures? With the material about Jesus. That is the New Testament and especially the gospels. Here is my suggested order for reading the whole Bible. It will take about three years to finish if you read one chapter per day and one year to finish if you read 3 or 4 chapters a day.

1. Read the New Testament in order, starting with Matthew and going book by book until you reach the last chapter of Revelation. This will give you a good idea about Jesus, the Church and Christian living.
2. Then go back to the beginning of the Bible and read Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy which tells you how things began and God's order for Creation, mankind and society.
3. Then read the Psalms in order from 1 to 50 then take a break (there are 150 of them).
4. Read Isaiah 40-66, Daniel, Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Haggai, Zechariah, Lamentations and Malachi which should help you grasp the prophets.
5. Then read Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and Song of Solomon - known as the Wisdom Literature.
6. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles - this will give you a good grasp of the history of Israel.
7. Then go back and read the New Testament from start to finish all over again.
8. Then go back and read another 50 Psalms (51-100)
9. Then tackle the Old Testament laws in Leviticus and Numbers.
10. More prophets - Ezekiel, Isaiah 1-39, Jeremiah these are the "major prophets"
11. Finish with some less known books Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, & Zephaniah
12. Then finish the last 50 Psalms (101-150)

What Is The Best Bible To Use?

Many people are confused by the large number of different bible translations available. This has come about because the Bible was written in three original languages Hebrew (most of the Old Testament) Aramaic (some of the OT) and Greek trade language of the 1st century known as Ioin Greek (the New Testament). There are basically four types of bibles depending on how they choose to do the translation process:

Literal translations: These translate the bible with word by word and are very accurate. While they are very faithful to the original text they can be somewhat clumsy when put into English. Literal translations include the King James version, The New King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version, and the New American Standard Bible. My favorites here are the New American Standard Bible and the New King James version.

Dynamic translations: Are translated phrase by phrase or concept by concept. They are still quite accurate but not as literally accurate as those above. They are much easier to read and understand. They include the Good News Bible, the New international Version, The Contemporary English Version and many others. The NIV is the best dynamic translation. For people using English as a second language the Contemporary English version is excellent.

Paraphrases: Very loose translations of the bible they rearrange the material within each paragraph so it flows smoothly and put the bible into very contemporary concepts. They should not be used for in-depth bible study but are very easy for daily bible reading. Many find them helpful but personally I do not use them. They include the Message, the Living Bible, the New Living Bible, and many others.

Wrong or Misleading Translations: These include the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses and other versions produced by cults.

From all the above here are my recommendations:

Translations: You should use the most accurate version available in your heart language. It should also be sufficiently modern for you to read it easily. The King James or Authorized Version is a very accurate Bible but was written four centuries ago in a different form of English known as Elizabethan English. Many of the words it uses are now obsolete or have changed meaning for instance the word "prevent" means "to go before" in the King James Version and the word "handsome" means sly and tricky - not attractive. So because it can confuse people I do not generally recommend the King James Version. The New King James Version is an equally accurate translation with more modern English and is the main one I use. Other good translations include: NASB (New American Standard Bible), NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), and the NIV (New International Version). Some easy to read but not so accurate translations include The Living Bible (LB) , The New Living Bible (NLB), The Message, The Good News Bible(GNB) and the Contemporary English Version (CEV). Avoid some poor translations such as the New World Translation by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Amplified Bible - both contain serious errors. I mainly use the New King James Version and the New American Standard Bible as they are very accurate translations.

Study Bibles: A study bible is a bible translation plus footnotes that explain the text and help the reader to grasp its message. They are very useful and every Christian should own one. The NIV Study Bible is the bible I give to people when they are converted. The NIV translation is easy to read, quite accurate and the notes and helps in the NIV Study Bible are excellent. The Open Bible with a New King James Version translation would also be a very good choice. If you want just one Bible version the ones I recommend are The Open Bible, the Thompson Chain Reference Bible and the NIV Study Bible. The Open Bible and the Thompson Chain Reference have the advantage of having a variety of translations available in their formats.

Finding The Time

Fifteen minutes is about all you need to read a chapter of the Bible, think, take a few notes, then pray. I do my daily bible reading first thing in the morning as I wake up with my first cup of coffee for the day. Other people have their "quiet time" on the train on the way to work or at lunch on a bench in the park. For many years I had my bible reading time at night just before I went to bed. Any time that you can carve out as a habit on every day of the week is the best time. Find a quiet place where you can pray and read and think in private and follow the Scripture Union method above. We "find time" for those things that are important to us and surely meeting God in His Word should be the most important thing in our lives. You do not have to use special words or kneel down or adopt a special bodily posture; it is the attitude of your heart that counts. I like praying as I walk.

Books and Resources That Can Help You Understand The Bible

1. ***How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*** by Gordon Stuart and Douglas Fee is a truly excellent book that will help you understand how the Bible should be read. IVP press I think. Available in most good Christian bookstores. Other good books about the Bible include: *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* by Josh McDowell, *The New Testament Documents Are They Reliable?* by F.F. Bruce and *The Canon of Scripture* by F.F Bruce.
2. ***Commentaries*** - these analyze passages of the bible in-depth. The Tyndale commentary series is good enough for most people while pastors and bible students might want to use the Word commentaries or the New International commentaries on the OT and NT. Some good one volume commentaries that treat the whole Bible in one volume are available - just ask your Christian bookstore. An excellent older devotional commentary is Matthew Henry's commentary.
3. ***Maps and Archaeology/Bible Lands*** - Knowing a bit about the life and times, history and culture of people in Bible lands can be fascinating and very helpful. The New Bible Dictionary is a modern up to date compilation that helps you find all you need to know about the life and culture. Good material is also available on the Internet and on CD-ROM.
4. ***Concordances/Bible Programs*** - a concordance is like an extensive index to the Bible that lists the words in the Bible and where they can be found. They are very helpful in bible study so that you can easily find all the verses on "money" or some other topic and find out all the Bible has to say about it. Bible programs allow you to do this very quickly on a computer and have many other helps as well. Good concordances include Strong's, Young's and Cruden's while good bible search programs include Quick verse, and Logos.