



SEEKING *Scripture*

Preparing For A Successful Year Of Bible Reading

Membership Closes Soon!

We begin our new reading plan on January 1 and at that time membership in our Facebook group will be closed for another year. If you have a friend or family member who would like to join, make sure you talk to them about it so that they can get in before the deadline. We'd hate someone to miss out if they'd like to be a part!

I've been a Christian since I was 11 years old and a lifelong church goer thanks to my mom, but Christy's notes have encouraged me to dive in deeper to God's WORD. I love being part of this fellowship of believers where we can grow and strengthen our faith muscles together. This is a supportive and welcoming group, and I'm grateful for it! -Kristy Ensor

Christy's "Rabbit Trails" have reignited my enthusiasm for Bible study! She examines details I have never studied in any other group. Members add their own interesting insights. The Word continues coming to life from fresh perspectives! "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" Heb 4:12 -Jamie Wyatt



Preparing for the year ahead

If you're reading this, chances are that you've committed to reading through the whole Bible with us in the coming year! Many of you may have already completed a reading cycle with us and are looking forward to another journey through the Word, knowing that the Father teaches us in layers, blessing us with more of His wisdom each time we travel through this amazing book.

For those first timers, my heart is leaping with joy just thinking of the wonderful adventure you have ahead of you. As a nearly lifelong believer, my entire life changed years ago when I began to feel a nagging emptiness, as if something were missing in my life. I prayed and soon realized that something very significant was missing - I had never read the entirety of my Father's word! My husband and I then determined to read the whole word of our precious Father and there isn't a nook or cranny of our lives that hasn't been blessed by it.

Now, my passion is encouraging others to form that daily relationship with the Word and as a result, an immeasurably deeper relationship with our loving and gracious Father.

We are about to embark on the journey of a lifetime!

Gratefully,
Christy

Mark your calendars for Jan 1!



5 Helpful Bible Habits

1. **Set aside a specific time each day.** This will help make reading the Bible a daily habit.
2. **Follow the plan.** When you Read the Bible on a plan, not only will it make far more sense, but you'll find yourself looking forward to what comes next as understanding deepens and the Father draws you closer to Him.
3. **Full Focus.** Discipline yourself to avoid distractions and set up your reading area to minimize these as much as possible. This may mean placing a chair in a cozy corner in a room without a tv or rising half an hour before everyone else so that the house is still quiet.
4. **Interact with the Word!** I view the Bible as my text book, study guide, and workbook and that means I interact with it through the use of highlighting, writing notes in the margin, etc.
5. **Be part of a community of Bible readers.** Check out our wonderful Facebook group each day for discussion in the comments on each day's readings. Members ask questions, share insights, and encourage one another.

How Do You Make Time For The Bible each day?

We have an amazing group of admins in our Facebook group. Many of them spend hours each day answering questions, praying over the needs of members, and helping everyone to feel welcome.

I asked some of the members of our admin team if they would share how they made time for the Word each day and I know you'll enjoy their answers as much as I did!

Aliisa De Salvo:

I have found that what works for me is to make sure that it is the first thing I do in the morning (after making coffee and letting the dogs out). As long as I make my coffee and then sit down and drink it while I read, I am good. It is the days that I get up and I start doing something, anything, even putting a load of clothes on to wash can derail me because then I am in "work mode". Once I am in "work mode" then I can't sit and focus on the Word because I am too distracted by the things I have to do that day.

Here are my steps:

1. I make my to do list the evening before so that I don't have to remember what I have to do that day.
2. I make sure my kitchen is clean before I go to bed. This keeps me from entering into "work mode" first thing.
3. I get up at the same time every morning.
4. I make coffee because it is now a habit that goes along with my bible reading and triggers my....it's time to read mode.
5. I stay off of FB while I read because messages coming in can derail me as well.

I am not saying that this is a 100% fool proof method for me but it does work most of the time.

