

# Bible Reading Strategies

## *Meeting with God*

### 1. Read Broadly

To gain a sense of the sweep of biblical history and revelation, it can be helpful to read through the Bible quickly. By reading approximately four chapters each day, one can complete the Bible in one year.

- **Reading consecutively**—four chapters per day—from Genesis to Revelation. This is the simplest approach, but many drop out as they work their way through the long books of the Old Testament. One variation of this approach is to read the Bible chronologically to get a sense of the progress of biblical history.
- **Reading four chapters per day from four sections of the Bible.** This allows you to get a sense of the inter-connectedness of the Bible.
  - A simple way to do this is to divide the Bible into four roughly equal parts, beginning, for example in Genesis, Ruth, Proverbs, and Matthew and reading progressively a chapter from each, daily.
  - Nineteenth Century Scottish pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne created a Bible reading plan that continues to be widely used in which one reads through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice. He created his plan for his church, recommending that they read two of the chapters as families and two privately.
    - New Testament scholar DA Carson has published two books around this plan, with each page containing M'Cheyne's reading list for the day followed by Carson's comments on one of the chapters. His commentary gives insight into the text and is often profound.
- **Other Bible reading plans** abound. The ESV Bible web site (<http://www.gnpcb.org/esv/devotions/>) lists a number of them. The ESV blog also compares a variety of plans graphically, which is interesting to look at (<http://www.esv.org/blog/2006/12/visualize.reading.plans>).
- **A hybrid plan.** I created a plan for my daughter which is organized around 52 reading blocks with chapters from the Old and New Testaments for each block. The Old Testament follows a chronological pattern and the New Testament begins each quarter with a gospel followed by books that have some relation to that gospel.

- **What about Bibles** that are rearranged for daily readings from different books or having daily Bible readings sent via e-mail or through a feed from a web site? I don't recommend it, not because it is wrong, but because it doesn't allow you to get a feel for the canonical text and it doesn't allow you to have a Bible filled with your own notes and underlining.

## 2. Read Narrowly

- **Books**
  - Read one book carefully over a period of time.
  - Read a book straight through numerous times, or, if it is a long book, read large sections through numerous times. The repetition helps you see interconnections and themes that one reading will not produce.
  - Read with notes from a Bible introduction, simple commentary or theologically sound study Bible.
- **Passages**
  - The best way to get you soul soaked in a passage is to memorize it. The best plan I've found for memorization was created by Andrew Davis and is found in John Piper's book, *When I Don't Desire God* (pp. 121-122). You can also find Davis' full version at his web site (<http://www.fbcdurham.org/> under "writings")
  - Read slowly and think about what you are reading. Pray the contents back to God. Write down your thoughts as they come to you. Use the 2 Tim. 3:16 method of application.