A Plan for Reading the Whole Bible

Every historical narrative, every prophecy, every law, every theological argument contained in the Bible is a link in the chain of God's development of His plan of salvation for humanity. The Bible is the whole story—God's story and message for humanity. And to understand that story, and how the various parts are connected, we need to read the whole Bible.

This paper describes a Bible-reading plan that has been especially helpful to a number of people connected with the C.S. Lewis Institute (CSLI). It is a simple plan, and one that you may find helpful in reading through the entire Bible not only once, but on a regular basis.

When we read through the Bible, we are actually reading through a collection of 66 books, varying by type of literature, or genre. For example, a Book may be history, poetry, a letter, or some other genre.

Perhaps the most common obstacle people encounter in trying to read through the whole Bible is getting bogged down in reading long passages, for days in a row, which may be difficult to understand. Genre-based Bible reading plans avoid this problem.

Norma-Neal Gause developed a Bible reading plan based on "six natural divisions" of the Bible, which she explained in a booklet titled "How to Read the WHOLE Bible Without Being Bored."[1] The six divisions are:

I. The first five Books of the Bible, often called the Law or the Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy
II. The History of Israel and Judah—Joshua through Esther
III. Poetical Books—Job through the Song of Solomon
IV. The Prophets—Isaiah through Malachi
V. The Gospels and Acts—Matthew through Acts
VI. Letters to Churches—Romans through Revelation

Ideally, you would read six chapters each day, one chapter from each of the divisions. This would take about a half hour a day or less, depending on your reading speed. However, the plan can be carried out at your own pace. You don't have to read the same amount of Scripture each day, and if you miss days you just pick up wherever you left off. You cannot get behind!

Under the plan, you will read each Book of the Bible from the first chapter through the last, but since you are reading passages from several genres of Scripture each day, you won't become bogged down in your reading.

To keep track of your reading, just record your reading on a chart. Blank charts are included at the end of this paper. Two sample charts are set forth below. The first chart has the first few lines filled in for a person reading six chapters each day, and beginning the plan (for illustrative purposes) on April 1; the second chart is an example for a person who varies their reading. If you print the blank charts at the end of this paper, you can fill them in by hand; alternatively, you can maintain the chart electronically.

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[1] Mrs. Gause has an interesting story, which was the subject of a *St. Petersburg Times* article published in 2000. She began to read the Bible after reading C.S. Lewis's book *Miracles* and, as described in the article, her life was never the same. "'I was born to teach'... Norma Neal Gause, 79, began studying the Bible 52 years ago and earned a doctorate in theology. She has taught for 30 years," Maureen Byrne, *St. Petersburg Times,* September 2, 2000. *http://www.sptimes.com/News/090200/news_pf/NorthPinellas/_I_was_born_to_teach_.shtml*

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Sample Table 1

DATE	LAW (Genesis to Deuteronomy)	HISTORY (Joshua to Esther)	POETICAL (Job to Song of Solomon)	PROPHETS (Isaiah to Malachi)	GOSPELS and ACTS (Matthew to Acts)	LETTERS TO CHURCHES (Romans to Revelation)
4/1 FRI	*Gen 1*	*Josh 1*	*Job 1*	*Isa 1*	*Matt 1*	*Rom 1*
SAT	*Gen 2*	*Josh 2*	*Job 2*	*Isa 2*	*Matt 2*	*Rom 2*
SUN	*Gen 3*	*Josh 3*	*Job 3*	*Isa 3*	*Matt 3*	*Rom 3*

Sample Table 2

DATE	LAW (Genesis to Deuteronomy)	HISTORY (Joshua to Esther)	POETICAL (Job to Song of Solomon)	PROPHETS (Isaiah to Malachi)	GOSPELS and ACTS (Matthew to Acts)	LETTERS TO CHURCHES (Romans to Revelation)
4/1 FRI	*Gen 1*	*Josh 1*	*Job 1*	*Isa 1*		
SAT		*Josh 2*	*Job 2*		*Matt 1*	*Rom 1*
SUN	*Gen 2-3*		*Job 3*	*Isa 2*		
TUE	*Gen 4*	*Josh 3*		*Isa 3*	*Matt 2*	*Rom 2*
WED			*Job 4*		*Matt 3-4*	*Rom 3*
THU	*Gen 5*	*Josh 4*		*Isa 4*	*Matt 5*	*Rom 4*

Once you complete reading the Books in a particular division, the plan calls for immediately starting over again in reading the Books of that division. Since there are different numbers of chapters in the six divisions, this means that, over time, you will always be reading a different set of Scripture passages each day.

Under this plan, you will be reading the whole Bible, although you will read some portions, especially the Gospels and Acts and the Letters to Churches, more often than others. If you read six chapters of Scripture a day, you will read the entire New Testament three times a year and the entire Old Testament three times in about two years.

The goal of reading the Bible is not simply to gain information, but to know God. As Tom Tarrants has stated, "Through the Scriptures, we learn of God's character, His great deeds, His love for us, His will for us, His ways, His promises, and so much more. The Holy Spirit uses these truths as a major part of the process of transformation—of becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ."[2] Following this Bible reading plan can be part of that process.

The charts for daily Bible reading follow. They are presented in two formats. The first, which has one chart on a page, provides more room for writing. The second, which has two charts on a page, can be cut in half to provide smaller charts that can more easily be kept in a Bible.

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[2] "Are you Growing in Grace?", Thomas A. Tarrants, III, *Knowing and Doing,* Summer 2015, p. 7. This article provides helpful information about how to read the Bible. See the section titled "The Apostles' Teaching." This article is available on the C.S. Lewis Institute website at *http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/4161.*

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