Virginia Wattenbarger:

I'm real close to Aliisa De Salvo in being diligent about "First things First", and first is The Study of the Word. Like my sister(s), I make my list the night before of obligations for the day, never schedule anything, if possible, before noon.

First reading is before sleeping so I'm ready to go as soon as I get coffee made. Chances are, once I begin reading and study, I will be on the days' thread until noon or later. I usually start by 8 a.m., second read of scripture, notes, re-Read or listen to Max read scripture (on biblegateway.com). Max's voice reading scripture and Christy reading notes, make both come alive and meaningful expressions make difficult passages more simple and understanding easier.

I love being with you, my family, so it's not hard to stay on reading your posts and sharing my thoughts sometimes, maybe too much. Days with no other appointments, I may be on line most of the day, I read at least 75 % of your posts, maybe more. It's my way of getting acquainted with members and honoring prayer requests.

continued...

I love reading scripture, seeing it in light of the historical context, trying to see it as though it is happening right before my eyes but the part that impacts my life most is looking at how the scripture applies to my life right now, to my world right now, & what the scripture is leading me to change or grow in my life.
- Aletha Bass

Donna McDaniel

To me, reading the word is like being on an adventure and you never know what you're going to discover no matter how many times you've read something before. I like to read when I have no distractions or interruptions, usually around mid morning. I also have several translations within reach to compare. I enjoy sitting and praying for people at the same time.

Michele Harris

I do my readings in the evening before my nightly prayers. I've chosen to use the audio option on BibleGateway and Max McLean's voice and theatrical skills help to give the readings deeper understanding for me. This method assures that I get my daily readings in every day.

Barbara Pelton

Mornings are definitely the best time for me. I like to spend time in prayer before my feet hit the floor, sometimes checking the prayer requests in the group for anything new or urgent. Then it's a quick morning routine of freshening up, setting out meds and vitamins, recording blood pressure, and grabbing my drink of choice...usually grape juice or hot tea. Then I get to read the Father's Word! I avoid reading Christy's notes or any comments first, as I've found I can get too distracted...Word first! I realize Phil and I have the special privilege of being retired and pretty much setting our own schedule, with only occasional interruptions.

I would encourage anyone to ask the Father to show you what will work best for you, then commit to keeping that time with Him each day. If there are days you get thrown off schedule, don't let the enemy discourage you. Instead, let the Father set you back on HIS track designed just for you! He is always faithful...may we grow in faithfulness to Him!

Aletha Bass

I turn on the coffee pot as I go to the back door to let the dog out. Then I feed my son's cats, let the dog back in, & pour my coffee. I go then to my room & pray before reading my Bible. Keeping to a routine really helps me.

Furthermore, by starting my day this way, I'm more productive & have a better attitude to face my day.

I love reading scripture, seeing it in light of the historical context, trying to see it as though it is happening right before my eyes but the part that impacts my life most is looking at how the scripture applies to my life right now, to my world right now, & what the scripture is leading me to change or grow in my life. Sometimes, the scripture pulls me into a deeper research & study. I try to make a point to read the verses referenced in the margins as often as I can. It's amazing how much more understanding chasing those references can give.

If there are days you get thrown off schedule, don't let the enemy discourage you. -

How does this Bible study work?

This is a mostly text based Bible study with the new addition of audio version of the notes.

- Each morning by 4:00 AM I post a link to the readings for the day and my notes in the Facebook group. You don't have to read it at 4:00, I just put it there at that time so that the readings and notes are ready whenever is most convenient for you.
- Visit the Facebook group each day and can click to read the Bible passages on Biblegateway.com or use the audio function there to have them read to you. Then, visit my notes to read them or play the audio track at the top to hear me read them. There is also a print button at the bottom of the notes each day for your convenience.
- If you have time, drop back into the Facebook group and check you the discussion on the daily posts! You'll be amazed at how much we learn from and encourage one another.

This is such a loving community, and you're a grand addition!

The most important part is that you're building your relationship with the Father!
~Aaron Baker

Bible Trivia

Did you know? There are 66 books in most protestant Bibles.

