

How to Read the Whole Bible in 2014

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Do you want to read the whole Bible?

The average person reads 200 to 250 words per minute; there are about 775,000 words in the Bible; therefore it takes less than 10 minutes a day to read the whole Bible in a year.

(For those who like details, there's a webpage devoted to [how long it takes to read each book of the Bible](#). And if you want a simple handout that has every Bible book with a place to put a check next to every chapter, go [here](#).)

Audio Bibles are usually about 75 hours long, so you can listen to it in just over 12 minutes a day.

But the point is not merely to read the whole thing to say you've done it or to check it off a list. The Bible itself never commands that we read the Bible through in a year. What it commends is knowing the whole counsel of God ([Acts 20:27](#)) and meditating or storing or ruminating upon God's self-disclosure to us in written form ([Deut. 6:7](#); [32:46](#); [Ps. 119:11, 15, 23, 93, 99, 143:5](#)).

As Joel Beeke [writes](#):

As oil lubricates an engine, so meditation facilitates the diligent use of means of grace (reading of Scripture, hearing sermons, prayer, and all other ordinances of Christ), deepens the marks of grace (repentance, faith, humility), and strengthens one's relationships to others (love to God, to fellow Christians, to one's neighbors at large).

Thomas Watson put it like this: "A Christian without meditation is like a soldier without arms, or a workman without tools. Without meditation the truths of God will not stay with us; the heart is hard, and the memory is slippery, and without meditation all is lost."

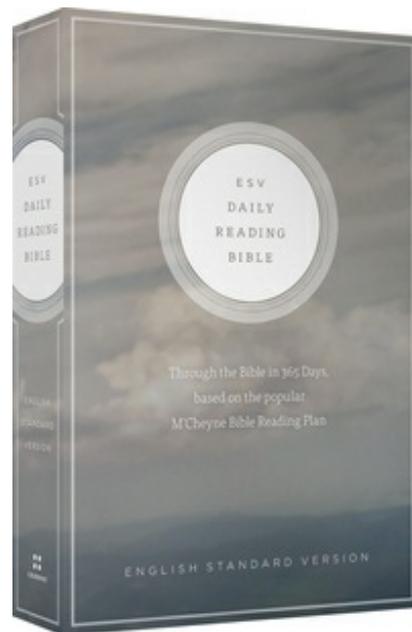
So reading the Bible cover to cover is a great way to facilitate meditation upon the whole counsel of God.

But a simple resolution to do this is often an insufficient. Most of us [need a more proactive plan](#).

One option is to get a Bible that has a plan as part of its design. For example, Crossway offers the [ESV Daily Reading Bible](#) (based on the popular M'Cheyne reading plan—read through the OT once and the NT and Psalms twice) or the [One-Year Bible in the ESV](#) (whole Bible once in 364 readings). [For multiple bindings of the [ESV Daily Reading Bible](#), go [here](#).]

Stephen Witmer [explains](#) the weaknesses of typical plans and offers some advice on reading the Bible together with others—as well as offering his own [new two-year plan](#). ("In my opinion, it is better to read the whole Bible through carefully one time in two years than hastily in one year.") His plan has you read through one book of the Bible at a time (along with a daily reading from the Psalms or Proverbs). At the end of two years you will have read through the Psalms and Proverbs four times and the rest of the Bible once.

The Gospel Coalition's [For the Love of God Blog](#) (which you can [subscribe to via email](#), but is now also available as



a [free app](#)) takes you through the M'Cheyne reading plan, with a meditation each day by D. A. Carson related to one of the readings. M'Cheyne's plan has you read shorter selections from four different places in the Bible each day.

Jason DeRouchie, the editor of the new and highly recommended [What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible](#), offers his [KINGDOM Bible Reading Plan](#), which has the following distinctives:

- Proportionate weight is given to the Old and New Testaments in view of their relative length, the Old receiving three readings per day and the New getting one reading per day.
- The Old Testament readings follow the arrangement of Jesus' Bible ([Luke 24:44](#)—Law, Prophets, Writings), with one reading coming from each portion per day.
- In a single year, one reads through Psalms twice and all other biblical books once; the second reading of Psalms (highlighted in gray) supplements the readings through the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy).
- Only twenty-five readings are slated per month in order to provide more flexibility in daily devotions.
- The plan can be started at any time of the year, and if four readings per day are too much, the plan can simply be stretched to two or more years (reading from one, two, or three columns per day).

