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READ THE **BIBLE** THIS YEAR



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
TO THE BEST BOOK YOU'LL EVER READ

ED BURDETTE

READ THE BIBLE THIS YEAR

Ed Burdette

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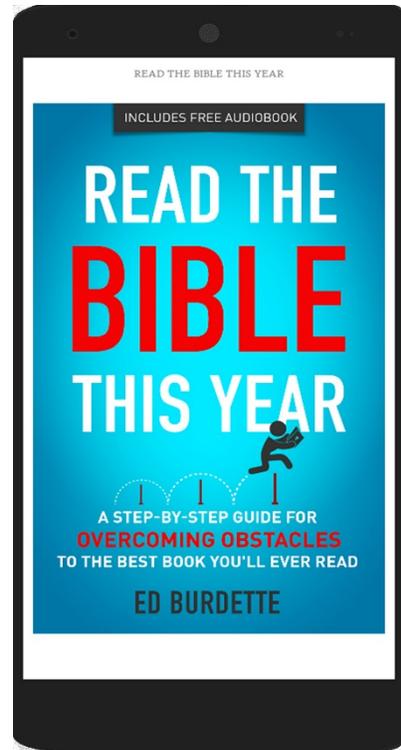


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INTRODUCTION

A huge treasure chest full of gold and priceless jewels is right in front of you, just waiting to be opened. Its contents will make you rich beyond belief and provide wealth to last forever. It's sitting there, filled with life-changing promises.

Do you have the key? Do you know how to unlock the treasure and make it your own?

The Bible - the best book ever written, is THE treasure chest at your fingertips. It contains rich rewards and a wealth of wisdom to help guide and shape your life. It's right there, but what about consistently reading and listening to it on a daily basis? What about actually *getting* that treasure?

In this book I will show you that reading the Bible is really all gain and no loss. By reading and absorbing its wisdom and truth you'll be strengthened for life, experience the empowering fun and satisfaction of achieving your goal, and best of all, enjoy spending more time with God.

If you want to read the Bible each day but are challenged by a busy schedule, lack of consistency, and the 24/7 distractions we all face, this book is for you. Maybe like me, you've felt a nagging sense that you should be doing more and getting more out of Bible reading. Something is missing, but it's not clear what.

For years I had no structure for reading and practically no enthusiasm. Other people seemed to have Bible reading figured out, but I just wasn't getting it. Over the course of several years, things began to change. From many talks with friends and mentors, and learning from hundreds of books and articles on the topic, I gradually discovered **a step-by-step method for reading the Bible regularly.**

And what really excited me? **It worked.**

Thanks to the approach you're about to learn, I went from being a disengaged, sporadic Bible reader to one who has sustained a focused habit of reading multiple chapters of God's word each day for the past 10 months. Now I'm a daily reader and podcaster of the Bible, with hundreds of consecutive days of published content. I've experienced firsthand the deep struggles *and* amazing benefits of reading the Bible. By using the methods described in this book, you **CAN** finally overcome the challenges of daily Bible reading.

In this book I will show you an easy-to-implement way to get past the barriers and enjoy the greatness of the Bible. ***Read The Bible This Year* recounts rewards you'll find, identifies the four major obstacles to reading, shows you how to avoid them, AND delivers a concrete, proven method for reading productively and consistently.**

Here's my promise to you:

If you follow this step-by-step guide, you will gain:

- **Confidence** to go after your goals
- **Discipline** to experience more freedom than ever before
- **Knowledge** that makes fear, anxiety, and uncertainty melt away

Simply put, you will achieve a new, higher level in your life.

Don't be the person who misses out on the Bible's treasure because you don't read it through. Commit to the process. Commit to seeing the rewards of reading the Bible in your own life. Commit to your absolute best shot at what you want -- a life of peace, joy, and self-discipline leading to a clearer understanding of God's word and a closer relationship with him.

The tactics and methods you're about to learn have been proven to create **consistent, positive results**. Keep reading and follow each chapter in order. That's all you need to do to start benefiting right away. Each new insight will bring you deeper into the riches of the Bible.

Clearly, you have an interest in reading the Bible. That's why you picked up this book. I want your interest to catch fire and your conviction to become even stronger. Take the first step and start right now. I know you'll enjoy amazing advantages from the treasures you're about to uncover!

ED BURDETTE

THE JOURNEY - WHERE WE ARE HEADED

You're about to begin a great and challenging journey!

The desire to read the Bible all the way through is a wonderful ambition. Billions of people through history have read this book and been affected by its influence and authority. The Bible is a treasure chest unlike any other book ever written.

But that doesn't mean reading through the Bible is easy. In fact, many of us who have tried have run into challenges that severely test our resolve. In the face of these challenges, the temptation to get sidetracked can be strong. To keep moving toward your goal and persist in daily reading, you need to know the rewards that are ahead, be aware of the obstacles you'll face, and follow a clear method.

This book will show you how to succeed in these three vital areas of reading the Bible and provide an Action Step for each section:

1. **The Rewards**
2. **The Challenges**
3. **The Method**

We'll start by looking ahead to the rewards, unlocking the treasure chest and taking a few moments to just *look* at the amazing riches the Bible offers. That's **Part One**.

In **Part Two**, you'll get an understanding of what makes reading the Bible so difficult. Why is it so tough to read consistently? By looking carefully at each challenge, you'll see what causes each one and -- this is key -- how to anticipate difficulties before they arrive. Once you become aware of the challenges that are coming, you'll learn how to overcome each specific one with targeted actions you can take. These actions map out reliable steps to follow so you'll never get stuck.

In **Part Three**, you'll discover a specific method that guarantees you can read the entire Bible this year. The step-by-step method you'll learn has been proven to create consistent, enthusiastic, and well-rewarded Bible readers.

Added together, the rewards of reading the Bible are so great that they make everything on the other side of the balance -- all the challenges and costs to reading -- look very small. The journey is worth it!

So, welcome! You have a great goal. You are to be congratulated, even at the outset, for what you desire to do. Now, let's get started.

