

Reading schedule

The Basics

Week 1:

Day 1: Mark 1-4

Day 2: Mark 5-8

Day 3: Mark 9-12

Day 4: Mark 13-16

Day 5: 1 John 1-3

Day 6: 1 John 4-5

Day 7: Genesis 1-3

Week 2:

Day 8: Genesis 4-5

Day 9: Genesis 6-8

Day 10: Genesis 9-11

Day 11: Romans 1-4

Day 12: Romans 5-8

Day 13: Romans 9-12

Day 14: Romans 13-16

Dig Deeper

Week 3

Day 15: Luke 1-4

Day 16: Luke 5-8

Day 17: Luke 9-12

Day 18: Luke 13-16

Day 19: Luke 17-20

Day 20: Luke 21-24

Day 21: Acts 1-4

Dig Deeper (continued)

Week 4

Day 22: Acts 5-8

Day 23: Acts 9-12

Day 24: Acts 13-16

Day 25: Acts 17-20

Day 26: Acts 21-24

Day 27: Acts 25-28

Day 28: Ephesians 1-3

Dig Deeper (continued)

Week 7

Day 43: John 1-3

Day 44: John 4-6

Day 45: John 7-9

Day 46: John 10-12

Day 47: John 13-15

Day 48: John 16-18

Day 49: John 19-21 and Matthew 28

Week 5

Day 29: Ephesians 4-6

Day 30: Genesis 12-14

Day 31: Genesis 15-17

Day 32: Genesis 18-20

Day 33: Genesis 21-23

Day 34: Genesis 24-26

Day 35: Genesis 27-29

Week 6

Day 36: Genesis 30-32

Day 37: Genesis 33-35

Day 38: Genesis 36-38

Day 39: Genesis 39-41

Day 40: Genesis 42-44

Day 41: Genesis 45-47

Day 42: Genesis 48-50

About this guide

*Glor*y to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.

Luke 2:14

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To Osman, who inspired me to make this

study guide.

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Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE,

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The Bible at a glance

The Bible consists of the **Hebrew** and **Greek** Scriptures.

The **Hebrew** Scriptures contain **39 books** written by many different authors

over a one thousand year period, approximately between 1400-400 BC. Ex-

cept for a few sections, it is written entirely in Hebrew. A more detailed

description of the Hebrew Scriptures is included later in this study, but for

the purposes of this introduction, it is sufficient to summarize that the He-

brew Scriptures as a whole tell of a special and unique task that the Creator

God gave to the descendants of a man named Abraham—the **Israelites**. The

purpose of this task was that the Israelites were “commissioned” to tell all the

other people of the world about the **Creator God**. The Hebrew Scriptures

contain many references of the coming of a *Messiah* (which is the Hebrew

word for savior or rescuer).

The **Greek** Scriptures contain **27 books**, also written by several different

authors over a period of approximately 50 years, around 40-90 AD. The Greek

Scriptures show how the Creator God entered into history by becoming a

human, fulfilling what was written in the Hebrew Scriptures about the com-

ing *Messiah* (Savior). The Messiah is a descendant of Abraham named Yeshua

(Joshua), or as translated in English, **Jesus**. The Greek word for Messiah is

Christos, from which the title *Christ* is derived. Today, we put the name and

title together: Jesus (the) Christ.

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or do so only sparingly). If you notice a verse of interest, highlight it or un-

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Day 1: Mark 1-4

Focus point: Mark 2:1-12

I can tell someone that I forgive them of their sins—all of their sins, mind you, not just the ones they may have committed against me personally. It would be bold and presumptuous of me to make such a claim, but nevertheless, I could still say this to someone and no one could prove one way or the other if my announcement actually worked or not. That is because there isn’t any obvious or visible sign that proves whether or not I actually had the power and ability to remove their sins—they would look just the same as they did before **I made my audacious announcement**.

Here, **Jesus provides the physical evidence** to His claim that He (and He alone) has the ability to forgive sins. First, He says to the paralytic that the man’s sins are forgiven, but then Jesus goes on to actually prove it—**He connects His words of forgiveness with His words of healing**. The paralytic is instantly cured—Jesus used His words to show His power over disease, the man was healed, therefore His words of healing must be true. Jesus used His words to state that He can forgive sins, likewise these words must also be true.

Do you see the striking difference between my claim to have the power to forgive sins (in which I provide no proof), and Jesus’ claim to have the power to forgive sins (in which He provides spectacular proof)?

Day 2: Mark 5-8

Focus point: Mark 8:31-38

This passage introduces a theme that you will see throughout all four gospel accounts—before Jesus’ death and resurrection, **the disciples completely misunderstood the purpose and intent of Jesus’ plan**. *They* thought that Jesus came as a conqueror-king that would deliver the oppressed Israelites out of the hands of the foreign rulers (Rome).