Trent Hunter's "[The Bible-Eater Plan](#)" is an innovative new approach that has you reading whole chapters, along with quarterly attention to specific books. The plan especially highlights OT chapters that are crucial to the storyline of Scripture and redemptive fulfillment in Christ.

For those who would benefit from a realistic "discipline + grace" approach, consider "[The Bible Reading Plan for Shirkers and Slackers](#)." It takes away the pressure (and guilt) of "keeping up" with the entire Bible in one year. You get variety within the week by alternating genres by day, but also continuity by sticking with one genre each day. Here's the basic idea:

Sundays: Poetry
Mondays: Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
Tuesdays: Old Testament history
Wednesdays: Old Testament history
Thursdays: Old Testament prophets
Fridays: New Testament history
Saturdays: New Testament epistles (letters)

There are a number of [Reading Plans for ESV Editions](#). Crossway has made them accessible in multiple formats:

- **web** (a new reading each day appears online at the same link)
- **RSS** (subscribe to receive by RSS)
- **podcast** (subscribe to get your daily reading in audio)
- **iCal** (download an iCalendar file)
- **mobile** (view a new reading each day on your mobile device)
- **print** (download a PDF of the whole plan)

| Reading Plan | Format |
|---|---|
| Chronological Through the Bible chronologically (from Back to the Bible) | RSS iCal Mobile Print Email |

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|--|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Daily Light on the Daily Path Daily Light on the Daily Path – the ESV version of Samuel Bagster’s classic | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Daily Office Lectionary Daily Psalms, Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospels | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Daily Reading Bible Daily Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| ESV Study Bible Daily Psalms or Wisdom Literature; Pentateuch or the History of Israel; Chronicles or Prophets; and Gospels or Epistles | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Every Day in the Word Daily Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, Proverbs | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Literary Study Bible Daily Psalms or Wisdom Literature; Pentateuch or the History of Israel; Chronicles or Prophets; and Gospels or Epistles | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| M’Cheyne One-Year Reading Plan Daily Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms or Gospels | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Outreach Daily Old Testament, Psalms, and New Testament | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Outreach New Testament Daily New Testament. Read through the New Testament in 6 months | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |
| Through the Bible in a Year Daily Old Testament and New Testament | RSS | iCal | Mobile | Print | Email |

You can also access each of these Reading Plans as **podcasts**:

- Right-click (Ctrl-click on a Mac) the “RSS” link of the feed you want from the above list.
- Choose “Copy Link Location” or “Copy Shortcut.”
- Start iTunes.
- Under File, choose “Subscribe to Podcast.”
- Paste the URL into the box.
- Click OK.

For those looking for some books to have on hand as “helps” as you read through the Bible, here are a few suggestions:

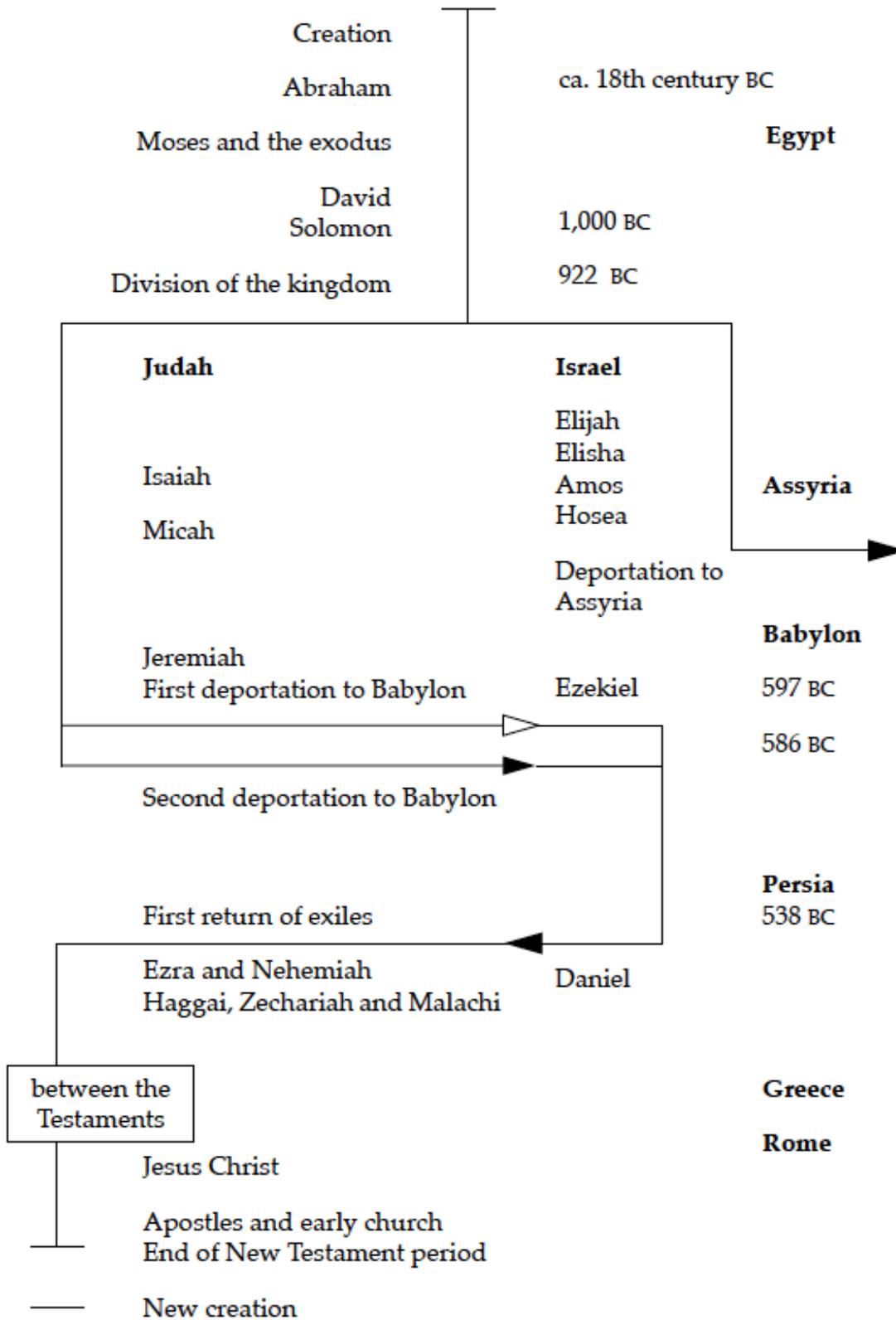
- D. A. Carson, [For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God’s Word, Volume 1](#)
- D. A. Carson, [For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God’s Word, Volume 2](#)
- D. A. Carson, [The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story](#)
- Jason DeRouchie, ed., [What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible](#)
- Michael Williams, [How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture](#)
- George Guthrie, [Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide to Understanding and Living God’s Word](#)
- Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, [How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guide](#)

- Grudem, Collins, Schreiner, eds., [*Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Bible Well*](#)
- Graeme Goldsworthy, [*According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*](#)
- Vaughn Roberts, [*God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*](#)
- D. A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Andy Naselli, [*Introducing the New Testament: A Short Guide to Its History and Message*](#)

As you read through the Bible, here's a chart you may want to print out and have on hand. It's from Goldsworthy's book [*According to Plan*](#). It's simplified, of course, but it can be helpful in locating where you're at in the biblical storyline and seeing the history of Israel "at a glance."

Goldsworthy's outline is below. You can also download this as a [PDF](#) (posted with permission).

Outline of biblical history



Taken from *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* by Graeme Goldsworthy. Copyright(c) Graeme Goldsworthy 1991. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515 (www.ivpress.com) and Inter-Varsity Press, Norton Street, Nottingham NG7 3HR England (www.ivbooks.com)

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| Creation by Word | Genesis 1 and 2 |
| The Fall | Genesis 3 |
| First Revelation of Redemption | Genesis 4-11 |
| Abraham Our Father | Genesis 12-50 |
| Exodus: Our Pattern of Redemption | Exodus 1-15 |
| New Life: Gift and Task | Exodus 16-40; Leviticus |
| The Temptation in the Wilderness | Numbers; Deuteronomy |
| Into the Good Land | Joshua; Judges; Ruth |
| God's Rule in God's Land | 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-10; 1 Chronicles; 2 Chronicles 1-9 |
| The Fading Shadow | 1 Kings 11-22; 2 Kings |
| There Is a New Creation | Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Esther |
| The Second Exodus | Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai |
| The New Creation for Us | Matthew; Mark; Luke; John |
| The New Creation in Us Initiated | Acts |
| The New Creation in Us Now | New Testament Epistles |
| The New Creation Consummated | The New Testament |

Below are Goldsworthy's summaries of each section.

