



Field Guide to the Bible Reading Plan

Welcome to the Field Guide to the Bible Reading Plan

Whether you are a long time reader or this maybe your first read of this ancient document we hope that this plan will be useful as you journey into the wild and wonderful collection of books that make up the Bible.

This plan has been bought to you in partnership with the Bible Society Group and The Send New Zealand.

For more information, please visit: www.biblesociety.org.nz

The Send Website: www.thesend.org.nz/

In this plan discover:

1. What is the Bible?
2. Why should I read the Bible?
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4. What version should I read?
5. Six parts of the Bible
6. I have read the Bible now what?
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Day 1 What is the Bible?

Scriptures:

- 2 Peter 1:21
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Isaiah 40:8

The Bible is a collection of ancient writings that tells the unfolding story of God's relationship with humanity (that's you, and everyone ever born). Chuck Missler describes the Bible as "an integrated message system from outside our time domain."

It was written by more than 40 different writers over a period of more than 1500 years. You could say that the Bible is actually a library of books all bound up in one big book.

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 ESV

All Scripture is inspired by God. 2 Timothy 3:16 NLT

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:8 ESV
The Bible says that its authors were 'Moved or inspired by God' to speak and write. What's important here is that God inspired the Bible's writers. Over time these writings endured because people throughout history have connected with God through them, and recognised them as being more important than ordinary books.

The Bible won't tell you everything there is to know about life or God. It won't tell you how tall Jesus was or what car you should buy or who to marry. But the Bible does tell you about God's relationship with us. And that's really important.

Because we read it as part of this relationship and not just to know stuff, it's OK to have questions or not know what to do with certain parts of it.

Some of the Bible is confusing and unusual and can seem weird but as you read it look for Jesus on every page. The entire Bible ultimately points to Jesus, so let's get started with your reading today, pick a book and reach into the story looking for His relationship with you. All 66 books are worth exploring, but remember it is a library of books, so you don't need to start with the beginning (Genesis).

Action:

If it's your first time reading the Bible start with Luke in the New Testament and enjoy the journey of the life of Jesus.

If you have read it before pick a book, and linger in the book reading over it several times.



Day 2 Why Should I Read the Bible?

Scriptures:

- Hebrews 4:12
- Jeremiah 15:16
- Romans 15:4

Let's be honest, the Bible's not an easy book to read. Exploring the Bible can be as daunting as climbing a mountain, so its normal to wonder 'Why bother?'

Some people think that you have to read the Bible to 'be a good Christian', that it's something you need to tick off on your Christian checklist. The problem with this view is that it can make people feel guilty, or that God is frustrated with them for not 'ticking the box'.

But God is not going to come down hard on you for not reading the Bible! God enjoys spending time with you and wants to be with you and talk to you. What makes the Bible special is that God uses it to speak to us. Nothing you do or don't do will make God love you more or less. So remember when you're reading and praying, it's not to impress God (or others), but to spend time with God and hear from him. OK, even if I believe God wants to spend time with me, reading the Bible is still hard. Yes, it is, but remember people don't usually climb mountains by themselves. The Bible itself tells us that God gives us a helper – the Holy Spirit.

As you begin to read, it's important to ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you're reading and also to talk to others about it.

Like mountain climbing, if you have the right equipment, gear, friends and most importantly a guide, you'll enjoy the journey a lot more.

Action:

Get the gear together for your Bible reading journey. You will need:

- A Bible – any version, find one that suits you.
- A friend – to discuss what your reading and bounce questions off
- A teacher – someone who has been reading the Bible for some time, maybe your church pastor.
- A journal – write down what you are reading and any questions that come up.



Day 3 Where do I start reading?

Scriptures:

- John 1:1-5
- John 14:9,10
- Genesis 1:1-5

Remember in Day 1 we talked about the Bible being a library of 66 books.

