

## **Recommended Bible Reading Plan**

**By Dan Jensen (2023)**

(In order to fully benefit from this essay, I recommend reading through my “basics” series first. It can be found on my website.)

Most Bible reading plans are too difficult for new Christians and/or for many Christians who are deeply bogged down with life. For this reason, many of them produce a tremendous amount of guilt and are in the end abandoned. My hope here is to offer a plan that I think is far more manageable for the types of Christians described above. With that said, I want to be clear that this plan is simply my advice on the matter. There is no commandment in the Bible itself to follow this plan, and so feel free to veer from it as the Spirit leads you. However, it is so important to have some sort of plan for getting through all of the Bible in reasonable amounts of time over the course of our journey with Jesus. Far too many Christians today do not read all of the Bible, and this is one of the reasons the church is so weak and corrupt in our age.

Let me first layout my proposed Bible reading plan and then I will provide my reasons for it. My recommendation is to read through the Gospels all the way through twice; then read all of Genesis; then read Exodus 1-20; then read all of the Psalms; then read Acts; then read all the letters of Paul; all in one year. This can easily be done by reading just 10 chapters every Sunday. All of this reading adds up to 513 chapters total. There are 52-53 Sundays every year. That comes out to 9.8 chapters per Sunday. So, even if you are off on a couple of Sundays, you will still be on track. If, at the end of the year, you are behind because there were a few too many Sundays where you weren't able to make 10, I recommend taking a couple days off to get caught up. I recommend not starting your next year until you do this. Take some personal days off of work if you have to, tell your family you need these days, do what you have to do in order to get caught up. It doesn't matter what time of year it is when you start. Just mark the first

Sunday when you start as day one and put that in your phone or somewhere you will remember, and go from there. If you end up a little behind, just do what you have to do to get caught up, and then start the new year on the Sunday after you're caught up.

If you feel like you need at least some Bible reading every day, I recommend reading the Psalms each day separately from the above plan. Far too many Christians just read a chapter of Scripture here, and a chapter there. This does not allow you to get a solid grasp of the flow of the Bible, and in all honesty, it is not a very healthy way to read the Bible. So, I highly recommend sticking to the 10 chapters every Sunday in order to avoid this. But, the Psalms are written in such a way that each Psalm does not connect to the next one. Therefore, it is perfect for daily devotional reading. Read as many chapters as you like each day from the Psalms. And don't worry about when you are in the Psalms as part of the Bible reading plan, the Psalms are the most powerful part of the Old Testament, and so reading extra is not going to hurt! And like I said, the Psalms can be read individually with great benefit, so if you are in one part of the Psalms as part of your Bible reading plan and in another part as part of your daily reading, this won't matter at all. In fact, if you want to bounce all over during the week through the Psalms, there is no harm in this. However, if you prefer to keep track of where you are for your daily readings, that is fine as well.

I understand that 10 chapters in one day will seem like a lot to some people. But it is so important that you take at least one day of the week off in order to really rest and worship God. Even if you are not convinced of the Confessional Presbyterian view of the Sabbath, we must have this time of rest and dedication to God. Far too many Christians today, especially in our nation, do not do this and they often wonder why their walk with God is so weak and erratic. This is why. If you cannot get Sunday off from work, it is essential that you have at least one day off a week for rest and worship. You still need to go to church on Sunday as much as possible, but you also need a full day off for rest and worship. Again, I think it is easiest and best to try your best to schedule this for Sunday even if you don't buy my understanding of the Sabbath, but either way it is so important to have one day off a week for rest and worship. You don't need to read

all 10 chapters at once. But, based on what I said above, it is best not to read one or two here, and then another one or two there. Try hard to read 5 chapters in one sitting, and then another 5 in a second sitting.

I would use the above plan for 4 years in a row. Then I would take the next year and a half to read the rest of the Bible. Over that year and a half read the rest of Exodus; then the rest of the Old Testament after Exodus except for the Psalms; and then the rest of the New Testament after the letters of Paul. After this, I would start the cycle all over again. Four years of the first basic plan, then a year and a half on the rest of the Bible. The rest of the Bible is 765 chapters, and there are approximately 78 Sundays in a year and a half time period. That comes out to 9.8 chapters per Sunday. So again, even if you are short a few Sundays, you should still be pretty close to being on track by the end of the year and a half period. If you are a little behind at the end, I would get caught up in the same manner as described for the first basic plan. During this year and a half period, you can read the Psalms throughout the week just like with the first basic plan.

Many of you may end up really liking a book that is not in the first basic plan, and may not like waiting so long to read it again. By all means, every so often substitute this book for the Psalms during the week as you see fit. I simply highly recommend reading it in chunks every few years as described by my overarching plan as it is so valuable to read most of the Bible in chunks rather than a chapter here and a chapter there. If there are multiple books from the second basic plan that you want to read more often, feel free to substitute those for the Psalms during the week as you please.

