

# How to fit the Bible into a busy life and how to get the most out of it

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## Every Christian feels like they ought to make the Bible part of their lives

- But it's a big and often confusing book.
- In an attempt to be obedient, many start each year with the best of intentions to read the WHOLE THING.
- They begin in Genesis but by the time they get to Leviticus, if not before, they bail out.
- Still feeling guilty, they jump around the Bible reading familiar passages like the Psalms or the Gospels.
- Or they give up on the Bible itself and read a devotional that briefly mentions Bible verses.
- Somehow these options don't satisfy.

## I want to help you change all that!

- I'm going to share a system that will help you get into the Bible DAILY.
- One that will help you get through the ENTIRE Bible.
- I'll be going into detail on why and how in this presentation, but first—
- *You don't even have to read the Bible to do it!*

### You can listen to it

- You can, of course read it if you want to, but if you feel you can't spare the time to sit and do that. . . .
- You can also take in the content of the Bible in by listening while commuting, working out, cooking, whatever.
- There is no greater benefit in reading over listening, spiritually or in any other way.
- Listening is how most believers throughout history have taken in God's Word.

## In the Old Testament

- In Deut. 31:11-13 God says to Moses and to the priests who were to follow him, *"You shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."*
- Later Joshua read it to the people as did Josiah, Ezra, and others.

- Obviously necessary as not everyone had a scroll in their tent or for that matter knew how to read.

### In the New Testament

- In the New Testament Paul says to Timothy, *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."* 1 Timothy 4:13
- Paul mentions in other letters that they are to read letters written to other churches as well as share the letter written to them.
- As with the Old Testament not everyone had a scroll in their homes that they would pull out to read in their morning quiet time or nor did they have personal copies of letters Paul wrote to the churches.
- Throughout most of human history, few people had personal copies of any book, let alone their scriptures, and most people were also illiterate. ***They learned the content of God's Word by listening to it and memorizing it.***

### We can do the same today

- Years ago, the Bible came out on CDs and many of us loved those.
- Today we have the Bible on our phones and on our desktop computer in digital formats that are easy for us to listen to at any time.
- The **YouVersion** is one that I use on my phone, and I highly recommend it. It is available online at **Bible.com** or the **app stores** for phones, tablets, desktop, and you can even have Alexa read the Bible to you.
- You can also listen to it in several versions.
- ***The bottom line is that if you don't like to read—listen!*** It's a great way to get Bible content into your life.

### Read or listen, now where to start?

- What is the best way to go through the Bible?
- I would propose reading your Bible in the coming year in Chronological, historical order, the order that things happened.
- As it has done for many people, reading it in this way will have an extraordinary effect on your understanding of the Bible and on your life.
- Don't worry about figuring it out, I will share a FREE resource at the end for how to do it this way, plus schedules & journal pages.
- But first, I'd like to talk about why people don't read the Bible this way and why it is important to do it.

### We think the Bible is somehow different than any other book in how we should read it

- We wouldn't read any other book that we cared about the way we read the Bible.
- We wouldn't jump around from passage to passage, here a little, there a little, and say we "read" the book.

## To illustrate the truth of this, consider what would happen if:

- From *the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
- If you pulled out the saying, “Sharpen the Saw” as a key teaching of the book, you might think it was a book about carpentry.
- If you start watching *The Wizard of Oz* for the first time in the middle of the movie and see a young woman, a lion, a scarecrow, and a tin man marching down a yellow brick road—you wouldn’t have any idea what to think.
- Both of the above are nothing more than a confusing collection of characters and isolated sayings if you don’t read the entire book or watch the entire movie but they all make perfectly good sense if you read the entire book or watch the movie from start to finish and meet each saying and character in context.

### It's no different with the Bible

- For someone who did not grow up listening to Bible stories or perhaps grew up in church and wasn't paying much attention, how much sense does it make when you hear about Shem, Jeroboam, and Barnabas or about atonement, sanctification, and justification?
- Little more than a lion walking down a yellow brick road.
- We must read the Bible in the order things happened for the history and doctrines to make sense.
- If this is so important, why aren't our Bibles in this order?