This is why Peter “rebuked” Jesus here—Peter is essentially saying, “Jesus, that’s crazy talk—you’re here to deliver us, not sacrifice yourself—let me remind you of the game plan....” Jesus must correct Peter (and not for the last time!) and remind *him* of the true game plan—that **Jesus came to usher in a new kingdom**, the Kingdom of God—a kingdom which looks com-

pletely different from our worldly ideas of a kingdom.

Keep this thought in mind as you read through the gospel accounts and it will help you understand a great deal of the “confusing” things that Jesus said to His disciples—it sounds confusing to us because we have the same incorrect mindset that Peter had.

Day 3: Mark 9-12

Focus point: Mark 12:28-34

The modern equivalent to a scribe would be a Bible scholar or Theology professor—one who studies the Scriptures in the original language and knows it inside and out. Isn’t it curious that a scribe is asking Jesus what commandment is the most important? The scribe is referring to the *Torah*, which are the **first five books** of the Bible—today we call this the “Law.” In Hebrew, *torah* simply means “instruction.”

We will get to a study of the Law later, but for the purposes of understanding this passage, there are **hundreds of laws and instructions** described in the *Torah*, so the scribe is asking: which of these is **most important**? It is likely that the scribe was hoping to trip Jesus up and get Him to say something inconsistent, or to say something that could easily be proven wrong (after all, he had a Ph.D. in the Scriptures). Instead, Jesus condenses and summarizes all of the Law into **two** commandments: it’s all about **your relationship with God** as highest priority, and **your relationship with fellow humans** as second priority. Everything else—all the detailed rules that you read about in the Law—fall naturally into place if you have these two commandments in the right priority.

You can see the transforming power of Jesus right here in this passage—the scribe had hoped to trick Jesus, but instead was completely convinced and changed by Jesus’ answer to his question.

Day 4: Mark 13-16

Focus point: Mark 14:53-65

The religious leaders were looking for a way to lawfully have Jesus put to death and rid themselves of Jesus’ meddling in their territory, so to speak. In verse 58, an accusation is made that Jesus used magic or sorcery as His source of power, which was an act

punishable by death according to the Law. But the accusation didn’t stick because of conflicting testimony. The chief priest must then “ratchet” things up a notch, and hopes to trap Jesus in blasphemy—**claiming to be God** or equal to God—an act also **punishable by death**. Now, instead of the conflicting testimony of the false witnesses, Jesus Himself answers the chief priest’s question (much to the delight of the chief priest, for this is exactly the claim he was hoping Jesus would make)—**Jesus confirms that He is the Messiah**. This sealed Jesus’ fate, for now the council had the “legal” basis for imposing the death penalty. At that time, since Israel was under the control of Rome, criminals convicted of capital punishment had to first have the approval of the regional Roman leader before the sentence could be carried out.

Stop and think about it for a moment: if Jesus were just an ordinary man (as the council thought), then good riddance—just another crazy person claiming to be a Messiah (people still claim this today); but the difference is that Jesus wasn’t just another crazy person, **He rose from the dead**, proving that He was indeed the Messiah. No false Messiah has ever done that, they are still in the grave.

Day 5: 1 John 1-3

Focus point: 1st John 3:1-10

Many people find it unusual or strange that the Bible uses familial language so often. Many people have an idea that God is a distant, incomprehensible figure. When we reflect on the scope and size of creation, it is easy to get this feeling about the Being who brought forth the entire universe! Yet, John wants to make it clear, using language that we can easily understand and relate to, that **God is like a wonderful father** who pours His love out on us.

As you read this section, try imagining that you are God’s “favorite” child (for the purpose of emphasizing the point John is making in verse 1) and see what a difference it makes in your understanding of God’s loving character! But also be mindful of the other point that John is making here—this **lavish love** is only for **God’s children**. And just who are God’s children? We find that out in the next chapter.

Day 6: 1 John 4-5

Focus point: 1st John 4:7-16

This is perhaps one of the finest explanations in the entire Bible about the nature of the relationship that we can have with our loving Heavenly Father—and the **basis** of that relationship is **love**.

At first glance, it may sound similar to what many other philosophies and religions say, that one has to intentionally express love to God and to others and once you do that, you are a loving person and God is pleased with you. But **re-read verse 10** and notice the striking difference between John’s explanation and that of the “world’s” explanation: it is not by us expressing love to God that brings us into a relationship with Him—it’s the other way around! **God expresses His love to us**, and that is how we become His children. Most people believe that the “work” has to be done on our side in order to make us pleasing and acceptable to God. Not so. Isn’t it wonderful that the “work” is done by God and not us—this is one of the reasons why the *gospel*, that is, the “**Good News**” (for that is what the Greek word *gospel* means in English) really is good news!