PART ONE - THE REWARDS

Let's open the lid of the treasure chest and get right to the rewards of reading the whole Bible. They are massive and make all the difficulty you'll face well worth it.

If you get weary and discouraged on your journey through the Bible, come back here and **look again at what you stand to gain**. Keep looking at the reward and you will be empowered to reach your goal!

CHAPTER 1

REWARD #1: EQUIPPED FOR LIFE

Between being born into the world and leaving it, you will face an almost unbelievable number of difficulties.

Sorry to be so blunt, but it's true.

At times you'll experience loss, sickness, temptation, confusion, pain, betrayal -- the list goes on. Thankfully, you'll also experience happiness, belonging, success, and joyful connection. When considering how challenging life can be and how common suffering is, the question becomes "How will I navigate life?"

Once I worked at a camp in New Mexico where groups would visit to make extended hiking treks through the mountains. The mountains could be very dangerous. There was the risk of dehydration, the risk of mountain lions and bears, and the risk of fast-moving lightning storms catching hikers away from shelter. For the first few days at basecamp, groups received training on the essentials. They were given time to adjust to the altitude. And they learned all the backcountry rules and tools to travel safely.

Likewise, the Bible gives us the tools and training we need for life. Each day it gives exactly what is needed. It teaches what to do in adversity, how to deal with conflict, and how to live wisely. The Bible addresses all the big issues of life, with direction and teaching about purpose, sorrow, joy, boredom, money, sex, and family. It covers all the hot topics and burning questions.

When you take in God's words on these topics day after day, your life becomes stable. You aren't easily pushed off course. You are able to keep moving ahead, even when challenges come. As the Bible becomes ingrained in you, you'll find yourself mentally responding to situations with scripture.

This is part of what it means to have 'the mind of Christ' -- to respond to events with God's words. As you read the Bible, almost without realizing it, **you are being equipped to travel through life wisely.**

CHAPTER 2

REWARD #2 - MOMENTUM OF COMPLETING YOUR GOAL

A year from now, you can have read through the entire Bible.

If that's your goal, put yourself at the finish line and imagine how you will feel. Happy? Proud of yourself? Satisfied? Sure! That's exactly how it feels to reach a major goal.

And once you've achieved a goal, you get another benefit you might not expect: momentum.

We know from experience that each area of our life affects the others. For example if you start exercising, not only does your physical health improve, but your emotional health gets a boost too. When you reach one goal, it gives you energy and encouragement to think even bigger.

When you have conquered the challenges to faithful reading, what comes next?

Maybe you'll start memorizing the Bible. Maybe you'll read through Proverbs and write the entire book out by hand. Maybe you'll carry over the disciplines you've learned to a totally different area of your life.

Whatever you do, I promise you'll have more hope and confidence having finished this step first. **Reading the entire Bible in a year is a gateway to more good things in your life.**

CHAPTER 3 ***REWARD #3 - A NEW FRAME OF REFERENCE***

As we move through life and face various situations, we develop our individual approach to whatever may come. This way of approaching life is our 'frame of reference' and it's always with us. Though it lives in the background of our minds, it is behind all our decisions and values, and influences every choice.

Consider this illustration of how frame of reference affects our actions:

Giving money to strangers who ask for it is a controversial topic. Being in those situations can make us uncomfortable. How do we decide whether to give or not? It's our frame of reference that tells us.

A former coworker believed that everyone who asks strangers for money is a con artist, trying to trick people into giving. He didn't give money to strangers. Another friend operated differently. I saw him, after being asked persistently, give \$5 to a man living under a bridge.

One person gave and the other didn't. The difference? Their frame of reference.

When you read the Bible, you are taking in God's frame of reference. You learn how God thinks about things and you adopt his perspective. When God calls something good, it's good. When he says something is evil, it's evil. God's thoughts about an issue tell the truth. They are reality.

As you learn God's thoughts from reading God's words, the power of scripture affects you. You are letting the power of God's living words work on you. Over time, **your thinking shifts**. Your frame of reference begins to change. After that, **your values begin changing**. Some things you once believed were important don't matter as much anymore. You start paying attention to things you ignored. Eventually **your actions and behaviors shift**, as well. You are becoming different all the way through.

The frame of reference the Bible offers is the absolute best, unrivaled and unequalled. It's the best because it's the most real. It's the way things really are. As you read and take it in, the words of the Bible become your words. They become your top-of-mind reaction to life.

When reality -- the words of God -- are on your mind and framing your life, you experience one of the best rewards of reading the Bible

CHAPTER 4

REWARD #4 - LISTEN TO AND BE WITH GOD

Think about your best friend for a moment. How would you describe them?

Maybe you'd say they're loyal, smart, funny, supportive, and interested in what you like. They remember your birthday, laugh at your jokes, and stick with you through trouble.

Do you know God is like all that and much more?

God is not only everything you'd want in a friend, but he also knows everything, loves you at huge cost, and directs every event in the universe, big or small. God is a billion times better than your best friend, your smartest mentor, and your most intimate lover.

Imagine you're an insurance salesperson. You're starting out and learning your trade. One day the world's greatest insurance salesperson visits your office. They've been in the business for decades and sell better by far than anyone else in the industry. Wouldn't you want to go talk with them? Ask questions, hear stories, and benefit from their experience?

Now think of the person who loves you most. Maybe it's a parent, a spouse, or a friend. Say they send you a message. They explain how much they enjoy your company and ask if you can set up a time to meet. Wouldn't you want to say yes and make time to be with this person?

God has even better knowledge and even greater love than these. He is THE someone you want to listen to and be around. **When you read the Bible, you encounter God and all his goodness.** What a great reward!

ACTION STEP - REWARDS

Before we talk about the challenges you'll face and how to defeat them, spend some time getting clear about the rewards you hope to gain from reading the Bible. What's your expectation?

It may or may not be one of the rewards outlined in this chapter. Whatever the reward you're seeking, take a moment to **write it down and keep it somewhere you'll see it often**. Keeping the reward in front of you will help when difficult times come.

