

Bible Reading Plan

a short introduction to the Bible and the Christian life



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A BIBLE READING PLAN for a new Christian or new Bible Reader

Though one of the best ways to read the Bible to truly understand the context and content of many of the books, is in Chronological Order, that is not easy to do because our Bibles are not in Chronological Order.

What then is the alternative, especially for someone starting to read the Bible?

It is a big book and if you are not familiar with it, many people start where one obviously starts any book—at the beginning. Genesis goes well and often partway through Exodus things are still making sense, but once the sacrifices and laws start and almost certainly by the time the reader gets to Leviticus, they often bail out.

Often people then turn to some sort of devotional book that gives a verse and then often a brief commentary on it. Though devotional books can be useful, they are not a substitute for reading the Bible itself.

To forestall that outcome there are many suggested reading orders for new believers or people new in starting to read the Bible. I produced the following plan for a friend who recently became a Christian. I limited it to these books because if you take the number of chapters and divide it by the number of weeks you come out to approximately one chapter a day from August 1 until the end of the year, it is about a 5-month plan and in the Bible Study Group I teach at the start of the year we will go through the Bible in Chronological Order.

After putting it together for her, I realized it can be useful for anyone anytime as a way to start reading the Bible or to start reading consistently.

Along with the reading, I strongly recommend that anyone reading the Bible begin a Bible-reading journal.

It does not have to be complicated. Writing out three short entries based on the suggestions below is a good start—though you can certainly go longer if you want. Here are my suggestions:

1. **Write down the passage reference, e.g. Matthew 1. If you want to read more than one chapter at a time, that is fine.**
2. **Write a brief summary of it.**
3. **Write down a thought, a question, a comment, a prayer on it.**
4. **Talk to God in prayer after your reading. Thank Him for what you have learned, ask Him your questions, and to help you live according to it.**

Why these books in this order

I selected all passages from the New Testament to start as they were some of the first books read by the early Christian church that explained the meaning of the Christian faith and are very practical on how we should live as Christians.

Living as Christians foundationally means living like Jesus and that is why three of the four gospels or biographies of His life are included.

Following is first a concise overview of the order of the books I recommend and then briefly, my very subjective reasons why each one is in that order. If you decide to read them in another order, or read other books in the Bible, that is fine—you cannot go wrong reading any part of God's Word.

Next January, plan to join me starting in Genesis for the in-depth study of going through the Bible in Chronological order. The materials from that series will be on the www.Bible805.com website for you to access them in the years following.

One additional piece of advice—If you do not already have a Bible, or have not studied it much in the past, following are a few recommendations as to translations

There are a number of translations and fair prices for them on www.amazon.com.

For a more traditional translation, the New International Version, the NIV, is good; if you want a more readable and contemporary one, the New Living Bible is excellent.

Though many people have strong feelings about different translations, it is good to remember that they are *all translations* and not the original languages. Each translation has its strengths and weaknesses. More than anything else I agree with the statement that "the best translation is the one you will read," and both the NIV and New Living are highly readable.

Translation aside, for a study Bible, I like the *Life Application Bible*, particularly for new Christians because it has excellent introductions to the books of the Bible and notes that are helpful both theologically, historically, and in suggesting applications. The comments, timelines, and charts were written by a group of theologically sound writers and provide an excellent education in the Christian faith and life all wrapped up in one volume. I have seen significant spiritual growth in people who read the

commentaries in the Life Application Bible along with the books themselves.

The most basic Bible without notes is also good to have. Though I love my Life Application Bible and use it for study, reference, and application reminders, I prefer my text-only Bible for my daily readings. Once you have learned or read the Life Application Bible through once and have a basic idea about the background of the books and suggested applications, it is good to read the Bible itself without distractions.

The danger of any study Bible is that it can overwhelm the words of the Bible itself. Some pages of the Life Application Bible are about 75% or more notes, which are useful, but they are not God's Word, and we need to remember that.

You do not even have to read the Bible to take in the content of the Bible. You can listen to it. The YouVersion app that you can download on your phone will read it to you on your phone or if downloaded on your computer on it. Listening to the Bible is how most of God's people through the centuries took in Biblical content and it is perfectly fine to do it that way today.