Now look at verse 15. This verse answers the question raised yesterday—who are the children of God? Do you now see how to enter into a relationship with our loving Creator God? **It is only by believing in Jesus Christ**, our wonderful Savior!

Day 7: Genesis 1-3

Focus point: Genesis 3:1-13

I can’t overemphasize the importance of this chapter in understanding the rest of the Bible. There are few chapters in the whole Bible that are as critical! Rather than comment very much on it, I recommend that you read and re-read this chapter frequently during *The Basics* and *Dig Deeper* studies—there are many other passages in Scripture that will shed more light and color on what we commonly refer to as “**The Fall**”—that is, the **fall of mankind** from a state of perfection and grace. We, as descendants of Adam and Eve, no longer have this perfect fellowship with the Creator God. The rest of the Bible is **God’s wonderful plan to bring us back** into that fellowship with Him. But as you will discover, the rest of the Bible also shows how mankind, sadly, repeatedly rejects God’s wonderful plan, even to this day.

Day 8: Genesis 4-5

Focus point: Genesis 4:1-12

This passage tells the account of the **first murder** in the history of mankind. It is implied, but not explicitly stated, that the reason that Cain’s sacrifice was not pleasing to the Lord is because Cain didn’t give the very best of his harvest but held the best portions back for himself, whereas Abel gave the choicest portion of his offering. In other words, in Cain’s heart, he didn’t put God as the first and highest priority. Today it is no different—we too hold back the best for ourselves—it is in our very nature.

Day 9: Genesis 6-8

Focus point: Genesis 6:5-8

The **depravity of mankind** only further deteriorated since the days of Cain and Abel, until it was to such a state that God was grieved to the heart—not that God has a heart like we do, but the author here (tradition states it was Moses) is using imagery that we can relate to in order to understand **how God felt**. Stop and think of that for a moment—God has feelings and emotion, such as grief and pain? That is an astonishing thought for most people, but it is true. This passage introduces the account of Noah, who found favor with God and through whom God would remake the world and re-establish the human race through a mighty flood.

Day 10: Genesis 9-11

Focus point: Genesis 11:1-4

The important thing to take note in this passage is how quickly mankind is back to its self-centered, self-sufficient ways. In verse 3, notice how **industrious** and **hard-working** the people are here and that their goals are **self-aggrandizement** (“make a name for ourselves”). Sadly, there is little difference between the people today and those described here. Like them, **we feel that we don’t need God**, we can do it ourselves!

It may sound strange or counter-intuitive, but it was actually an act of mercy that God dispersed the people and confused the languages—had the people been allowed to continue on in their quest for independence, no one would have been left who even remembered God. By dispersing the people, God was able to isolate a particular man from which He would **build a**

whole nation of people that would **share** His love with the rest of the world.

We will return to this point in history in the *Dig Deeper* lesson, but first, we need to get additional background material to make better sense of this special people.

Day 11: Romans 1-4

Focus point: Romans 1:18-20

Paul is saying here that it’s no use to plead **ignorance**—you can’t show up before the throne of God and say, “Oh, sorry, I didn’t know you existed... you should have made yourself more obvious.” God has left all of creation as a **testimony** of His existence!

Re-read **verse 18** to see what Paul says about people that attempt to feign ignorance—he says that someone who does this is a wicked person who **suppresses the truth**. Have you ever known someone that failed to see something about themselves but it was obvious to everyone else? Maybe it was a problem they had, some compulsion such as overspending, overeating, alcohol addiction or repeatedly making bad relationship decisions. Don’t you feel a little bit of pity for them—they can’t, or won’t see something that is plain to everyone else around them. Now amplify that ignorance—actually, it’s not true ignorance but a **suppression of reality**—on a much grander scale. Let say, the size of the universe—for that is how large of a witness there is to the Creator God—how foolish would it seem for a person to continue to deny the existence of God? Paul would say that it would be foolishness to the point of wickedness.

Day 12: Romans 5-8

Focus point: Romans 8:1-4

This section of Romans contains one of the most lucid and sobering descriptions of mankind’s **disposition towards evil**. As we read through chapters 5-7, we are struck to the heart because we feel that Paul is not describing himself but instead has somehow gotten into our heads and discovered the deepest secrets about ourselves that we have kept hidden from everyone else!

Try this exercise, re-read Romans 7:7-25. At the end of verse 25, stop and breathe a heavy sigh of relief—imagine that you’ve just finishing running a marathon and are so glad and relieved

that it is over. Then immediately read Romans 8:1-4. This passage is a **breath of fresh air**—imagine it, the heaviness of sin (like a grueling marathon), and then the lightness and freedom of being done with it—**forever!** That is how you should feel as you read through Romans 8, light as a feather through your new-found **freedom** in Jesus Christ!