Make your goal clear, write it down, and look at it regularly. With that done, you're instantly more likely to succeed!

PART TWO - THE CHALLENGES

In this section, the focus is on what makes reading the Bible so difficult. Why is it so hard? Maybe for some this is a long-time goal that hasn't been accomplished -- yet. We got off to a good start, but somewhere along the way we slowed down and lost momentum.

Why is that? What blocks us from reaching our goal and what can we do about it?

CHAPTER 5

THE BIBLE ON THE SHELF

Picture with me a Bible sitting on a shelf. It's beside a bed or in a living room. The owner of the Bible gets up every day and goes about their business. They walk past the shelf, maybe notice the Bible, maybe not. They go about their life.

Time passes. Opportunities and challenges come along. Big decisions and important conversations happen. Values are formed, commitments are made, and lives take shape -- all without accessing the treasure on the shelf.

The Bible is there, but it's not useful. It's not read. It's not opened up. It just ... sits there.

Maybe this Bible on the shelf is like the one at your house. For many years, it's been like the one at my house. This wonderful resource, literally a book made by God and full of God's words, is there at our fingertips. We either don't know how to use it, why to use it, or what we'll gain from using it.

This situation we've just imagined is playing itself out all over. The Bible is available, but it's not used. And here's the thing -- an unused Bible can't grow me. If I'm not listening to God by reading the Bible, it will be hard for my relationship with God to go places. How well can you know someone you don't listen to or spend time with?

It's possible to change this picture. You can make this trusted resource one that you consistently rely on and turn to on a daily basis. But before this happens, you can probably already tell there are some challenges to be faced.

When we set our sights on reading the Bible, obstacles will come. Maybe you've experienced this yourself. You set a goal, have a good intention, and get a strong start -- but somehow, over time the goal just fizzles. Obstacles get in the way. It's almost like they *want* us to stop! The obstacles you'll face on this journey may be common, but that doesn't mean they're not devastatingly effective.

Anytime a new habit is being formed, such as reading the Bible each day, you can expect to run into four major challenges. At first they might seem small, but most lack of success can be directly attributed to one or more of them.

THE CHALLENGE OF SCHEDULE ***Finding, Making, and Committing the Time***

This challenge can come in two different forms. Going either of these ways can defeat your goal.

1. "Have you seen my jammed schedule? Nothing else can fit!"
We're too busy to add anything to our overcrowded lives.
2. "I don't keep a schedule. I just do the next thing in front of me."
Our schedule is so flexible that we resist following a plan.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONSISTENCY

Keeping It Up Over Time

Life can be chaotic. All of us experience events that disrupt normal life -- moving to a new home, starting school, going on vacation, catching a cold. Disruptions like these take their toll on consistency. Even without big changes happening, the sheer weight of day-to-day struggles can get heavy. Over time, small things add up to big things and can become a real obstacle to consistently pursuing your goal.

There's no sugar-coating it. It's hard to keep going over the long haul!

THE CHALLENGE OF INTEREST

Repetition Can Lead to Boredom

Whenever something new comes along and we try it for the first time, there's a natural interest because its novel and different. We pay close attention to what we're doing, give it all we've got, and feel totally engaged.

Think back to how you felt on the first day of high school. Whether you were excited, nervous, uncertain, or all of the above, I guarantee you were paying close attention to what was happening that day at school. Now think of how you felt about school in April, after almost a full year had passed. If you're like me, you were more than ready for a change!

If something doesn't stay fresh over time, interest can be lost.

THE CHALLENGE OF RIGHT MOTIVATION

Doing Things for a Different Reason

Have you ever taken a class because of *who* was in it rather than *what* the class itself offered? I have. By the end of the course, I wasn't following the material at all. I didn't experience the intended reward of the course because *the reward I was pursuing was different* than the subject matter itself.

When our motivation for pursuing a goal is not the normal, established result of reaching that goal, this challenge is inevitable.

A GUARANTEE

When you set out to read the Bible, you will face opposition -- Guaranteed. This is not a neutral activity. Choosing to read the Bible is not simply a one-time choice. It's a choice that must be made repeatedly and with conviction. Setting a goal like this is stepping out with a bulls-eye on your chest.

Why talk about how difficult it can be to reach this goal? Because it gives perspective. It helps to understand the distractions that divert our attention from what matters most. Why, when in the car driving to work, it can be so easy to listen to something other than the Bible. Why, when the value and rewards of opening up the Bible and soaking it in are well known, there is always something else competing for the top spot in our lives.

Each person will face unique challenges and opposition. Your challenge won't look exactly like mine, but be assured it WILL be there.

Not long ago, a hurricane passed through my neighborhood. This storm was powerful and the news had been warning about it for days in advance. People got ready. They stocked up on groceries, secured their property, and made emergency plans. They knew what was coming and made preparations.

Since obstacles to reading the Bible are coming, it's time to start preparing for them now. Being aware and taking action will keep you from being surprised or caught off-guard when they arrive.

In the next chapters, each of these four challenges will be outlined in detail AND we'll cover what to do about each one. Think about which challenge is most likely to be a struggle for you. Instead of being blocked and defeated by these challenges, learn how to take the offensive and be the victor!

CHAPTER 6

Challenge #1: The Challenge of Schedule

The first challenge we all face when setting out to read the Bible is our packed schedules. Everybody's busy, so who has time to read? Think about your own daily schedule. Ask yourself where Bible reading will fit in.

- Will it work in the morning, when you're just getting up, feeling groggy, and maybe rushing out the door?

- Will it fit at the end of the day, when you'd like to relax, replenish, and spend some time with family?
- The middle of the day is often the busiest. You're running errands, in meetings, and just trying to stay on track to finish everything that needs to get done.

You're serious about making a regular practice of reading the Bible, so how exactly is this going to work?

