

*Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
Psalm 119:103*

Why a New Bible Reading Plan?

Over the years, I have tried a number of methods for reading through the Bible. I have especially used Robert Murray McCheyne's plan as found with excellent comment in DA Carson's two volume *For the Love of God*. I've always been dissatisfied with McCheyne's plan because it requires reading four different chapters of the Bible in one day making it difficult to focus on the flow of a biblical book.

This plan is different in its assignments. Reading is marked by cycles, not days. This allows the reader to choose whether to read all Old Testament followed by all New Testament or to mix his Old and New Testament readings each day. Fewer Psalms, Proverbs, and other poetical books are assigned for each week because poetry and proverb benefit from closer meditation. The cyclical assignments also allow the reader to vary the length of his reading to the demands of the day. Some days our time allows for little more than a chapter, some for ten. The reader can plan his daily reading accordingly.

The plan is different in its arrangement of books as well. In the New Testament readings, the four gospels are read throughout the year, rather than reading them consecutively at the beginning, as most plans direct. This way, one is never more than a few months away from reading a gospel. I have also arranged Acts and the epistles to make a logical connection with gospels. Hence, Luke is combined with Acts, John with his letters and Revelation, Mark and his Roman audience with Romans, and Matthew with his Jewish concerns with Hebrews. Not all of the connections are as strong as others, but I encourage the reader to see themes between books as they are arranged in the plan. The exception to this is the placement of the pastoral epistles after James. These are here because they fit well with the quarter, allowing space before the next gospel's reading.

In the Old Testament, I have sought to follow a general chronological arrangement for the historical books and the prophets. Hence, following 2 Kings, the major and minor prophets are put in general historical context following 2 Kings. Prophets who ministered during the events of Kings come first, then the exilic prophets, then the history and prophecy of the restoration. The matches are not precise, but they follow the general progress of the historical narrative. Chronicles comes late because it was written during the restoration period and the concern of its writer is restoration of temple worship, the concern also of Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah.

You do not have to begin this plan on January 1, nor do you need to finish in one year. Despite the fact that I have chosen to divide the plan into four quarters and 52 cycles (which match the seasons and weeks of the year), nothing in Scripture demands completed reading of the entire Bible in one year. I have seen people stop reading when they have “fallen behind” according to the dates in the plan, when in fact the best thing is simply to pick up where they dropped out and keep reading.

I recommend breaking the reading up through the day. One way is to read Old and/or New Testament in the morning and Psalms and Proverbs at bed time. Vary your habit according to your schedule and preferences as long as you hide God’s Word in your heart making it your soul’s counselor and delight.

Finally, this is a work-in-progress. Some of the chapter divisions break up clear literary units, some portions may be too long or too short. Though I’ve gone over it numerous times, there are likely errors in typing and chapter numbers. If you find any errors or think of any ways to improve this, please let me know.

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