The reason I have split things up this way is so that you don't feel overwhelmed trying to read multiple chapters of the Bible each day. I know for some, this can be very difficult and it is what most Bible reading plans require. Further, not all of the Bible is equally powerful and important. I know that statement throws a lot of Christians off. A lot of Christians reason that if all of the Bible is the word of God, then all of it must be equally important. But this actually is not the case. All of the Bible is equally authoritative and to be believed. And all of it certainly is powerful and important. But some portions are more

powerful and important than others. Some portions are *far* more powerful and important than others.

Allow me to explain. No matter what I tell my kids, it carries my authority with it as their dad. This does not mean that I am always right as is God (I of course most certainly am not), but it does mean that they need to listen to everything I say with respect. They don't (and shouldn't) have to agree with everything I say, but whatever I say carries the authority of dad. But, when they were little and I told them to brush their teeth, this was far less powerful and important than when I told them that I love them. The same basic principle applies with God's word. The portions of the Old Testament that describe for us how the Israelites were to deal with mold are still the word of God. We are to believe that God gave these commands and that they were for the good of the Israelites at the time. And while these commands do not specifically apply to us today, the basic principle behind them, namely that mold is unhealthy and should be removed, still does apply to us. However, it would be very wrong to compare these sections to the Gospels. The Gospels describe for us the life; ministry; death; resurrection; and ascension of Jesus! It would be wrong to compare the two. Now, this is not to say that we cannot see Jesus in these sections on mold. Jesus is to be seen in every portion of the Bible. However, it remains true that we see Jesus much more clearly and powerfully in the Gospels than we do in the sections on mold.

Therefore, it is essential to know which parts of the Bible are the most powerful and important, so that we can pay special attention to them. The Gospels are the heart of the Bible for the reasons stated above. We must pay more careful attention to them than any other part of the Bible. The rest of the Bible points to them because the rest of the Bible points us to Jesus. But, some parts of the Bible point us to Jesus in a far more direct and clear fashion than others. The most important part of the Bible in this regard is the part that contains the letters of Paul. Paul is the chief explainer of who Jesus is and what He did and why. Genesis, the first half of Exodus, and Acts are all foundational books. Foundational to the rest of the Bible in the case of the first two books, and foundational to the rest of the New Testament in the case of Acts. And the

Psalms are the most devotional portion of the Bible as said earlier. We need the rest of the Bible and we should be so thankful to God for giving us the rest of the books of Scripture. But, they are in a sense of a secondary importance to these books. That does not in any way mean that they can be ignored; disrespected; or disbelieved in any fashion.

Think of the Bible like a meal. The Gospels are the meat, potatoes, and vegetables. Genesis; the first half of Exodus; the Psalms; Acts; and the letters of Paul are the biscuits and stuffing. The rest of the Bible is the butter and gravy. Now this analogy is not intended to point to which items we like best. Some of us, like myself, can't stand vegetables and love butter and gravy! Others, like my daughter, are not big fans of gravy and generally feel that it should be left off. The analogy is pointing to which parts are the most important. If all we had was butter and gravy, we would be quite malnourished. If all we had was biscuits and stuffing, we would be doing a lot better, but we would be highly lacking in protein and certain key nutrients. If all we had was the meat, the potatoes, and the veggies, we would be doing pretty good, but we still would not have a full meal. And if we took just a little bit of the meat, potatoes, and veggies, and lathered them up with butter and gravy, we would have a very odd and unhealthy meal.

Obviously the above analogy is not perfect, and I am sure you could find all sorts of things wrong with it and many inconsistencies in it. My basic point is that we need to have balance and I believe my overarching reading plan provides that.

It should also be said that most Christians, even the most mature, find the books in the second basic reading plan I laid out, to be tough to read sometimes as far as for devotional purposes. There are certainly exceptions to this rule, but by and large that has always been the reality. So, if you find yourself in that boat, you don't need to feel guilty, that is quite normal. Many non-Christians love to say that the Bible is so boring and so how can we believe it is the word of God. But, they are usually talking about these particular books and don't understand the purpose of these books.

These books are not intended to be riveting reads for the most part. They are by and large intended to give us law; history; judgment; and prophecy. They are unbelievably important, but yes, at times they can be difficult to read. And the letters of Paul are of course going to be boring for someone who does not love Jesus. He is primarily giving us doctrine so that we can better understand the life and work of Jesus. But anyone who finds Genesis, the first half of Exodus, the Psalms, the Gospels, and Acts boring is not reading those books very carefully. They are universally recognized as some of the best literature ever written. The Gospels are positively fascinating and even most unbelievers admit this if they give the Gospels a chance. And it should be noted that some of the most intriguing stories found in all of literature are found in much of the history portions of the books in the second basic reading plan I gave. Stories such as Joshua and Jericho; Samson and Delilah; David and Goliath; Daniel and the Lions Den; Queen Esther; and many others.

Ok, get reading the Bible!