The first thing to recognize is this: the challenge of schedule has to be faced regardless of what we intend to start doing. No matter the activity you choose or interest you pursue -- Bible reading or anything else -- you can only overcome this challenge by actually putting it on your schedule and keeping it there.

One one hand, you may look at your busy calendar and ask, "When will I find time to do it, especially with a schedule that's already full?" On the other side, maybe you don't keep a calendar. Instead, you try to remember important events and keep up as best you can. If this is you, the question probably isn't "Where will this fit?" but instead you're wondering "How will I remember to do this each day?"

For both, there's a way to face the challenge of schedule and not be defeated by it.

The key is having a powerful purpose.

Here's what I mean by that:

Wherever you are in your day right now, take a step outside your normal activity. Give yourself a few minutes to become quiet. If it helps, focus on your breathing.

When you're quiet and at rest, consider this big-picture question (it's not scary but actually quite helpful to think about): "All the things that I do ... What am I doing them *for*?"

Another way to ask it is, "What is the goal and purpose of my life?"

It's more than making a living. It's more than accomplishing tasks. It's more than our daily obligations.

You might have a really specific, detailed answer to this question, while someone else has a more general idea. Both are okay. Regardless of your answer, we all have the same 'big-picture' in common. It's easy to lose sight of, but the facts surrounding all of our lives are the same.

Let's zoom way out in order to remind ourselves of life's big-picture.

The book of Genesis says that God made the world in which we live. After making the Earth out of nothing, God made plants and animals and humans. Simply knowing how the world began

can open our eyes to what the whole story is about. And from there, we can begin to see what our own lives are about.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus says something really interesting. Talking with a group of people who are worried about their lives, he makes a big statement. He says the #1 priority in life should be God's kingdom and justice. He says that we are all created for this purpose.

If that sounds strange now, it must have sounded really strange then! It seems so impractical. What about my job and family and health? Jesus says not to focus primarily on that. God will handle it, he says.

It will take a lot of trust to live this way! But if our big picture is God's world, we gain a new motivation. Seeing life through that big picture will begin to change our perspective. Life is no longer about the things we once focused on -- wealth, family, health. In this new way of seeing things, God's plan takes priority.

If I start living this way, I need to learn what it is God wants to see happen in the world. I'll also need the ability to go do it. For this way of life to become a reality, I'll need frequent communication from God and I'll have to be talking with God all the time. Our relationship must be super close. Otherwise, how will I know what God's kingdom is? Or be able to do something about it?

The bottom line is that my connection with God is vital. My actions are determined by it. I learn from God what is important and what isn't. This connection is literally my lifeline -- the one thing that keeps me alive and makes me come alive!

Taking this big picture view and accepting the priorities of Jesus makes it possible to declare, "My relationship with God is the single most important and valuable thing in my life, so I will stake claim to it on my schedule. I'll prioritize it. I'll follow the words and example of Jesus and make the pursuit of God my ultimate purpose. Everything else can come afterwards."

A life of pursuing God this way will look very strange to someone who does not share your priority. They might say, "How will you possibly do everything that needs to be done?"

You will come to know the secret: **God gives you what you need.**

When God's priorities become yours, you will *want* to create space for listening to him and talking with him. Looking at the big picture of life, you will see what really matters. Time spent with God fuels our purpose, informs our thoughts, and drives our actions.

This is how you face and defeat the challenge of schedule. If your calendar is already crammed, you come to see that time with God outranks those other things. If you don't keep a calendar, you come to realize spontaneity is great but it's not worth missing out on God.

Scheduling and the issue of time is a common challenge to reading the Bible. If you feel like it applies to you, take a minute right now to identify one thing you can do to defeat it. It may be using your Google calendar for the first time. It may be setting an earlier bedtime so you can wake up with time to read. Whatever it is, find that one thing you can do to overcome this challenge. Then, go and DO IT!

CHAPTER 7

Challenge #2: Keep on Keeping On

Have you ever heard this ancient Chinese proverb? *“No one who rises before dawn 360 days a year fails to make his family rich.”* So many people want to be rich. According to the proverb, all it takes is getting up before the sun 360 days a year. So why doesn't everybody just do this and get wealthy?

It comes down to the challenge of consistency. It's easy to do something once, like waking up before dawn, but hard to do it over and over, day after day. As we set out to read the Bible in a year, we know we'll be reading the Bible most, if not all, the days of the year. This will not be easy!

For comparison, think of the New Year's resolutions we make but don't follow through on. How many of our goals for exercise and diet and travel get abandoned and just don't pan out? Maintaining a steadfast posture and practice over time is one of the toughest things to do.

But something significant happens when you read the Bible. It's a dynamic experience with cumulative effect. You will grow and benefit from continued exposure to God's words. And, you'll be forever changed. So, how do you face this challenge of consistency so that positive changes can take place? How do you go beyond just a strong start to also have a strong middle and a strong finish to your goal of reading the Bible this year?

Three factors help in meeting and defeating this challenge:

1 - Make Reading a Habit

Habits have weight and substance behind them. It takes discipline to build and sustain a habit. The good news is that once you establish a rhythm, it actually becomes easier to continue the activity than to stop it.

It takes about 30 days of doing something new to turn that activity into a habit. Put your Bible reading on a schedule and it will eventually become a new habit. By deciding to read or listen to the Bible at the same time every day or in the same order in your day, you will build the momentum to keep going. You'll soon discover that the decision is already made, the habit is second nature, and the reading will happen with little or no effort.

2 - Record Your Progress

Recording your progress is a second way to face the challenge of consistency. Imagine you have a goal to lose weight and you start exercising to reach your goal. Over time, wouldn't you be curious to see how much progress you'd made? You might weigh yourself every week and write down the results. Why track your progress? Because it's exciting! It shows how far you've come and how close you are getting to your goal.

The same approach can help build consistency in your daily Bible reading. In this case, use a journal instead of a scale. Instead of recording numbers, write down the things that jumped off the page at you. These are the special words from God meant for you that day. Keeping a record of them will remind you of God's goodness and the personal relationship that is growing between you.