What are the shortest books in the Bible? 2 John and 3 John can each be read in under two minutes. Philemon can be read in under 3, and Obadiah in around 4.

What is the longest book in the Bible? The entire book of Psalms takes about five hours to read.

What is the longest chapter in the Bible? Psalm 119, which takes about fifteen minutes to read and falls around the center of most Bibles today. This entire Psalm is a prayer to the Father, praising His wisdom, instruction, and commandments.

JoAnne Stanley

First I have to believe that Father will speak to me from His Word. I love the Front Porch Fellowship and the schedule and have asked Him to speak to me in the daily readings. [That way I have gotten away from 'random'-- which is harder to believe that He is speaking and not my own desires].

This all fuels my prayer life. Needs and requests for prayer vary or are a part of a prayer journal so to speak, plus 'emergencies'.

But the inspiration for how to pray/and what to pray from His Word is shaped by my reading and Him answering my prayer to speak/quicken.

I follow the plan and read. [early early for me.] He speaks. I hear with the intention to obey. Prayer is richer and I am richer, from reading and hearing and believing He speaks.

Sandy Howell

There are a few things I find helpful in studying God's Word. One of the big ones is to be in a place that has as few distractions as possible.

I'm sure no one wants to think about this but, there are people who read the Bible out of a sense of obligation - they feel that it's what they're supposed to do - rather than out of a joyful love relationship with God and the privilege of getting to know Him better. I've found in my life whenever I start viewing my life with God in that way that if I'm just 'bare bones' honest with me and God it helps. I'll even pray something along the line of - God, I don't have the deep desire that I wish I did, please give me the Want to... help me Want to study Your Word more, help me to Want to talk with You More. And before I know it the Want to is there in abundance! I'll also often pray and ask God - according to His Word - to give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation as I study the Bible. Opening my ears to hear what He's saying and my eyes to see what He's saying!

Aaron Baker

I tend to be a creature of habit. I do specific things in a specific order when I wake up. But I think it's important to not be afraid to make adjustments when the need arises. If you wake up late and have to go to work before you can get your Bible time in, later. that doesn't mean you can't do it later. Relatedly, don't beat yourself up if you miss a day. That's what the enemy wants.

I also read different books with different translations. So don't be scared to try a couple translations out when you begin reading a book of the Bible. Some of them feel like they flow better when reading a specific style of writing. And sometimes I'll just listen to it. I used to feel like that was cheating but this will actually call different things to your attention that you would get while reading.

I would normally advise doing it in the morning if at all possible, as this helps set a tone for the day, but I know that's not possible for everyone. I once heard John Bevere say, in engineering terms, that reading the Bible when you first wake up is like recalibrating your instrument (yourself) to be able to interact correctly with the world around you each day. If you do it at the end of the day, you may have been out of calibration all day. That being said, if reading at night is what works best for you, read at night. The most important part is that you're building your relationship with the Father!

I've chosen to use the audio option on BibleGateway and Max McLean's voice and theatrical skills help to give the readings deeper understanding for me. - Michele Harris

I believe that if we ask the Father, He will show us the right time to meet Him each day. - Linda Spinks

Allison Saylor

I usually read at night. It's part of my self care routine. My own personal time to reflect on the day and put it to rest. It's a real big part of my day. I look forward to it. I take off my make up, put on good face and hand cream, and read and reflect.

Linda Spinks

I begin each morning with the group, saying my hellos, and then move right into my reading and study. I have found that it starts my day off on the right foot, and if I miss that time, it's hard to get it back during the day. I am definitely a 'morning person'! I believe that if we ask the Father, He will show us the right time to meet Him each day.

That being said, sometimes I have to be flexible, if daily circumstances change!

Debbie Ingle

I think the most likely way to be successful is to create a routine, practice it, commit to it, plan a contingency for when it doesn't work, and live it out. Making up one's mind ahead of time to stick to the plan is crucial. There are mornings when I don't want to read, but I have made a commitment, so I read anyway.