Creation by Word

Genesis 1 and 2

In the beginning God created everything that exists. He made Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden. God spoke to them and gave them certain tasks in the world. For food he allowed them the fruit of all the trees in the garden except one. He warned them that they would die if they ate of that one tree.

The Fall

Genesis 3

The snake persuaded Eve to disobey God and to eat the forbidden fruit. She gave some to Adam and he ate also. Then God spoke to them in judgment, and sent them out of the garden into a world that came under the same judgment.

First Revelation of Redemption

Genesis 4-11

Outside Eden, Cain and Abel were born to Adam and Eve. Cain murdered Abel and Eve bore another son, Seth. Eventually the human race became so wicked that God determined to destroy every living thing with a flood. Noah and his family were saved by building a great boat at God's command. The human race began again with Noah and his three sons with their families. Sometime after the flood a still unified human race attempted a godless act to assert its power in the building of a high tower. God thwarted these plans by scattering the people and confusing their language.

Abraham Our Father

Genesis 12-50

Sometime in the early second millennium BC God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to Canaan. He promised to give this land to Abraham's descendants and to bless them as his people. Abraham went, and many years later he had a son, Isaac. Isaac in turn had two sons, Esau and Jacob. The promises of God were established with Jacob and his descendants. He had twelve sons, and in time they all went to live in Egypt because of famine in Canaan.

Exodus: Our Pattern of Redemption

Exodus 1-15

In time the descendants of Jacob living in Egypt multiplied to become a very large number of people. The Egyptians no longer regarded them with friendliness and made them slaves. God appointed Moses to be the one who would lead Israel out of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. When the moment came for Moses to demand the freedom of his people, the Pharaoh refused to let them go. Though Moses worked ten miracle-plagues which brought hardship, destruction, and death to the Egyptians. Finally, Pharaoh let Israel go, but then pursued them and trapped them at the Red Sea (or Sea of Reeds). The God opened a way in the sea for Israel to cross on dry land, but closed the water over the Egyptian army, destroying it.

New Life: Gift and Task

Exodus 16-40; Leviticus

After their release from Egypt, Moses led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. There God gave them his law which they were commanded to keep. At one point Moses held a covenant renewal ceremony in which the covenant arrangement was sealed in blood. However, while Moses was away on the mountain, the people persuaded Aaron to fashion a golden calf. Thus they showed their inclination to forsake the covenant and to engage in idolatry. God also commanded the building of the tabernacle and gave all the rules of sacrificial worship by which Israel might approach him.

The Temptation in the Wilderness

Numbers; Deuteronomy

After giving the law to the Israelites at Sinai, God directed them to go in and take possession of the promised land. Fearing the inhabitants of Canaan, they refused to do so, thus showing lack of confidence in the promises of God. The whole adult generation that had come out of Egypt, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, was condemned to wander and die in the desert. Israel was forbidden to dispossess its kinsfolk, the nation of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, but was given victory over other nations that opposed it. Finally, forty years after leaving Egypt, Israel arrived in the Moabite territory on the east side of the Jordan. Here Moses prepared the people for their possession of Canaan, and commissioned Joshua as their new leader.

Into the Good Land

Joshua; Judges; Ruth

Under Joshua's leadership the Israelites crossed the Jordan and began the task of driving out the inhabitants of Canaan. After the conquest the land was divided between the tribes, each being allotted its own region. Only the tribe of Levi was without an inheritance of land because of its special priestly relationship to God. There remained pockets of Canaanites in the land and, from time to time, these threatened Israel's hold on their new possession. From the one-man leaderships of Moses and Joshua, the nation moved into a period of relative instability during which judges exercised some measure of control over the affairs of the people.