Dwelling on those words also sparks an internal change. When you listen and take God's word to heart, you become a reflection of those words. Read Psalm 131 about having a calm heart, and you actually become calm. Read about being strong and courageous in the book of Joshua, and you gain strength to live courageously. By recording what stands out each day, you make a written declaration of the changes taking place in your heart and life.

3 - Better Together

The third way to face this challenge is to lock arms with others. Don't attempt to read the Bible in a year by yourself. Instead, take the journey with a friend or in a group. Let other people know what you're doing, and even better, encourage and invite them to join you. By sharing your goal, you're also inviting your friends to encourage you. If you've ever had an exercise buddy or a hiking partner, you know how much it helps to keep each other focused and on track. It truly is better together, making it easier to stay positive and motivated.

Facing the challenge of consistency in reading the Bible has both a bottom line and a silver lining. Stick to a schedule and develop a habit. Record your progress and reflect on what you've read. And, remember there's "safety in numbers" so don't go it alone but take others along on this amazing ride. I promise the payoff will be huge!

CHAPTER 8

Challenge #3: The Thrill is Gone

The third challenge to reading the Bible is maintaining interest and staying excited as time goes by. This may be disrespectful to say, but sometimes reading the Bible seems boring to me. There are chapters that talk about ceremonial laws, and genealogies, and long prophecies without any real action. These parts can be difficult for me to read. It's hard to relate!

Of course, there are also stories that are incredibly interesting and exciting. Lazarus rising from the dead, David fighting Goliath, and Elijah calling down fire from heaven are great examples. But in between and around those stories, I can find myself losing interest.

When that happens, I don't track with the story as well. I start to skim. At that point, I'm pulling out the parts I like and ignoring the parts I don't. I'm no longer reading the Bible!

The Bible says about itself that all of it is breathed out by God. That means the entire Bible has something that God wants to say. With that awesome knowledge, we can choose to face this challenge directly and not be defeated even when we feel like the thrill is gone.

So, how can we maintain interest in reading the Bible when it takes us through passages that can seem so distant? Just like with the challenge of consistency, this challenge can be defeated in more than one way.

1 - Picture Yourself in the Story

As you're reading, picture yourself in the story. If you're reading a chapter that seems unrelated to your life, put your imagination to work. Place yourself as a character in the story and then start asking questions:

- What is this story about?
- Who are the main characters?
- What are the emotions they're experiencing?
- What is my character doing, and why?
- What will this lead to and where is this going?

If you have a Bible or internet connection handy, try this exercise right now. Pick a section that you think is boring. As you begin to read, put yourself in the scene. *Feel* what that is like. Then answer these questions and see how much more engaged you become.

2 - Ask for Help

The second way to face this challenge is to ask for help. Here's how it works: Let's say you're struggling to get excited about reading the Bible. You know in your mind that God's word is useful and helpful, but your current experience may be boredom and disengagement.

Pray about it - pray honestly. Tell God that you feel bored and don't get it. If that's true, say so. A prayer like this shows that you truly want to read the Bible, but struggle because of a lack of interest. Be honest about yourself and your limits as you also express a desire to connect with God.

What a great prayer! Isn't this exactly the sort of honest, real communication God wants to have with us? Wouldn't he love to help you see why the tough parts of the Bible are there and what he wants you to learn from them?

The Bible was written over the course of thousands of years about people and cultures very different from our time. Don't be surprised when there are parts you don't understand. That's

normal. **The danger is in allowing “I don’t understand” to turn into “I’m not interested,” which can quickly become “I give up.”**

Before you get to the point that you stop reading, when what you don’t understand turns into boredom, take these steps! Picture yourself in the story and ask questions to make it relatable. And, be honest with God and simply ask for help.

Most of us will face the challenge of interest at some point. If you think it will affect you, take action right now to prepare for it. That may mean writing down the questions you’ll answer to put yourself in the story. It might mean preparing your mind so you aren’t surprised and tempted to stop when you don’t understand what you’re reading. Whatever it takes and however you prepare, make sure you are ready for this challenge!

CHAPTER 9

Challenge #4: Motivation Matters

The fourth and last challenge to reading the Bible in a year is the challenge of motivation. This challenge happens when the goal we *think* we have and the goal we *really* have aren’t the same. The threat arises because mismatched motivations can be really hard to see, especially at first.

Here’s an example of what this challenge looks like:

Years ago when I was trying to figure out what to do after college, I looked back on what I enjoyed most about school. Taking interesting classes and learning new concepts had been my favorite part, so I applied to another school program and started with the fall semester.

After a year of classes, this new program sent students into laboratories and had them continue working there for years. The program was set up to direct students out of the classroom and into the lab. From my perspective, this was a problem!

I ended up leaving. I didn’t want what the program offered -- My motivation was different. Reflecting back, I hadn’t gotten clear about whether my motivation meshed with the program’s structure. It took about 18 months for clarity to emerge.

When you set out to read through the Bible, understanding your motive is very helpful. If your goal is to read regularly, ask yourself why. What is your motivation? It may be to know God better, or to have his words on the tip of your tongue, or to benefit your family. What do you think will come out of your desire and commitment to read the Bible? What practical steps will you need to take to reach your goal? Are you willing to take those steps?

These questions are not easy to answer, but it is worth it to carefully think them over. If you can identify your WHY, if you know what it will take to reach it and whether the cost is worth it, then you are ready for this challenge!

When the purpose and motivation is concrete from the start -- when you understand why you're doing something -- you are much more likely to persevere. **Knowing the purpose and aligning the motivation will give you something to look forward to when times get tough and reading is a struggle.**

Let's say that one day you wake up and, out of habit, start reading that day's section of the Bible. But you feel disconnected and tired. You wonder if this habit is worth it. There are other things you could be doing. This is the perfect time to look again at the benefits of listening to God. If you see a great outcome ahead, you'll choose to keep moving forward.

When you consider your motivation, make sure you really are excited about reaching your goal. Sustaining that interest is crucial to your success!