There are mornings when things go wrong, so I have a contingency plan for when my reading time will be made up if/when this happens. I'm not 100%...but I'm in the high 90s...and planning for it is what makes it happen for me.

PS. My "chair" for studying is one of those foldable outdoor chairs. I can move it around the house if family...or let's say hypothetically, baby goats...cause a distraction (which actually happens in my life!).

Melody Mahala

I agree about getting into a routine but I'll also say don't be afraid to change it if it's not working for you. Sometimes it takes little tweaks here and there to get what works for you in your current season.

I'm very strict with myself that I do not open emails or scroll social media until I've read His Word and checked in on the Porch. I get up several hours before my kids so I can have a quiet house.

However, on the mornings when I can't finish my studies before they rise, I'll stop to take care of them, but I always make time that day to get back to the Word. I've never forgotten that you, Christy, and Tom McDaniel told me to never let a day pass without being in the word. That's how the enemy gets a foot hold.

Making up one's mind ahead of time to stick to the plan is crucial. There are mornings when I don't want to read, but I have made a commitment, so I read anyway. - Debbie Ingle

I have found that what works for me is to make sure that it is the first thing I do in the morning (after making coffee and letting the dogs out). As long as I make my coffee and then sit down and drink it while I read, I am good. It is the days that I get up and I start doing something, anything, even putting a load of clothes on to wash can derail me because then I am in "work mode".

- Alisa DeSalvo

I begin in the Word each morning before I see anything of the world. I want to feed on it before consuming anything of the world.
- Wayne Scott

Amy Whitehead

I know how much Christy encourages others to start their day early to do the daily Bible reading., it kinda reminds me of when my mama used to tell me, "You need to start the day off by putting on the whole armor of God, Amy."(I didn't understand what she was talking about then). I am an early riser (3:30a.m.-4:30a.m.) and I have tried this and it doesn't work for me. For me, this creates anxiety and I can't focus

Anxiety, because I look around and the house needs to be cleaned, clothes folded, dishes put away, the kids' lunches and backpacks need to be put together, etc. So I work on these things first in the morning. Then I wait until I get to work and do most of my Bible study in my office where there is very little distraction, and I can better focus. I'm blessed with my job that I am able to complete my work quickly and easily and have LOTS of time to study. There are often days when I can get in 5 hours of study!

*My mama used to tell me,
"You need to start the day off
by putting on the whole armor
of God, Amy."
-Amy Whitehead*

Wayne Scott

I begin in the Word each morning before I see anything of the world. I want to feed on it before consuming anything of the world. I have been doing this now for around 4 years. It is life-changing. The time per day varies. On work days, 30 minutes. On off-days, it could be a couple of hours.

I have stopped using "verse-a-day" apps as well. I am strategic. I want context beyond a verse or two. The Seeking Scripture Facebook group has proven so valuable as a daily plan. It is my baseline, yet I still "hone" up on other areas of the Scriptures in parallel.

Philip Pelton

I would like to encourage those starting in Jan to make a habit of reading Father's Word. When I get up in the morning , the first thing I think of is " What is the reading for today?"

There are certain things, medical, I have to take care of, then make my coffee and then sit down with my Bible open and ready to really start my day. At this time of my life, I don't know what it would be like to start my day without reading Fathers word. Being apart of this group has been life changing for me.

Wren Olszewski

I have made it a habit to do my reading and studying at the same time every day.... even weekends. I make sure I turn everything electronic off. I even some days try not to use my computer to look things up until I'm all finished reading. I need NO DISTRACTIONS. This is accomplished much easier when I am up early and it's quiet around our house.

Kasey King

My early mornings are too rushed or I just need a chance to wake up and be ready for the day so doing it when I first get up isn't optimal. And my evenings are so varied that I can't set a "routine" that I could ever manage to stick to. What has worked best for me (and I'm privileged to be able to do so) is to bring my Bible to work and once I've settled in and got some coffee, I can read and think about what I'm studying. I've got a lot of down time available to me at my job so it's a good way to fill the time and has created a lot of opportunities to talk about what I'm reading when people come into my office.(And oddly, this is the time when I have the least distractions!)