### Because it's always been done that way.

- The OT Hebrew Bible was arranged with History, Prophets, Writings.
- NT History, Letters, Prophecy.
- When Jerome translated the Bible from Greek and Hebrew around 400 AD, into what became the Latin Vulgate, that's the pattern he followed.
- “Vulgate” not some fancy, scholarly translation, but one in the “vulgar” or common language of the people, main Bible used for hundreds of years
- *Previously, this was not a problem because people knew the history and context of the Bible and could put the people, doctrines, and messages from the prophets in their proper places.*
- *It's not like that anymore because.....*

### We live in a “post-Christian” world and in many ways “post-Bible” world, far different than it was in the past.

- In the world of the Old Testament and much of the recorded history of the Western World including Europe and the Americas—
- The Bible was the basis of culture, and education; it

was the reference point of art and music.

- Every religious or educated person knew the history, the timelines, the main characters that were in the scriptures.
- If they read a Psalm that included the line “Of David, when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech” they knew the story he was referring to.
- If they saw a painting titled “Lydia of Thyatira” they would know what it was about.
- If they heard “the Messiah” sung they would know where the passages could be found in the Bible and the context of them.
- ***It's not like that today. People have no idea of the history underlying the content or historical order of the people and events in the Bible.***

### Here is what happens if you don't know the history

- Imagine 2-3 thousand years from now (the time from the writing of the Old and New Testaments) from now reading a book about our current history that was organized like this:
- In the first part of the book, you'd have a retelling of the major events that took place, such as the history of the Great Depression, World War Two, and the Civil Rights movement.
- Next in the book you'd have chapters quoting poetry, philosophy, and romance stories of the times.
- Finally, at the end of the book, would be famous speeches of the times, but they wouldn't be necessarily in order, they wouldn't tell you anything about why they were created, the audience, or what made them important.
- There would be a speech by Churchill after Dunkirk talking about fighting everywhere, a speech by an FDR on only “fearing fear itself,” and finally one from a preacher named Martin Luther King about a dream he had.
- How well would you know or understand our world today if future you read about it in that way? How much sense would the speeches make if you couldn't match them with the history that produced them?

### That's what happens when most people read the Bible today

- It's no wonder no one pays attention to the power and purpose of the Old Testament prophets when their words are divorced from the current events that prompted them.
- But when you read any speech or prophecy in context and understand the current history when it was given it will become alive in the same way it

does when you understand why Martin Luther King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before a quarter of a million people. You understand the tension and terror it was to be a black person during that time and what it meant to hear him say, "I have a dream. . . .

- If you don't know the context, the history, what came before and after, his speech loses its power.
- And the power and importance of the message of the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, or Amos, or Hosea is lost when we read them out of context today.

### **Additional serious implications of not knowing the historical setting of biblical content**

- It's more than simply not knowing when a particular character lived or what they did when, or even not appreciating the power of context for powerful speeches.
- For many people, not knowing the historical context removes the content of the Bible away from historical, tangible truth, from real events being the basis for what the Bible teaches into a category of sayings based on *what feels good to me, what in it answers my needs*.
- The commands and challenges in the Bible become not much different than fortune cookie advice. Tasty at times, but easy to ignore if we don't like what it says.
- I don't think any of us intend for that to happen, but we can't help it, if the Bible is primarily a book of optional advice to us and not the written revelation of God.
- Reading the Bible in Chronological order will help us understand the messages of the Bible in the way God wants us to.

**Again, it's a big project, so let me share some additional reasons why *Reading your Bible in Chronological Order* will benefit you**

#### **ONE—**

### **Reading the Bible in chronological order we see how God is truly the author of the entire Bible**

- The Bible was written over 1600 years by 40 different authors, and yet it has one mind and one voice behind all the voices and one clear theme—of God seeking, saving, and restoring his lost people.
- Obviously, the writers over this span of time and geography could not have conspired together to tell the same story with all the parts fitting together the way

they do in the Bible on their own.