Day 13: Romans 9-12

Focus point: Romans 10:9-13

Re-read Romans 10:13 and let the words **sink into your ears, your heart, your very being**. Isn’t it wonderful to know that this is a promise from God that we can bank on and trust in? This is an excellent passage to memorize so that you can recall it anytime you need a burst of wonder at the amazing promises that our Creator God has given to us.

But just **who is the “Lord”** that Paul is referring to in this passage? In today’s culture, it is very common to say or believe that there are many ways to “call on the name of the Lord” and that in essence, all the various religions are just different ways to the same God. But are they really? Is the Lord that Paul is describing here the same that our pluralistic society today defines? For the answer, we have to go back a couple sentences to verses 9-11. Here in these verses, **who does Paul say is the “Lord”** that is able to deliver on the promise given in verse 13? With that answer in mind, you may also want to memorize these verses as well!

Day 14: Romans 13-16

Focus point: Romans 13:8-14

In Romans, you have heard Paul refer to the “**Law**” on many occasions. Just what is this Law that he keeps referring to? To answer that question will require more background reading in the Bible—in fact, we won’t get to a detailed study of the Law until after we finish the *Dig Deeper* section. But for purposes of getting a big picture overview of the Law, this section of Romans provides one of the best summaries in the entire Bible. Keep this overview of the Law in mind as you continue your study through the Bible, so that when you finally do read about the Law (which is quite comprehensive), you will not “get lost” or mired in the details of the Law. You can refer back here to Paul’s summary in order to keep you grounded in understanding

the true and **underlying intention** of God when He gave the Law to the Israelites. In Paul’s masterful way of expressing ideas, he introduces, or rather reminds us that the **ultimate purpose** of the Law is to **lead us into love**, which should sound very familiar to what you just recently read in the 1st Letter of John!

The Basics: Stop and Take a Look Back

Even though we’ve only read a little over three books of the Bible (out of a total of 66), you should already be getting the sense that the Bible “answers itself.” That is, the various books of the Bible, even though they are written by many different authors in many different places and time periods, are **harmonious** and **complementary** to one another. Or perhaps a better way to put it is that the Bible contains the answers to many of the perplexing questions we have about life—if we are willing to **invest the time** to search for the answers and be open to listening to what God is saying to us through the words of the Bible. This is one of the main goals of the first section of this course—recognizing that when questions “come up” as we read through the Bible, the answers are ultimately found in other passages of the Bible itself. This is why we said at the beginning of this course that we can understand the Bible better and better **as we are reading it**.

As you continue your journey through the *Dig Deeper* study, keep this in mind—in fact, knowing that the answers to your questions might be “**just around the corner**” makes it very exciting to read through the Bible and you will find yourself not wanting to put it down!

Dig Deeper

The *Dig Deeper* study continues building on the readings from *The Basics* study. Again, the emphasis is on selected books from the Greek Scriptures and you will also finish the book of Genesis from the Hebrew Scriptures:

Luke Acts Ephesians Genesis 12-50 Gospel of John Matthew 28

The *Dig Deeper* and *Next Steps* study continue in the second part of *The Basics of the Bible* study guide.

Reading schedule

The Basics

Week 1:

Day 1: Mark 1-4

Day 2: Mark 5-8

Day 3: Mark 9-12

Day 4: Mark 13-16

Day 5: 1 John 1-3

Day 6: 1 John 4-5

Day 7: Genesis 1-3

Week 2:

Day 8: Genesis 4-5

Day 9: Genesis 6-8

Day 10: Genesis 9-11

Day 11: Romans 1-4

Day 12: Romans 5-8

Day 13: Romans 9-12

Day 14: Romans 13-16

Day 21: Acts 1-4

Day 20: Luke 21-24

Day 19: Luke 17-20

Day 18: Luke 13-16

Day 17: Luke 9-12

Day 16: Luke 5-8

Day 15: Luke 1-4

Week 3

Dig Deeper

Day 36: Genesis 30-32

Day 37: Genesis 33-35

Day 38: Genesis 36-38

Day 39: Genesis 39-41

Day 40: Genesis 42-44

Day 41: Genesis 45-47

Day 42: Genesis 48-50

Day 43: Genesis 45-47

Day 44: Genesis 45-47

Day 45: Genesis 45-47

Day 46: Genesis 45-47

Day 47: Genesis 45-47

Day 48: Genesis 45-47

Day 49: John 19-21 and Matthew 28

Week 4

Day 22: Acts 5-8

Day 23: Acts 9-12

Day 24: Acts 13-16

Day 25: Acts 17-20

Day 26: Acts 21-24

Day 27: Acts 25-28

Day 28: Ephesians 1-3

Week 5

Day 29: Ephesians 4-6

Day 30: Genesis 12-14

Day 31: Genesis 15-17

Day 32: Genesis 18-20

Day 33: Genesis 21-23

Day 34: Genesis 24-26

Day 35: Genesis 27-29

Week 6

Day 36: Genesis 30-32

Day 37: Genesis 33-35

Day 38: Genesis 36-38

Day 39: Genesis 39-41

Day 40: Genesis 42-44

Day 41: Genesis 45-47

Day 42: Genesis 48-50

Day 43: Genesis 45-47

Day 44: Genesis 45-47

Day 45: Genesis 45-47

Day 46: Genesis 45-47

Day 47: Genesis 45-47

Day 48: Genesis 45-47

Day 49: John 19-21 and Matthew 28

About this guide

Glorify to God in the highest, and on earth

peace to men on whom his favor rests.