If you start reading the Bible at the beginning (like you do with any other book) you'll probably get bogged down somewhere in Exodus. And if you make it to Leviticus or Numbers, confusion will set in. You will wonder what is this book all about.

When you start your Bible reading journey, it's best to jump to the New Testament, about three-quarters of the way into the Bible. The New Testament starts with four books which are called the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). It's in the Gospels that we read the story of Jesus. This is important because Jesus is at the centre of Christianity, and he said that he reveals exactly what God is like. John 14:9,10

Because of this, Jesus is a kind of compass. He helps us make sense of the rest of the Bible and points us to God. So it's good to become familiar with the story of Jesus. In fact, it can be helpful to come back to the Gospels often as you read the Bible.

All the Gospels seem to be the same. But they were written by different people to different audiences, so each one tells the story from a different perspective.

So I've read the Gospels, what next?

Once you've read the Gospels, go to the next bit of the story – the book of Acts – which tells the story of how the church started.

After you've read Acts, go back to the very first book of the Bible – Genesis. This book tells of how God created the world and people, and how we humans messed it all up. You'll be introduced to Abraham and Sarah and the nation of Israel that God started through them.

Another good idea is to read the Psalms or a few Proverbs alongside your readings. These are the books of Poetry and Wisdom. You will notice there are 31 chapters in Proverbs. That's one for every day of the month.

Action:

Start reading Proverbs daily alongside your other readings. Match the day with the Proverb, i.e. if you start this on May 22nd, read Proverb 22 and read it daily, when you get to the end of the month, start again, we can never get enough wisdom. Proverbs 1:1-5



Day 4 What version should I read?

Scriptures:

- Psalm 23:1-4
- Jeremiah 15:16
- Ezekiel 3:1-3

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. Since most people can't read these languages, the Bible has had to be translated.

There's different ways to translate the same thing. There's word-for-word style, which is very precise, but sometimes harder to understand. You can also have thought-for-thought translations, which translate the meaning behind larger chunks of scripture in a way that makes the most sense and are usually easier to read.

King James Version is a Word-for Word version whereas The Message is a Paraphrased version. All are good.

Here are 5 tips for choosing a translation:

1. Keep in mind that there's not a "best translation".
2. Make sure the translation is easy to read for you.
3. Choose one translation as your main Bible version.
4. For Bible study, compare multiple translations.
5. If you're not sure, ask your pastor or ministry leader.

So which one should I read?

It mainly depends on why you're reading it. If you want to study the Bible, a word-for-word style translation is probably better. If you want to get a sense of the overall meaning, then try a thought-for-thought translation. It's ok to use more than one style.

Action:

Check out some different versions of Psalm 23. Try the King James, NIV, NLT and the Message. Pick one that you feel comfortable with and as Ezekiel and Jeremiah did 'eat it' and enjoy the taste.



Day 5 Six Parts of the Bible

Scriptures:

- Genesis 1:26-31
- Genesis 6:5-8
- Genesis 12:1-3
- Matthew 28:5-20
- Acts 2:1-4
- Revelation 1:7

Think of the Bible as an epic with six parts.

1/ Creation. God created the world and declared it 'good'. Humans were made in God's image to flourish in the presence of God and to extend God's order and goodness on earth.

2/ Rebellion. Humanity didn't trust God and sought to become like God. Relationships with God, one another and creation were broken.

3/ Israel. God chose Abraham and Sarah so that their descendants (the nation of Israel) would be a blessing to all the nations.

4/ Redemption. God sent his Son, Jesus who lived among us. Jesus revealed what God is like and restored our relationship to God through his life and teaching, death and resurrection.

5/ The Church. The community of Jesus' followers realised what Jesus did and what it meant for all people. After Jesus had defeated sin and death, their love for him motivated this community (the Church) to be obedient to Jesus by announcing this good news everywhere.

6/ Restoration. Jesus will return to earth to reward faithfulness, restore creation, to judge evil in this world and full bring God's Kingdom on earth.