- Divine intervention was essential for the unity of message the Bible has.
- BUT you won't hear the one voice if you don't read the whole book and you'll hear it most clearly when you read it in the historical order events and messages happened.

#### **TWO—**

### **Reading the Bible in chronological order we understand the whole story of salvation as it unfolds**

- Many of us only have bits and pieces of the salvation story.
- When you read the Bible in chronological, historical order, you'll see how the Old Testament builds towards the fulfillment in the New Testament of the birth of Jesus, his death, resurrection, and promised return.
- When you understand when prophecy was given and then fulfilled by Jesus, you won't make the mistake of current critics who assume he was just a good man who tragically died.
- The salvation story was written by God, and it takes the entire Bible to tell all of it.

#### **THREE—**

### **Reading the Bible in chronological, HISTORICAL order makes sense of the prophet's messages**

- For example, the prophet Jonah.
- Everyone knows about the story of him swallowed by the big fish.
- But the context.....he was a very popular preacher in Israel during the time of King Jeroboam II, he prophesied his country would be victorious in war, and they were.
- At the same time Assyria, (Ninevah was its capitol) was rising in power and they were a viscously strong power.
- It was in the middle of all that God called him to leave his comfortable, popular position and go and preach to a potential enemy, who not many years from then would conquer and destroy Israel.
- No wonder he ran the other way.
- And what this also tells us is that around 50 years later when Assyria conquered Israel and took people captive, there were most likely believers among the conquerors.

## FOUR—

### Reading the Bible in chronological order you won't be afraid of "gotcha" questions about the Bible and your Christian faith

- I think a lot of Christians are afraid to share their faith because they are afraid of what I call the "gotcha" questions, all kinds of sometimes very valid questions about what is in the Bible, but that are easily answered if you know it well.
- In addition to questions from friends we can't explain, many Christians also have questions about the Bible they are afraid to express. The "dark night of the soul" can be terrifying when we doubt the truth of God's Word.
- Many of these questions are answered and fears calmed by simply reading the whole book in chronological historical order.
- There is a lot of incorrect information floating around in secular media that again, a simple, chronological study of Bible can easily correct.
- I realize this is a "trust me" statement, but I've seen this as a result from many who have taken my classes on going through the Bible in this way and it has meant a lot to me in my fears and doubts.

### The result of reading the WHOLE Bible in Chronological Order

- As J.I. Packer puts it:  
*"The Scriptures are the lifeline God throws us in order to ensure he and we stay connected while the rescue is in process."*
- Without this lifeline we can drown in the lies of culture and media and the confusion and pressures of life.
- But when we grab on to the Bible, when learn and live by truth in it, we can safely get through all the challenges and trials, joys and sorrows of this life, and forever.
- So grab and hold on to your Bible!

### And the best way to do that, is to go through it in Chronological order

- Reading or listening to it, I have free plans for you, plus the book, podcast, notes and more at [www.Bible805.com](http://www.Bible805.com)
- Please go there for information on how I put this plan together, it is slightly different than other chronological plans.
- I promise if you go through the Bible in chronological order reading or listening. . . .
- You'll find it will be the most important, satisfying, significant, and spiritually life-changing thing you can do.

## A final historical motivation

- Augustine was a successful, if quite wild and profligate young professional in the chaotic declining days of the Roman Empire.
- In his *Confessions* he relates the turning point of his life came when after disgust with his life and crying out to God, he heard children chanting, "tolle lege; tolle lege" Take up and read.
- He took up a Bible, read it, and his life and the history of the Christian church was changed.
- He believed the message came from God and I believe God still calls us today in whatever busy, challenging situation we may be in
- **Tolle lege**—take up and read your Bible and see what God can do in your life.

### That's all for now

- **Check out the notes from this lesson, Bible reading schedules, related resources, and helpful links at [www.bible805.com](http://www.bible805.com)**