Luke 2:14

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To Osman, who inspired me to make this

study guide.

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Focus points:

Genesis 12:1-7: the promise God made to Abraham—one of the most founda-

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Genesis 27: the account of Jacob stealing the birthright frtom his twin brother

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John 3: a profound yet simple and clear explanation that Jesus Himself gave on

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John 11: perhaps the most moving description in the entire Bible about the

deep compassion of Jesus. Here, Jesus is so distraught and moved by the death

of His friend Lazarus that Jesus weeps at his grave. This passage is foundational

on many levels—understanding the humanity and emotion of Jesus, under-

standing the perspective that Jesus had in regard to the ultimate fate of man-

kind (death), and understanding that death (and disease for that matter) are not

in God's original plan for mankind.

John 15: part of Jesus' final instructions to His disciples, which is only recorded

by John. In this chapter, Jesus explains the relationship that believers have to

God through Him.

The Great Commission

This is it—the best description of what the followers of Jesus are supposed to

do with their time left on this planet. In terms of getting guidance on our

purpose in life, Matthew 28:16-20 is the most important set of instructions in

the entire Bible. Don't misunderstand—the rest of the Bible is very important

in building up many different aspects of the life of a follower of Jesus, but no

other passage can compare when it comes to answering the question: “**What**

exactly does God want me to do with my life?” Of course, there are many

different ways that God's will can be done, and the work that God calls for one

believer will likely look different from the work He calls for another believer.

We must trust (and pray) that the Holy Spirit will fill in the details that are

specific to our own situation. But here, let's summarize the big picture of the

Great Commission that Jesus gives us:

Go: actively go out and share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Anoth-

er word for go is “leave” as in, leave your comfort zone.

Make disciples: teach others what God has shown you through your relation-

ship with Jesus Christ and through of the Holy Spirit.

Baptize them: soak them in their relationship with Jesus so that it transforms

their life in highly visible and noticeable ways.

Teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded: help them “dig deeper” and

continually grow in their walk with Jesus.

Stop and Take a Look Back

Wow: Hopefully this is how you are feeling as you finish up the *Dig Deeper*

study. Isn't the Bible an amazing book that you might not have appreciated

before? Have you felt the Holy Spirit “speak” to you and give you insight dur-

ing this study? If so, wasn't it exciting and wouldn't you like to experience

more of that? **The good news is that you can!** Through the process of this study,

you should now feel equipped to give you a plan in which you can read the rest of

the Bible. The readings are again in a non-sequential order to facilitate under-

standing the Bible as you are reading it.

But before you continue on, let's learn an important lesson from the book of

Acts. While I hope this study guide has been helpful to you, let me also give

you a cautionary note: don't just take the words in this study at face value—

instead be a “Berean.” Take a look at **Acts 17:11** to see what I mean:

“*Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for*

they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures

every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Being a Berean means to examine the Scriptures for yourself to see if

what Paul (or anyone else) says about God is true. As you embark on your

journey, I encourage you to be a Berean for **the rest of your life!**

Week 6: Genesis

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continually grow in their walk with Jesus.

Week 5: Ephesians

Focus points:

Ephesians 2:8-9: one of the most compact summaries in all the Bible about

what it is that followers of Jesus believe. This is an excellent passage to mem-

orize!

Ephesians 4:11-13: this passage is one of the best summaries of the variety of

“jobs” that believers of Jesus do (v. 11), the underlyingly purpose of these jobs

(v. 12) and the reason why God views these jobs as so important (v. 13).

Ephesians 6:10-18: an essential passage for understanding how believers are

to actively “equip” themselves for service in God's Kingdom work. If you

return to this chapter and re-read it whenever you are facing discouragement,

disappointment or defeat in your work for the Kingdom.

Week 6: Genesis

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Focus points:

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by John. In this chapter, Jesus explains the relationship that believers have to

Next Steps (abridged version)

Congratulations! You now have a basic understanding of the Bible and what it means to be a **follower of Jesus**. You now should also have more confidence in your ability to read, interpret and understand the Scriptures and feel **empowered** to continue your study of the Bible. This is exciting because, for the rest of your life, as you continue to read and re-read the Bible, you will likewise continue to gain a deeper and deeper understanding of the Bible and as a result, grow closer and closer in **your relationship with Him**.