Joan Osborne

Before I retired I got up an hour early and did my Bible study as soon as my coffee was made.

Now if I wake during night and can't go back to sleep I'll do some then until I get sleepy. Then catch little more sleep. It's always my morning priority but I often read off and on throughout my day.

Shannon Kelly Massey

My reading time for me is best in the early morning. I get my husband up at 4 for work. I make his breakfast and fix his lunch for work. It is the only time when it is quiet and I can focus on my reading. I think it's such a special time starting my day with YHWH. On days when my pain is bad and I haven't slept, that changes. It frustrates me because that peaceful time means a lot to me. I keep everything in my reading spot, so it is always there to be a reminder and I can read through out the day.

Is Your Soil Ready?

- Debbie Ingle, Admin Team

The lessons of our Messiah are invaluable in our lives today and when it comes to our study of the Word, He has wonderful wisdom for us to ruminate on and apply. Today, I want us to take a look at the Parable of The Sower And The Seed found in Matthew 13.

This parable reminds me of the new reading cycle. Every year "good seed" is spread as tens of thousands of people open their bibles with the intention of reading for the first time. They are excited and eager. But what often happens?

Many will fall away.

What is the common denominator of all who stay? Their soil.

What we are all talking about in this newsletter may sound like routines and readiness, but what we are really encouraging you to do is to cultivate your soil. Let us each pray for rich soil in the coming year as we endeavor to become hearers and doers of His word!

The Parable Of The Sower And The Seed

And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Matthew 13:1-9

The Parable Explained

"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Matthew 13:18-23

Return to me, and I will return to you.

Zechariah 1:3

To me reading the word is like being on an adventure and you never know what you're going to discover no matter how many times you've read something before.
- Donna McDaniel

I've read the Bible more since joining this group than I ever have. I've occasionally gotten behind, but as Christy has said, just jump back in! My appreciation for reading the Word of God for myself has grown thru this group. I look forward to reading the Bible and understand the importance of doing so more than ever.
-Jane Densmore, Front Porch Fellowship member

In closing, I'm so grateful that the Father has brought us together and I have every confidence that you'll feel welcomed and loved in this wonderful community of Believers.

Many folks are intimidated by the thought of reading the whole Bible. Some fear it won't make sense or that they aren't smart enough to understand it. Others see it as boring or somehow irrelevant to us today.

I want to assure you that you were MEANT to read this Word; the Father gave it to you, specifically, so that you could read it and know Him as never before. And yes, every word, every jot and tittle, is relevant to us today - but we won't know any of that unless we read it.

I'm so excited about studying His word alongside you!

Glory to the King!

~Christy

You will seek me and you will find me when you seek me with your whole heart.
-Jeremiah 29:13

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What Bible Translation Do I Need To Participate?** We have a firm group policy that the best Bible translation is the one you're gonna read. Our translation is merely our jumping off point so I encourage you to grab your favorite and dive in! I'll show you how to dig deeper using whatever Bible you prefer.
2. **Do I have to be able to watch videos each day to be a part of this?** Nope. The Bible study is mostly text based but there are audio versions for those who prefer to listen or who may learn better that way. I often do weekly chat videos to talk over what we are learning and discuss other relevant topics.
3. **I have a friend who wants to join but is not on Facebook. How can they take part?** Our Facebook study group is an integral part of the Bible study thanks to the helpful daily discussion, encouraging community, and ability to ask questions. However, if someone prefers not to use Facebook, they can take part on their own by visiting SeekingScripture.com each day beginning January 1. The readings and links to the notes for the day will be at the top right on the homepage.
4. **What denomination is this group?** We are from all walks of the faith but we are of one accord in many things, most notably our love of the Father and appreciation for the grace granted to us through His Son.

**Everyone is welcome.
Let us seek Him together!**

