

REFRESH YOUR STUDY

It is easy to get in a slump with consistent daily Bible Readings, so it's important to find a new way to do it occasionally. Reading along with a companion book, like "66 Love Letters" by Dr. Larry Crabb is a good way to experience the Bible in a new light. There are lots of encouraging ways to refresh your study found on the internet. Browse some today and come up with a new plan for your personal study.

Below are some encouragements to reading the Bible regularly.

NT WRIGHT on Bible Readings

We need whole-book readings and whole-Bible readings. How are you going to do that? We need to encourage one another that, in addition to whatever Bible-reading scheme we use for our daily devotions (and if we're not doing daily Bible reading we should start at once), we should take time, perhaps once a week or once a month, to set aside an hour or two and read right through a book at a sitting. That is what they were designed for, after all. And actually with some of the harder books – I think of Leviticus as an obvious example – it's much easier to read them straight through at a run. If you do half a chapter a day it'll take you a couple of weeks just to get through the daily sacrifices and unless you are a real geek for that stuff you will get bored; whereas to read the whole thing through at a run is to realise that the book works like a song, with the rhythms and repetitions coming round in an almost incantatory fashion. I had a friend whose spiritual director once advised him to read Romans every day for a month. What, he said, a chapter a day? No, said the director: the whole book, every day. And so he did – coming home from work, getting a cup of tea, sitting down and reading Romans one more time. He said it was a life-changing month. But most Christians, including highly intelligent Christians, have not only never done that, they've never even thought of doing that, or anything like it. What an impoverishment.

When it comes to the whole Bible, I believe we should not only be reading right through the Bible individually at least once a year – for clergy I'd say twice a year at least, and perhaps the gospels four times a year, and if this means reworking your personal schedules then fine, do it – but that we should make it possible for our congregations to try creative experiments for how to experience the whole Bible.

7 Ways to Get Creative with Bible Reading

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/inside-bst/get-creative-with-bible-reading.html>

Bible reading plans don't have to follow any set rules or patterns. If you completed something more traditional recently, you could change things up. Here are some suggestions for doing just that:

- Divide the 66 books of the Bible by months or weeks. Instead of following a set reading plan, you could either shoot for reading five or six books each month or one or two per week. Since some of the minor prophets and letters are short, this isn't as daunting as it may seem. Split the short ones up so that you have at least one each month or save them for weeks that you know you'll be busy.
- Instead of reading through the whole Bible this year, consider zooming in on one book each month. Read it through several times and take notes about what God's showing you. Use several versions of the Bible for added insight. Then, watch some videos or read study materials on our site to really dig in (you'll find them linked below the reading pane).
- Read out loud. Sometimes, hearing the words spoken aloud can help you in your studies. You could even read in a group of others so that no one person has to read the whole book.
- Commit to memorizing one verse from each book you study this year. That may sound scary, but it's not. We memorize things all the time. Plus, it'll help you remember a lesson from each one.
- Memorize an entire chapter or book of the Bible. This is a big challenge for anyone, but it's well worth the investment. A Psalms 1, Philemon 1, or Jude 1 could be the place to start.
- Write out verses. Another method of study that some people find helpful involves copying Scripture in a notebook. It can be a slow process, but you might be surprised how well you connect with what you're writing.
- Learn Greek and Hebrew. There are many sites on the Internet that will teach you these ancient languages. Learning to read the original manuscripts of the Bible is well worth the effort.

5 Creative Ways to Read the Bible This Year That WON'T Be Boring

<http://deeperchristian.com/5-creative-ways-read-bible-year-wont-boring/>

Several years ago at the start of a new year, I bounded awake excited to begin my brand-new Bible reading plan.

Sure, I had trouble following through in years past, but this was going to be my year! For the first few weeks, everything stayed on schedule, but then a curious thing began to happen—I'd get behind on a day here and there, eventually being weeks behind, stuck in Leviticus, and thinking about throwing in the towel.