The remainder of the study guide provides you with a proposed reading order to complete the rest of the Bible. Depending on your reading speed and the amount of time you commit each day, you can expect to finish the **entire Bible** between 3-12 months. The important thing is not how fast you read but **what you learn** during the process—speed reading through the Bible for the sake of finishing it does little good if you miss the message.

Like *The Basics* and *Dig Deeper* lessons, the following plans also take you through the Bible in a non-sequential order, again to facilitate better understanding of the Bible *as you are reading it*. **Continue your daily prayer** that God give you His Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are about to read—and expect that you will be wonderfully rewarded!

The structure of the OT

The Law: known as *Torah* in Hebrew, which means “instruction”; the Law is the first five books of the Bible.

Historical books and Prophets: known as *nevi-im* in Hebrew, these are the books that contain detailed historical accounts of the leaders and rulers of the Israelite people.

The Writings: known as *ketuvim*, these are books of poetry and wisdom.

The structure of the NT

Historical books: consisting of the four Gospels and Acts. The Gospels are named according to the author: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew and John were two of the twelve disciples of Jesus during His earthly life and ministry. Mark was likely a young man who was among the larger band of disciples that followed Jesus. Luke was a Greek physician who came to believe in Jesus through Paul’s missionary work. He also authored Acts.

Letters: as implied, these are letters

written by the apostles, who were the leaders of the group of believers that emerged immediately following the resurrection of Jesus.

Prophecy: the only prophetic book of the NT is Revelation, which tells of the return of Jesus to finalize His Kingdom after there has been sufficient time for all the nations to have a chance to hear and to respond to the message of salvation by believing in Him.

Proposed reading plans

The remainder of the Bible can be read and studied by breaking up into the following subjects:

1. **The Law**
2. **Prophecy and end times**
3. **Life in the “Body of Christ”**
4. **Warnings against false teachers**
5. **OT History: Conquest – Judges**
6. **OT History: Monarchy period**
7. **The writings of David and Solomon**
8. **Refresher: David and Solomon**
9. **OT History: Divided Kingdoms**
10. **OT Prophets to Israel**
11. **Detailed study on Judy**
12. **OT History: Exile and Restoration**
13. **Post-Exile Prophets**
14. **Special books**

1. **The Law**

The books of the Law describe how the Creator God called a nation of special servants, the Israelites, and gave them the task of **telling the whole world about Him**. You will quickly discover that the Israelites failed in this task time and again. Yet God never abandoned the people of Israel, even to this day and He will still fulfill the promise He made to Abraham in Genesis 12. The books of the Law lay the foundation for understanding all the historical and prophetic books of the Hebrew Scriptures and even more importantly, for understanding how **Yeshua the Messiah** (Jesus Christ) perfectly and completely fulfills the requirements of the Law *on our behalf*. If He hadn’t, we wouldn’t be able to have a **relationship** with our Creator and would remain His enemy (through our own doing, not His).

The Law begins with the book of Genesis, but since you’ve just completed reading that book, there is no need to repeat it in this study. Then, after reading Exodus through Deuteronomy, the study is “framed” by another explanatory book on the Law—the letter by Paul to the Galatians, which provides a wonderful way to “stop and look back.”

Hebrews: a detailed description of how Jesus perfectly fulfills the requirements of the Law on our behalf.

Exodus: the account of the rescue of the descendants of Jacob from slavery in Egypt and the formation of the nation of Israel. The first time the Creator God makes Himself widely known to the nations.

Leviticus: detailed regulations for the Israelite people and their leaders.

Numbers: account of how the Israelites didn’t trust God and as a result had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy: after the unbelieving generation died, the new generation had to be re-instructed.

Galatians: letter by Paul that gives a summary of the Law and how through Jesus, we are released from bondage of the Law to live Spirit-filled lives.

2. **Prophecy and end times**

The Bible speaks considerably about **future events**—in both OT and NT. Some events described in both testaments **have been fulfilled**, whereas others events have yet to take place. Some prophecies are obvious in their fulfillment, such as the *Suffering Servant* of Isaiah 53, whereas it is not as clear in other cases. As we read through the Bible, we should not *overly* focus on determining if a certain prophecy has been fulfilled or not, but rather try to **learn** what God is telling us through the words of the prophets. Here, we take a closer look at the books of the Bible that speak directly about end times.

Matthew: one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. He wrote his gospel to a Jewish audience, emphasizing how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and Law of the Hebrew Scriptures.

1-2 Thessalonians: letter by Paul to the believers in Thessalonica, who had some anxieties about the end times.

Isaiah: the prophet that wrote the most about the coming Messiah.

Joel: visions of the coming judgment and of an age when God’s Spirit will be poured out upon many people.