God's Rule in God's Land

1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-10; 1 Chronicles; 2 Chronicles 1-9

Samuel became judge and prophet in all Israel at a time when the Philistines threatened the freedom of the nation. An earlier movement for kingship was received and the demand put to a reluctant Samuel. The first king, Saul, had a promising start to his reign but eventually showed himself unsuitable as the ruler of the covenant people. While Saul still reigned, David was anointed to succeed him. Because of Saul's jealousy David became an outcast, but

when Saul died in battle David returned and became king (about 1000 BC). Due to his success Israel became a powerful and stable nation. He established a central sanctuary at Jerusalem, and created a professional bureaucracy and permanent army. David's son Solomon succeeded him (about 961 BC) and the prosperity of Israel continued. The building of the temple at Jerusalem was one of Solomon's most notable achievements.

The Fading Shadow

1 Kings 11-22; 2 Kings

Solomon allowed political considerations and personal ambitions to sour his relationship with God, and this in turn had a bad effect on the life of Israel. Solomon's son began an oppressive rule which led to the rebellion of the northern tribes and the division of the kingdom. Although there were some political and religious high points, both kingdoms went into decline. A new breed of prophets warned against the direction of national life, but matters went from bad to worse. In 722 BC the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the power of the Assyrian empire. Then, in 586 BC the southern kingdom of Judah was devastated by the Babylonians. Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, and a large part of the population was deported to Babylon.

There Is a New Creation

Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Esther

The prophets of Israel warned of the doom that would befall the nation. When the first exiles were taken to Babylon in 597 BC, Ezekiel was among them. Both prophets ministered to the exiles. Life for the Jews (the people of Judah) in Babylon was not all bad, and in time many prospered. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel indicate a certain normality to the experience, while Daniel and Esther highlight some of the difficulties and suffering experienced in an alien and oppressive culture.

The Second Exodus

Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai

In 539 BC Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian empire. The following year, Cyrus the king allowed the Jews to return home and to set up a Jewish state within the Persian empire. Great difficulty was experienced in re-establishing the nation. There was local opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Many of the Jews did not return but stayed on in the land of their exile. In the latter part of the fourth century BC, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire. The Jews entered a long and difficult period in which Greek culture and religion challenged their trust in God's covenant promises. In 63 BC Pompey conquered Palestine and the Jews found themselves a province of the Roman empire.

The New Creation for Us

Matthew; Mark; Luke; John

The province of Judea, the homeland of the Jews, came under Roman rule in 63 BC. During the reign of Caesar Augustus, Jesus was born at Bethlehem, probably about the year 4 BC. John, known as the Baptist, prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus. This ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing began with Jesus' baptism and lasted about three years. Growing conflict with the Jews and their religious leaders led eventually to Jesus being sentenced to death by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He was executed by the Romans just outside Jerusalem, but rose from death two days afterward and appealed to his followers on a number of occasions. After a period with them, Jesus was taken up to heaven.

The New Creation in Us Initiated

Acts

After Jesus had ascended, his disciples waited in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began the task of proclaiming Jesus. As the missionary implications of the gospel became clearer to the first Christians, the local proclamation was extended to world evangelization. The apostle Paul took the gospel to Asia Minor and Greece, establishing many churches as he went. Eventually a church flourished at the heart of the empire of Rome.

The New Creation in Us Now

New Testament Epistles

As the gospel made inroads into pagan societies it encountered many philosophies and non-Christian ideas which challenged the apostolic message. The New Testament epistles shows that the kind of pressures to adopt pagan ideas that had existed for the people of God in Old Testament times were also a constant threat to the churches. The real danger to Christian teaching was not so much in direct attacks upon it, but rather in the subtle distortion of Christian ideas. Among the troublemakers were the Judaizers who added Jewish law-keeping to the gospel. The Gnostics also undermined the gospel with elements of Greek philosophy and religion.

The New Creation Consummated

The New Testament

God is Lord over history and therefore, when he so desires, he can cause the events of the future to be recorded. All section of the New Testament contain references to things which have not yet happened, the most significant being the return of Christ and the consummation of the kingdom of God. No clues to the actual chronology are given, but it is certain that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. The old creation will be undone and the new creation will take its place.