You will likely encounter these four challenges at various points along the way. Reaching the goal of reading the Bible in a year will challenge your schedule, your consistency, your interest, and your motivation. While these obstacles will test you, they aren't unexpected and they won't take you by surprise. Now you know how to face them when they come.

When you feel challenged in your reading, remember that's completely normal. Determine which challenge you are facing, revisit this section to refresh your memory and renew your resolve, and then go on to overcome it!

ACTION STEP - CHALLENGES

When you give it your all and really try to read the Bible day after day, you will face obstacles. Now that you know that, let's do something about it:

1. Break out your notebook or journal, or open up your favorite word processor (I'm a Microsoft Notepad guy myself).
2. Write down the four common challenges to reading the Bible all the way through.
3. Pick one or two that you know will give you the most trouble. You know yourself and have an understanding of which one or two it will be.
4. Write answers to these questions:
 - a. What will you do ahead of time to anticipate that obstacle?
 - b. What will you do after it comes your way? Get specific. Maybe your plan will involve asking a certain friend for help, or starting to use a calendar for the first time, or getting up a little earlier.
 - c. How will you keep this particular challenge from stopping you?

Did you write down those replies? Good news -- Your chance of reaching your goal just skyrocketed! Congratulations on taking steps toward getting what you want.

PART THREE - THE METHOD

Now we know WHY reading the whole Bible is so hard. And yet, people still do it. But HOW do they do it?

They have a method that works.

That's exactly where we're going in this section. In the pages that follow, you will learn a proven method for daily reading that will continually fire up your enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 10

Picking a Plan

We've talked about the challenges to reading the Bible and how to keep them from stopping you. Now we move into the practical -- How to actually read (or listen) day by day.

As you set out to read the Bible all the way through, the first practical thing to think about is which reading plan you want to follow. **A reading plan is a step-by-step process for reading different parts of the Bible each day, so that over time you finish the entire book.**

Lots of plans exist. There are plans that go through the Bible front to back. Some plans run chronologically, with the earliest-written books first. Other plans include a combination, such as part of the Old Testament and New Testament each day. On top of choosing a reading plan, there's also the question of which version to use: NIV, ESV, KJV, and more. There are lots of options here, too.

When you're starting out on this journey, whether your goal is to read the entire Bible in a calendar year or to get into a consistent reading rhythm, I recommend you pick a plan to follow. A reading plan will give you a framework. By following a plan, you won't have to decide what to read each day since the thinking has already been done for you. Life is easier and the process simpler.

So you're going to use a reading plan, but which plan should you pick?

The most important thing at this point is not to worry about what plan you choose. It doesn't matter that much. What really matters is reading the whole Bible this year. Don't worry about the plan itself too much. Just choose one that fits you.

If you have a translation of the Bible that you already use, say the New International Version (NIV) or the English Standard Version (ESV), pick a plan that uses the translation that you're familiar with and go with it. The important thing is not the plan that you choose, but your consistency and your determination of complete it, and your enthusiasm for the goal.

Please don't make this part harder than it has to be! If you find yourself taking more than a week to settle on a plan and method, just pick the plan in front of you and start. I promise it will work out over time and you'll be glad you got going.

CHAPTER 11

Reading vs. Listening -- Which is Right for You?

Another question that comes up is **reading** the Bible versus **listening** to it. Decades ago there weren't many options, so you would usually have a large printed Bible that you opened up and read from. Today, thanks to new technology, we have other ways to access the Bible. For

example, you might do most of your reading on a screen. You may listen to podcasts in the car or on a plane. Maybe you do your reading by watching YouTube videos set to music!

When it comes to taking in the Bible, the two main modes are: READING (off a screen or printed page) and LISTENING (to a recording of someone reading the Bible out loud). It's absolutely worth it to spend some time up front figuring out which mode is best for you. When you use a mode that fits you, you instantly improve your chances of reaching your goal.

Discovering the best mode for you isn't hard, but it does take a little thoughtful consideration. You'll need to understand your own personal communication style.

Consider these two types of people. Which type sounds more like you?

TYPE 1

- When you hear something, it tends to stick in your memory.
- You listen to audiobooks or podcasts in the car.
- When you need to communicate, you would rather make a phone call than write an email.
- If you can't call or speak to someone directly, texting is your next choice.

TYPE 2

- You express yourself naturally in writing.
- As you drive down the highway, you find it hard not to read the signs and billboards you pass.
- You like books.
- You prefer email over texting or calling.
- Listening to someone talk, be it a live speaker or online recording, can quickly become boring for you.

If you identify more with Type 1, you can see how listening to the Bible would be a good fit. You'll be more engaged, remember it better, and have more enthusiasm for your goal.

On the other hand, Type 2 folks would be better off reading the Bible than listening to it. If you're in this group, you'll want to have the text in front of you, either reading it on a screen or off a printed page.

Regardless of which style fits you best, make sure you know which one it is and that you honor those personal preferences.

What does that mean? It means if you're more of a listener, don't try to go against your style by reading every day. And if you're a reader, don't try to listen to the Bible day after day. **Instead, honor your type by letting it shape your approach to the Bible.** Reaching your goal will be so much easier if you do! Whether you read the Bible or listen to it depends on your personal style.

Now, if you are a listener, here's a tip for getting the most out of your time listening to the Bible. Just like with versions of the printed Bible, there are lots of Bible recordings out there. You'll find some with music and some without. Some have a speaker with a British accent. Some have actors reading different parts and feature cool sound effects!

Whichever audio plan you choose, be sure it's one that lets you focus on the Bible. If you're thinking mostly about which part of England the speaker is from, that's not helpful! Find a speaker with a non-distracting voice that puts the focus on the text and not on their manner of speech. If someone has a strong accent or drawl, or a very dramatic delivery when they read scripture, it's a misdirection. You want to center your focus on the text.

Reading or listening? The good news is that you can successfully do either one and still accomplish the goal of going through the entire Bible in a year.