Zechariah: visions of the coming Messiah and His new kingdom.

Daniel 7-12: visions given to the Hebrew named Daniel during the Exile period (6th century BC) that are a prelude to the visions given to John in the book of Revelation.

Revelation: visions of the end of the age, when Jesus returns to finalize His

Kingdom.

3. **Life in the Body of Christ**

The Bible and Paul in particular, speaks frequently of life in the “**body of Christ**”—the gathering together of **local believers** for the purpose of enlarging the Kingdom of Jesus and to encourage, help and support one another. This study takes us through the books in the Bible that speak most directly on the “**body life**” of the believer—that is, how we should live our lives as followers of Jesus.

1-2 Corinthians: perhaps the definitive books on life in the body of Christ.

Philippians: the joy of having a new life through Jesus Christ.

Colossians: how Jesus is everything that we need.

James: character traits of a disciple that truly believes and follows Jesus.

1 Peter: hope for the believer that is facing trials and suffering.

Titus: the virtue of self-control in the life of a believer.

Philemon: an example showing what true “body life” behavior looks like.

4. **Warnings against false teachers**

Four of the New Testament authors, Paul, Peter, John and Jude give specific and detailed warnings about **false teachers** that try to **lead believers astray**. When something is repeated so often by so many different writers, we should take special note, thus the reason why we have a specific study on this subject. The letters are brief, but packed with powerful lessons.

1-2 Timothy: Paul’s instructional letters to Timothy, a young leader in the church in Ephesus.

2 Peter: a letter cautioning believers to be ready for the forthcoming day when rejecting God is common.

2-3 John: warnings against false teachers and those that would hinder believers in their work for the Kingdom.

Jude: warnings about false teachers that had infiltrated the community of believers and were already leaders.

5. **Conquest to Judges**

After the death of Moses, Joshua led the people into the **Promised Land** to establish the nation of **Israel**. Following the settlement, there was a long period where Israel was ruled by decentralized leaders called Judges.

Joshua: account of the Israelites entering the land promised to them by God

Judges: a period of approximately 400 years when Israel was ruled by Judges.

Ruth: the account of the family line of

King David.

1 Samuel 1-7: introduction to the Kings period of Israel’s history.

6. **Monarchy Period**

After the Judges period, three monarchs or kings ruled over Israel. This period lasted **120 years** during which time Israel’s wealth and prominence among the surrounding nations greatly increased. This lesson takes us through the so-called **United Kingdom** period of Israel’s history, so named because all 12 tribes were united under the rule of a single king.

The first king, Saul, had great potential but his heart did not follow God. The second king, **David**, was a “**man after God’s own heart**” and is still today considered the one of the greatest figures in all of Israel’s history. His son, **Solomon**, was the third and final king of the United Kingdom period. He started off with a heart for God, but over time, he drifted away, which set in motion the events that led to the **division of Israel** into two nations.

1 Samuel 8-31: the first king Saul and the rise of David.

2 Samuel: the rule of David after the death of Saul.

1 Kings 1-11: the passing of David, the reign of Solomon, his wisdom and the temple that he built to honor God.

7. **Writings of David and Solomon**

In this section, we take a break from the historical books to read through the literary and poetry books attributed to David and Solomon.

Psalms: considered the most beautiful portions of the whole Bible. They are worship songs (note that the English word *song* is derived from the Hebrew word *psalm*) and many contain instructions on what instruments are to be played or what tune is to be used. Thus it is no wonder that believers of God throughout the ages have used the Psalms as their source of inspiration for the worship music of their generation.

Proverbs: a compilation of wisdom sayings, most attributed to Solomon.

8. **Refresher: David and Solomon**

Whenever anything is **repeated** in the Bible, whether it is the repetition of a single word, phrase or verse, or whether it is entire narratives, this is God’s way of saying to us: “**pay very close attention!**” The historical account given in the book of Chronicles is very similar—oftentimes identical—to the accounts we recently read in the books of 1-2 Samuel and 1 Kings. However,

the Chronicler makes a special point of highlighting and commenting on the rule of King David. Recall that it is from the line of David that the Messiah (Savior) is to come, thus the importance that God has placed on this period of Israel’s history. Don’t think of it as boring repetition, but instead look at the **special emphasis** that God wants you to pay very close attention to—having this mindset as you read through Chronicles will allow the Holy Spirit to teach you more about God.