Below is my suggested reading order and following it are the reasons why this list of books is in this order

Matthew
James
Luke
Acts
Romans
Eph
Phil
Col
1&2 Peter
John

Short summaries of comments on why these books

Matthew—I wanted to start here because not only is it a comprehensive biography of Jesus, but it is an excellent bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Note as you read how many times the Old Testament is quoted, and Matthew uses the phrase “this happened to fulfill....” In doing this he shows that Jesus was the long-awaited and prophesied Messiah. Jesus coming to die for our sins was not a last-minute

thought of God's nor was Jesus' death a tragic accident of a popular prophet who Rome did not like. Jesus and all the aspects of his life and death had been predicted from the earliest days of human history and Matthew reminds us of it.

James—is another book with ties to the Old Testament. James is most likely the first letter written to the young Christian churches that were mainly filled with converts who were initially primarily from the Jewish religion. The author James was the half-brother of Jesus and the leader of the church in Jerusalem. His book is intensely practical and shows how belief in Jesus should show it is genuine by how we live our lives.

Luke—is another book about the life of Jesus, but it is one sent to a non-Jewish person, who Luke, the writer of the book, wanted to tell about Jesus. Luke is a precise, careful historian and an extremely compassionate physician. He writes extensively about the people Jesus interacted with and tells more about the women, including Jesus' mother Mary, than the other gospels do.

Acts—Luke continues his account of the Christian faith by talking about how the earthly Church got started after Jesus returned to heaven. The first part of the book focuses on Peter and the church in Jerusalem, but most of the book talks about Paul and the spread of the faith to Gentiles. It was not an easy transition and Paul was constantly prosecuted for sharing the Christian faith. Luke does not tell us much about his personal interactions with Paul, but as Paul was continuously being beaten, stoned, and otherwise abused for this faith, it was no doubt a comfort having Luke as his physician and friend with him. The book ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome. I will recommend the letters he wrote at that time shortly, but first prior to coming to Rome, Paul wrote the church in Rome a letter and that is the next book I recommend you read.

Romans—this is Paul's in-depth explanation of the Christian faith. He starts with creation and shows how humanity turned its back on God, which is the essence of sin, and that the result of that turning was both physical and spiritual death. But he goes on to show how God did not abandon His creation, but that because of God's grace, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and by trusting Him for our salvation we can be in a place where there is "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1). Romans 12 and the following chapters tell us how to live as God's people in light of this great gift of salvation.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians—Though these three books are often referred to as "the Prison Letters," they were actually written when Paul was under house arrest in Rome following the end of the book of Acts. Though Paul was chained to a Roman guard, people from various

churches could visit him and he wrote these letters for them to take back to their churches and to share with other churches. Each of the books first gives a theological foundation to the Christian faith and then follows it with how we ought to act because of it.

Here are a few comments on my favorite parts of these books:

Ephesians—begins with a glorious eternal view of our salvation, which I cannot even approximately comprehend. That Jesus loved us and died for our salvation is incredible enough, but that God "has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [and that] he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" is an amazing gift of grace Paul explains early in the book. Then in chapter four, he gets practical about how we are to "walk worthy of the calling we've received." The book ends with the armor of God which will help us walk worthy, but we must remember to put it on.

Philippians—most commentators talk about how this is a book of true joy in the Christian faith and remind the reader that it was written while Paul was under house arrest, awaiting trial and dependent on the gifts of friends for food and support—hardly normal circumstances for joy. Those comments are true, but to me, one of the most profound and challenging passages in the book is Philippians 2:5-11 where it talks about how Jesus, who "in very nature God. . . .took on the form of a servant." Our primary identity as His disciples as that of a servant, which in our age of outrage over imagined hurts and slights and false ideas of entitlement is a constant challenge.

Colossians—is all about Jesus. It begins with how He is the image of the invisible God and Creator of all things and continues with how we are to live since our life is now in Him, which includes among other things a command to "clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (Col.3:12)."

1st and 2nd Peter—Peter was a disciple of Jesus, a close friend who denied Jesus at his trial and ran from his crucifixion. Peter gave up on Jesus, but Jesus did not give up on him and after Jesus' resurrection, he found Peter. The details of that encounter are not recorded but Peter later became the leader of the church and a fearless preacher of salvation in Jesus. In these books, Peter knows he does not have much longer to live and encourages Christians in their trials as he affirms both the reality of the life and resurrection of Jesus as an eyewitness of those events, but also that a time is coming when the trials of our time on earth will be over, and God will make all things new.