Once you pick your plan and determine whether you'll read or listen to the Bible, you've taken a huge step toward your goal.

CHAPTER 12

How to Read/Listen Each Day

At this point, you have a GOAL (reading the Bible) and a PLAN (what to read or listen to each day). Now we're going to talk about the method. This is the step-by-step process you'll follow each day as you read or listen to the Bible.

Each step we'll talk about in this chapter is really important. They all fit together and I recommend you do them in order. If you do, you'll see rewards from your reading sooner and your enthusiasm for reading or listening will increase. You'll get so much more out of the time you spend with the Bible.

Whether you read or choose to listen, make sure to do each of these steps:

1 - Read or listen to the Bible at the same time each day.

When you have a consistent, set time for reading, you form a habit that your body and mind will adapt and accept. Over time, they'll start expecting you to keep doing what you're doing. The habit will become so reinforced that it will take no effort for you to read or listen at your designated time. You won't have to make any tough choices -- It will just happen.

For years I didn't do this. I let whatever was going on that day determine when and if I would read the Bible. By neglecting to set a specific time for reading each day, I was putting this practice at risk. Whatever activity looked most important and immediate won my focus.

If there was a big deadline at work, I would dive into that. An upcoming neighborhood activity would have me planning and writing emails to get ready. If it was a slow Saturday morning, I'd enjoy catching up on rest. Responding to the day like this made consistent reading difficult!

But since I started this new practice, reading the Bible each day has become much less of a struggle. The habit is now so ingrained I don't think about when or whether to do it. It seems to happen by itself. Setting up a helpful habit like this clears the way for success. You will have more energy to focus on the Bible and will find yourself getting into a groove. It's a beautiful thing!

2 - Find a distraction-free place to read or listen.

Look around -- There are quiet spots just about anywhere. You might try a room in your home, a nearby park, or even inside your car. The point is to be thoughtful about finding an environment where your attention can be on the Bible.

Keep in mind that no place is completely distraction-free. A car alarm will go off. You'll get cut off in traffic. Your mind will wander. If you need to deal with something that comes up, that's okay. It's normal. Do what you need to do and come back when you can. Pick up where you left off and keep going.

Find a place that maximizes your ability to focus on what God is saying to you. Know that unexpected things will surface, and when they do, simply address them and get back to your rhythm.

3 - Before you begin, pray for help to understand and see.

This step recognizes that we need help to really understand what's in the Bible. Without it, we could read all day and not experience growth. While our own minds are limited, God as the true writer of the Bible is unlimited. He wrote the Bible for us and wants us to see what's there.

Asking for help can be a very short prayer. I like to pray Psalm 119:8 -- "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." Praying like this has another advantage: it will move your focus onto God and his words. Think of it as a transition, like a doorway taking you from whatever has been going on to this separate space where you spend time listening to God.

This step moves reading the Bible from a natural activity to a supernatural one. A natural activity is limited by human capacity, but a supernatural activity is one where God does what's impossible for you and me to do. Wouldn't you love to be empowered beyond your own ability? That's exactly what God does in answer to prayers like this!

4 - Read or listen to that day's section of the Bible, praying through the text as you go.

Do you sometimes lose track or disconnect from the Bible while you're hearing or reading it? I do. Sometimes I'll get to the end of a paragraph and realize I have no clue what just happened. Praying through the text is an engagement secret I learned a few years ago. It's a great way to stay involved as you're reading or listening.

So what does it look like?

Say you're reading in the Psalms. You're reading or hearing the first verses of Psalm 1 and it says:

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

As you hear or read those words, praying through the text means to 'inhabit' them through prayer. It means to pray those same things for and about yourself.

For example, you might pray, "God, help me not to follow advice from wicked people," or maybe you would ask for more enjoyment of God's law. Perhaps you're thankful for God's blessing that lets you spend time listening to him, and you pray, "Thank you for helping me to meditate on your law."

When you personally engage with the Bible by praying through it, you really intertwine your own life with the text. It's a great way of bringing scripture into your life, making it instantly relevant. Everything connects. Everything is related to your life.

Again, as you read and listen, pray through the text to stay engaged and to connect your life with God's word.

5 - Record what stands out.

I had a coworker once who liked to say, "Capture that." And what he meant was, if we were talking and someone said something helpful, we should take a moment and write it down. It was a way of preserving the really useful things that came up.

When you read or hear the Bible, chances are that certain parts will stand out to you. Maybe that's because they relate closely to your life, or even simply because they stick out by sounding strange and they make you think.

After you've read or listened through that day's section, find a place to write or record what stood out to you. This step will help you keep learning as you go through the Bible. God is likely to reveal fresh insights each time you read a familiar passage. You'll have a reminder of important lessons that you've gathered over time.

I recall a day of reading that included Mark chapter 6, where Jesus feeds the crowd of people following him around. When I read verse 39, I noticed it said Jesus had the people sit down on "the green grass."

That seemed strange. Why point out the grass color? The question stuck with me so I wrote it down. Later on, I remembered a line from Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, he makes me lie down in green pastures."

I got excited. Maybe the reason Mark called the grass green was to show indirectly who Jesus is -- the Lord and one who cares for his people like a shepherd with his sheep. It made me see Jesus in a new light.

I only 'connected the dots' and learned something valuable because I made note of a verse that sounded strange to me.

To recap, these are the five steps that you'll walk through each time you read the Bible:

1. Read or listen at a consistent time.
2. Get to a distraction-free place, wherever that is.
3. Pray for help to understand what you're reading, to see into it with greater vision or insight than you might normally have.
4. Read or listen to the text, praying through it as you go.
5. When you're finished, record what stood out to you in that reading.

By using this process, you will dig deep into God's word. You will discover yourself reading the Bible because you want to, not because you have to. Over time you'll see your reading and your life start to meld together.

I once heard a pastor, after reading from the Bible to his church, say, "This is God's word for us today." He made it clear that the Bible interacts with our lives. The words you read in the Bible are literally what God is saying to you today. It's not happenstance or accident that you're hearing these words.