Action:

With each part of an epic think of a story and how you fit into it. For example Part 1 Creation, what does the Bible say about you (here is a clue – Psalm 139:14)



Day 6 I have read the Bible, now what.

- Psalm 119:18
- Ephesians 1:15-23
- Jeremiah 15:16
- Hebrews 4:12

Reading the Bible is a significant first step in exploring and understanding. But what do I do next. Keep reading, there is so much more to discover. A first read of the Bible just gives you an overview of the whole story. Reading again and again mines up new revelations on what God is saying. A great bible teacher Chuck Missler said “ the Bible is 66 books by 40 authors, and yet we now discover it’s an integrated message system from outside our time domain”. So to discover more we need to keep reading this amazing book.

So:

- 1/ Find a time and place to read that suits you. Make sure it is a quiet place with no distractions. Make it a habit to go to this place and read.
- 2/ Reflect on what you’ve read. Take some time to reflect on what you’ve read. Consider how the messages and themes apply to your life.
- 3/ Join a study group. Engaging with others who have also read the Bible can provide new insights and perspectives. Look for a local church or group and join a study group. If your church doesn’t have one get a few people together and start one up.
- 4/ Continue learning. The Bible is a complex and multifaceted book. There is a large number of resources available – books or online material that will help with your learning journey.
- 5/ Pray. Prayer can deepen your spiritual connection and help you integrate the teachings of the Bible into your life.
- 6/ Apply the teachings. The Bible offers guidance on how to live a fulfilling life. Think about ways you can apply its teachings in your daily life.

So, you can read it alone, read it with friends, read it aloud, listen to it (download the Youversion app, the Bible can be read to you).

Start writing what you are reading, making notes on what you have learnt and especially write down the questions that come up.

Action:

Pick a book to read once you have finished this reading plan. Don’t use the toss a coin method. Ask God which of his books he would like you to read. He will prompt you with a book just for you. After this plan dig into it and read it several times over and over again. Eat it and see how sweet it is.



Day 7 Sharing His Word

- Isaiah 55:11
- Ezekiel 3:1-9
- 2 Tim 3:16-17
- Mark 6:7-13
- Matthew 28:16-20

The Bible is a powerful tool that God has given us. We live in a time where we have freedom to read this book and we have it in so many forms. Book, on-line, apps, social media and more.

It is a book that is not just meant for you, it contains words that others are hungry for. People are used to the Bible, they have possibly read it themselves or heard it quoted. When you are reading the Bible pray over what you are reading and ask God what he is telling you and ask if there is someone else that could do with hearing it. Share it with others, speak it out for them and give it to them as a gift from God. You don't need to explain it to them, allow the Holy Spirit to do that.

Here is how to do this:

- 1/ Pray to God for open doors for you to share His Word and for the Holy Spirit to guide your interactions.
- 2/ Start conversations. Look for opportunities to engage with others in conversations about faith. Ask questions, listen attentively, and share your own story and experiences.
- 3/ Share your story. Personal testimonies can be incredibly powerful in sharing the Word of God. Share how your faith has impacted your life, how you've experienced God's love and grace and how following Jesus has brought meaning and purpose to your life.
- 4/ Use Scripture. Share relevant passages from the Bible that speak to the questions or concerns of those your engaging with. To do this you need to be armed with Scriptures that you have read. The Holy Spirit will remind you of appropriate scriptures for the discussion.
- 5/ Pray and Follow-up. Pray for the Scripture that you have shared that it "will accomplish" what God intended it for.

Action:

Find someone to share a scripture with. Ask God to give you a scripture and a person then Go and do it. Arm yourself with a tract, or better still a Gospel (maybe Luke) to leave with the person. In your journal write down the scripture you shared and who with so that later on you can follow-up with them and hear the good news of how the scripture has affected them.

Want more resources check out: www.biblesociety.org.nz/discover-the-bible/the-bible-good-for-life/