1 Chronicles: a commentary on the life of King David.

2 Chronicles 1-9: a commentary on the life of King Solomon.

9. **Divided Kingdoms**

Among the most exciting and epic writings in all of the Bible. The remainder of 1-2 Kings tells how Israel became divided: the **Southern Kingdom of Judah**, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and the **Northern Kingdom of Israel**, consisting of the remaining ten tribes. Immediately, the first king of Israel adopted the Egyptian idolatrous practice of bull worship and as a result, there never was a ruler out of the 19 kings in Israel that did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

The **Northern Kingdom** was **conquered** around 722 bc by *Assyria* and the people scattered throughout the Assyrian empire, never to return. Non-Hebrews (i.e., foreigners) inhabited the land and it became known ever-after as a defiled land full of idolatrous mixed-bred people. This region would come to be called **Samaria** in Jesus’ day. The **Southern Kingdom** of Judah fared only a little better. Out of 20 kings, there were eight that did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Nevertheless, Judah too was punished and was **conquered by the Babylonians** around 586 bc. The people were taken into captivity and it is here that the Hebrew people became known as “Jews” which is a shortened version of *Judah*.

1 Kings 12-22: account of the kings of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

2 Kings: the continuing account, including the fall of both kingdoms.

10. **Prophets to Israel**

Two prophets spoke against the idolatries and wickedness in Israel.

Hosea: a stinging indictment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Amos: judgment of Israel is at hand.

11. **Detailed study on Judah**

As mentioned earlier, **repetition** in the

Bible speaks volumes. Here, we **revisit the demise of Judah** and take a closer look at what the prophets of that day were saying against Judah.

2 Chronicles 10-36: the remainder of the Chronicler’s commentary on the kings of the Southern Kingdom.

Micah: mainly directed against the evil kings of Judah, he also speaks of the destruction of both Israel and Judah.

Nahum: actually directed against Nineveh (Assyrians), but is included here since the events were relevant at the time when only Judah remained.

Habakkuk: warning to Judah of the coming Babylonian invasion.

Zephaniah: warnings against Judah that doom is at hand.

Jeremiah: know as the “weeping prophet,” he warns hard-hearted people of Jerusalem’s eminent destruction.

Lamentations: a poetical lament over the destruction of Jerusalem.

12. **Exile and the Restoration**

The day that the prophets had **warned** of had finally arrived—the **kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians**. Unlike the Assyrians that completely destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel nearly two centuries earlier, the Babylonians were different kinds of victors. They allowed the people of Judah to retain their cultural identity even though many were **deported** from Jerusalem to Babylon (modern day Iraq). It was here that the Hebrew people became known as the “Jews” (short for Judah)—from which we get the modern term “Jewish” when referring to someone descended from the 12 tribes of Israel.

Exile was the most **humiliating** thing that could possibly happen to the descendants of Abraham—it seemed that God abandoned His people. But God **did not abandon** His people and moved in amazing and miraculous ways to restore a remnant of the people to the capital city of Jerusalem and rebuild it. The **Exile** lasted **70 years**. **Ezekiel:** some of the most amazing and horrifying visions in all of the Bible. **Daniel 1-6:** account of 4 young Hebrews drafted into the Babylonian court during the Exile; and the conquest of the Babylonians by the Persians.

Ezra 1-6: the first phase of the Restoration, where the Persian king allows Zerubabel to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.

Esther: account of a Hebrew girl that

was chosen to marry the Persian king just in time to prevent a plan to annihilate the Jewish exiles. If it weren’t for Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah would not have lived to lead the remainder of the Restoration process.

Ezra 7-10: the second phase of the Restoration, where Ezra returns to Jerusalem to rally the people.

Nehemiah: final phase of the Restoration by Nehemiah who oversees the rebuilding of the Jerusalem’s walls.

13. **Post-Exile Prophets**

There are **three prophets** to Judah after the Restoration: **Haggai**, **Zechariah**, and **Malachi**. We read Zechariah earlier in the study, so we won’t repeat the reading here. Here, we also include **Obadiah**, even though his message was against the neighboring kingdom of Edom (distant relatives of Israelites, descended not of Jacob’s line, but of his twin brother Esau). The two groups had always been at war, just as Jacob and Esau were.

Obadiah: punishment of Edom for their participation in the plundering of Jerusalem (recorded in 2 Chronicles).

Haggai: rebuilding of the temple after the return from Exile.

Malachi: a final warning to the disobedient Israelites.

14. **Special books**

There are **four books** that complete our study of the Bible. These books are last because they are the most difficult or the **most widely misunderstood**. Saving them for last hopefully helps us understand them better than if we had attempted to read them earlier.

Job: a profoundly enigmatic (much like the subject) analysis of the issue of suffering. It is almost entirely a work of poetry, making interpretation on this difficult subject even more challenging.

Ecclesiastes: a commentary on the futility of living without making the Creator God a central part of your life.

Song of Solomon: beautiful poetry with sensual imagery that speaks about love on many levels—between a husband and wife, and between the loving Creator God and His people.

Jonah: well-known account of the prophet swallowed by a whale, but one in which most readers completely miss the point. This book is all about the grace of God and how we as depraved humans, much like Jonah, don’t understand what God is trying to do. Today, we are no different than Jonah was in his day.