Use this reading process to maximize their benefit to you.

CHAPTER 13

Travel in a Group

Maybe you've heard it said, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." That gets said so often because there's truth to it.

To reach the goal of reading the Bible in a year, we'll need to go far. Why not go with another person or with a group? One of the biggest encouragements I get to keep reading the Bible is from people who share with me something they saw while they were reading.

- Brant telling about hearing the writer in Psalm 52 say, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God," and how that showed him a picture of being content and humble.

- Paul sharing his appreciation for the power of reading God's words out loud and how doing so enables him to share in God's thoughts and follow in God's steps.
- Priya telling about being encouraged by Psalm 12, finding that God's words are completely pure and are a reliable guide and comfort.

In Part One, we saw how partnering with others helps you face the challenge of perseverance. As you set out on your journey of reading through the Bible, you are more likely to succeed if you find someone else who is interested in doing the same thing. Not only will having a partner help you toward your goal, it will make the process richer and more fun!

If you can think of someone who'd like to join you, perfect. But if not, don't let that slow you down. The internet is a wonderful help, as you could post about your goal and ask if anyone else wants to join you. Whether or not you follow the same reading plan is not as important as the ability to share mutual encouragement.

Maybe you set up weekly or bi-weekly check-ins with your partner. When you connect with this person, you'll have your reading as common background and can benefit from what you're each seeing and learning.

It's true. If you travel in a group you give yourself the greatest chance of success. You are far more likely to realize your goal of reading the Bible this year.

CHAPTER 14

Get Back on the Wagon

There is one question that comes up a lot when talking about setting and reaching goals: "What if I mess up and miss a bunch of days? How will I ever catch up if I get way behind?"

None of us is even close to perfect! We're human. We forget. Life has unexpected twists and turns that disrupt our intended actions. And, let's be honest -- Over the course of a year, you will certainly miss some time in the Bible. Maybe you're on vacation, or sick, or an unanticipated opportunity comes up. You'll miss a day. You'll miss a few days. However long you miss, and however much you miss, here are the steps to take when that happens:

1 - Don't stress and worry about falling behind.

Recognize that your energy and your interests come in waves. You will have different periods of high energy and low energy. It's impossible to remain constant in those areas.

2 - Take all the energy you would have used to worry, and redirect it.

Instead of sending energy toward anxiety and blame, put it into remembering WHY you set this goal in the first place. The rewards of reading the Bible are amazing. You probably had some of

them in mind when you set your sights on reading the Bible cover-to-cover. In this interval between falling off and climbing back on the wagon, grab a journal and write out the reasons you want to reach this goal.

When you write out why you wanted to read through the Bible in the first place, you will be energized by looking at the reward. Let it draw you forward. You will come away encouraged, focused, and excited, which is perfect preparation for Step 3:

3 - Wherever you stopped, just pick up right there and keep going.

This may seem simple and obvious, but believe me, this is the biggest step to getting back in action.

Bottom line? When you mess up -- not *if* but *when* -- don't stress about it. Take another look at the reward in front of you, and then you'll be able and willing to pick it back up and keep moving forward.

Here is what's on the table as a result of growing closer to God and listening to him regularly: Picture a life where God's word is your frame of reference, where your character is changing, where you are becoming a bigger help to your friends, family, and community. You're being transformed into something wonderful, something beyond even your dreams.

As you take off on your journey, I want to say one last thing about reading or listening to the Bible all the way through. This is me looking you in the eye, giving you strong encouragement: Keep going. Don't give up. If you keep moving forward and don't quit, I promise you will see incredible benefits as you reach your goal! I can't wait to hear about what you gain.

ACTION STEP - METHOD

Supercharge your progress by completing this short set of questions, saving days or weeks of time and massively increasing the likelihood of reading the entire Bible. Pull up your favorite word processor or audio recorder and answer these questions about this section:

1. What version of the Bible (KJV, NIV, etc.) do you prefer?
2. What reading plan will you follow? (hint: find one -- any one -- and go with it!)
3. Are you more of a listener (Type 1) or reader (Type 2)?
4. Looking at the five steps you'll follow each time you read, which do you think will be the hardest for you?
 - Consistent time
 - Distraction-free place
 - Pray for help to understand
 - Read or listen, praying through it as you go
 - Record what stood out to you in that reading
5. What action can you take that will make this hard step easier to do?

Congratulations on completing these questions. Your goal is clearly in sight and within reach!

PART FOUR - IT'S YOUR TURN

Congratulations on reaching this point in the quest for treasure!

By reading this book, you've proved your strong interest and have already made great progress in consistently reading the Bible. By getting to this point, you are now armed with several actionable insights:

1. Reading the Bible is incredibly rewarding, as recounted in Part One. But to get the rewards you'll need to defeat different reading challenges. Each challenge you'll face is normal. In fact, you can expect them and not be surprised. When obstacles surface, remember to keep looking ahead to your reward.
2. Not only are the challenges to Bible reading common, but each of them can be defeated by following the strategies explained in Part Two. Think of these strategies like soldiers in a fort, defending your goal from being taken over by hostile challengers.
3. The step-by-step method for daily Bible reading in Part Three is a proven path to success. By following each step in order, you WILL experience a connection with scripture and a reward from reading that will energize you and help you see benefits faster.

You now have all the tools to discover amazing truths about God and yourself. You hold the key that will unlock the treasure chest. Stake your claim to all the wealth of scripture that God has for those who desire it, pursue it, and possess it!

The best treasure you'll uncover is on the other side of difficulty, so keep going. Never give up!

A FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT AS YOU SET OUT

**As you read these words from Psalm 19,
pray them for yourself and catch a vision for the
incredible blessing of knowing God and his word:**

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Thank you for reading this book! If it has been helpful to you, please spread the word by writing a review on Amazon and sharing with your online network.

I'd love to hear your stories and insights from reading the Bible. Write to me at ed@biblethisyear.com and tell me what you've found!

*Cheers,
Ed Burdette*