Have you been there?

If so, I can relate and after years of profitable Bible reading, I have five suggestions for you that will keep you engaged and not fizzling out this year. Obviously, nothing can replace discipline and diligence—two key elements in studying and reading Scripture—but these five creative ways to read the Bible may help you if you find yourself stuck.

1. Select Anew

While I highly recommend having one main Bible translation to study and teach from, I have found it helpful to occasionally change the translation I read in my daily reading. In doing so, I have found these benefits:

- a new translation can give a freshness to your reading
- it allows you to see and discover things you might ordinarily gloss over
- it changes the style and emphasis of your reading and can make it exciting to keep going
- While I think a solid word-for-word translation is necessary for your Bible study, reading other translations has often given me a renewed love for reading God's Word.

2. Start Listening

There are a lot of activities I do daily—such as driving, exercising, cooking, etc—where I have the opportunity to listen to something at the same time. Whereas I could turn up the tunes, using these opportunities to listen to God's Word gives me a way to not only multitask but focus on Jesus throughout mundane activities.

Over the years I have purchased several audio Bibles—and here are a couple thoughts to consider when looking at getting one:

- what translation do you want to listen to?
- do you want one person reading the entire Bible or do you prefer multiple voices?
- do you want an audio Bible that is dramatized (where there are different voices, often a music soundtrack, etc—almost like a movie without the images)?
- how much do you want to spend?

Answering these questions up front helps narrow the options. Need a place to start?—check out ChristianAudio.com or Audible.com and search for “Bible.”

3. Speed Up

Sometimes the reason we get bogged down in Leviticus and grow weary is due to the amount we read. Many yearly Bible reading plans only have you read a chapter or two from a book in the Bible and thus it takes weeks to get through a book like Leviticus, Jeremiah, or Obadiah (just kidding).

One great idea is to challenge yourself to read through the entire Bible in three or six months. It may take 30 or so minutes a day of reading, but you'll be surprised at how much the Bible comes alive. You'll see connections between books and stories that you can easily miss when reading slowly.

Two great ideas to get started:

- take the total number of pages in your Bible and divide it by how many days you want to read (90 days, 180 days, etc) and find out how many pages you need to read each day.
- determine a set amount of time you want to read each day and hold yourself accountable to keeping it

4. Slow Down

In contrast, slowing down your reading has a way of reigniting passion for God's Word.

A good friend of mine will read the entire Bible the first three months of the year and then will choose one book of the Bible to slowly read, meditate (chew on), and ponder for the rest of the year. Reading quickly gives him global context and framework, reading slowly gives him greater depth and understanding of a single book.

Rather than have the pressure to read through the entire Bible this year, why not consider slowing down and only read through the New Testament (several times), or choose a book like Colossians and read it everyday for two months and then choose another book.

I've found that the best way to smell the roses is to not run by them quickly hoping for a whiff, but to slow down enough where I can stick my nose inside the petals and inhale.

5. Stay Focused

Again, there is no substitute for discipline and diligence ... sometimes we just need to buckle down and be purposeful in our Bible reading and study whether we feel like it or not. But we mustn't forget one important truth: all of Scripture is about one thing.

Whether you read in the Old Testament or New, everything in the Bible is focused upon Jesus Christ. The Old Testament foreshadows His life and the purpose of the Cross, and the New Testament flows from this reality.

When you read the Bible, make sure you read it with the lens of Jesus. The Old Testament comes alive when you realize everything points to Him. The New Testament becomes more

significant when you discover it's all about Jesus, the Cross, and His work (via the Holy Spirit) to form and shape within you with His character, attitude, and love.

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Reading the Bible isn't supposed to be boring, it is not some ancient text we are to academically peruse, nor is it merely good moral stories that tell us how to live—it is the very words of God, they are truth, and they reveal Jesus Christ.

If you haven't decided on a Bible reading plan for this year, don't wait. A richness of intimacy and insight await you.