John—we started this series of readings about the life of Jesus, and it is fitting we end with Him. Matthew showed how He was the long-awaited Messiah, Luke showed his compassionate humanity, and John shows how from all eternity He is God. Note especially Jesus' final words in John 14 through 17. These are His last words to His disciples before He was crucified. They both comfort and challenge us as His disciples today, reminding us that if we love Him, we will keep His commands; that in this world we will have troubles, but that He has overcome the world and in Him, we can have peace.

Concluding thoughts for readers of the Bible

It is more essential than ever that we make God's Word the foundation of our lives as our world turns ever further and further away from the way our Creator intended us to live.

As believers in Jesus, we have the extraordinary opportunity to model our lives after Jesus and to live in ways that are not only pleasing to Him, but that will give us peace and fulfillment. We will not have any idea how to do that unless we know God's Word well and unless its words are the reference point and measuring line of our actions. We make them that by getting the content of the Bible into our lives.

You can do that day by day, by reading or listening, by thinking about the content of the Bible, by talking to God in prayer and asking Him to help make His Words the pattern of your life.

My prayer for you is that God's Word will become the foundation, the North Star, the guide, and the joy of your life all your life long until you meet face-to-face, the living Word, our Lord Jesus.

Yvon Prehn's links to social media, websites, podcasts, and videos, printables, and eBooks

I have two sets of social media and on-line resources, one in Bible teaching and one in Church Communications. I have combined these resources into an overall group entitled the Bibleverse, which is a combined ministry whose purpose is to bring the Bible into all of life.

The Bibleverse has many parts and below are areas that may be useful to you. Keep in mind that the only materials for sale on any of them are ones I create and that help support the ministry. NONE of my sites (I can't help what YouTube does) contain ANY outside advertising, affiliate marketing, or other distractions.

For the sake of peace, I also do not allow comments on my sites or social media if I have a choice on them. My time is more than full attempting to keep up on creating content for the following ministries (and I often fall behind) and I can either focus on content creation or interacting with comments. That though some comments are positive, many in the past have been vile attacks by cults and disturbed people. I choose to focus on content creation. If someone wants to reach me, my email is on my sites in the About sections.

When you come to a site associated with the Bibleverse, I want it to be a peaceful, encouraging time that will help you know God and serve Him more joyfully and effectively.

Here are the resources to help you do that:

Not tied to any one ministry

Instagram personal account (an online devotional)

<https://www.instagram.com/yvonprehn>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/yvonprehn/>

Bibleverse, overall site: <https://www.bibleversehub.com>

An overall site that introduces you to the various parts of the Bibleverse and has periodic updates of the ministry on it.

Bible805

Bible805 website: Yvon Prehn's Bible teaching and link to Bible podcast: <https://www.bible805.com>

Bible805 Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Bible805>

Bibleverse Shop: <https://www.payhip.com/bibleverseshop>

Source for an ever-increasing collection of Printables you can use to create Bible-verse pictures and images in many sizes and formats, from social media images to files you can print on office computers and that can be printed at professional print shops for large posters or canvas prints. Many images for many occasions all for a low yearly subscription price, instead of having to pay for them individually as you do on other online sources such as Etsy.

Bible805 Podcast, from here you can find links to listen to the Bible 805 podcast on iTunes, Spotify, and many other podcast resources: <https://anchor.fm/yvon-prehn8>

Bible805 YouTube videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnQJIt33JE2PxYAAMXcpMeg>
Quality Bible teaching videos, all for free that you can learn from and use in teaching

Bible805 Academy <https://www.payhip.com/Bible805Academy>

Though you can access the videos for free on YouTube, if you would like to legally download them and share them with a Sunday School class, small group, home school, or Bible school, you can buy the video along with notes, discussion questions, and images you can use to advertise it all for the extremely low yearly subscription price of \$36. I'm making this as low as it is to make quality Bible teaching available to anyone and still support the creation of them.

Effective Church Communications

Effective Church Communications website: <https://www.effectivechurchcom.com>

Effective Church Communications Library <https://www.payhip.com/ecclibrary>

An ever-growing online Library of eBooks and church communications training videos that will give you the skills, strategy, and inspiration to create communications that fully fulfill the Great Commission, all for one low subscription price. With the subscription you have permission to make unlimited copies of the resources.

Effective Church Communications YouTube videos: <http://www.youtube.com/yvonprehn>
Quality training videos on church communications, all for FREE that you can learn from and share.

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/effectivechurchcom/>

Instagram ministry account: <https://www.instagram.com/effectivechurchcom>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/EffectiveChurchCommunications>

Podcast about Effective Church Communications: <https://anchor.fm/yvon-prehn>