



TBC's Bible Reading Plan

Or, Professor Horner's Bible-Reading System *Light*

My prayer for Christ's church among us is that we would strive after an unprecedented unity in love to God and one another—through a deliberate commitment to the holy Word of God. A knowledge and love of God's Word is essential to our worship, spiritual unity and edification individually and corporately, and our gospel impact in the world.

I am proposing that every one of us commit to reading through the Bible this year, preferably together. To this end, I am recommending a Bible reading plan particularly designed to expose us to the whole counsel of God every day. I trust that there will be unforeseen benefits to reading through the Scriptures together as a church.

May God bless our efforts to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Why another Bible reading plan?

I know what you are thinking: there are already so many Bible reading plans out there, why take the time to arrange a new one? First, it is certainly not for the sake of novelty. I fully realize that there are many advantages to going with a well-established reading plan (i.e. proven over time, widely adopted, featured in many of the handheld and online tools now available, some are even printed in Bibles, etc.). It is for suitability to a church-wide reading endeavor that offers more than sequential and chronological plans.

Second, this plan is not actually all that new. It is an adapted version of Professor Grant Horner's Bible-Reading System, which has been profitably used for over thirty years.

Third, no other plan that I know offers the basic benefits of Professor Horner's approach without some significant measure of repetition. I am not discouraging repetition, I am simply encouraging regular exposure to the Word of God for the widest possible audience.

Why not just follow Professor Horner's system?

Professor Horner's Bible-Reading System calls for a substantial amount of repetition. Now I know that part of the value of his approach is just that: saturation through repetition. But the goal of this light version is more particularly interested in exposure to the whole counsel of the Word of God rather than saturation through repetition.

Many have never read through the Bible, and still others are not accustomed to regular, daily Bible-reading. This plan is specifically tailored for church-wide participation.

The same basic principles apply but with the following modifications:

- Each day 5 chapters are read instead of 10.
- The schedule is tailored to weekday reading, allowing different readings (including make-ups) on weekends.
- The various lists are regrouped to allow for minimal repetition and nearly equal distribution across the different groups of writings.
- The plan is extensible, offering optional readings for further interweaving and saturation of God's Word while maintaining a synchronized baseline for everyone.

Why are you asking me to follow this reading plan?

For unity as a church under daily exposure to the Word of God.

Please know that I am not interested in coercing you to follow this reading plan, nor do I wish anyone to take on a negative sense or guilty feeling if you choose not to follow it. To be sure, this plan will not be equally appreciated by all, nor will it appeal to all. We all read, relate, and absorb things differently. It is quite likely that for some, other plans will suit you better.

Please keep in mind the goal of this plan: unity in worship to God. Reading together will afford us increasing opportunity to engage in spiritual discussions and more readily relate to one another in the discipline of living as people of the Word. It is intended to encourage a deepening unity and spiritual health for the church—for Christ to the glory of God and the joy of man.

How does it work?

Each weekday you read five chapters of Scripture—one chapter from five different books.

All of the books in the Bible are grouped into five different lists. Each weekday you read one chapter from a book out of each list. Each list represents a basic category of Scripture: Torah & Wisdom, Psalms & Proverbs, Israel's History, Prophets, and New Covenant. This particular grouping optimizes exposure to the full counsel of God's word with minimal repetition.

You progress through each of the five lists one chapter at a time, book by book. At the end of a book; go to the next book in that list. In the case of Psalms & Proverbs, when you have completed both of those books, simply start over from Psalm 1 (that will be on reading day 182).

Example:

- **Day 1** — Genesis 1, Psalm 1, Joshua 1, Isaiah 1, Matthew 1
- **Day 2** — Genesis 2, Psalm 2, Joshua 2, Isaiah 2, Matthew 2
- **Day 29** — Genesis 29, Psalm 29, Judges 5, Isaiah 29, Mark 1

Guidelines for Reading

1. **Persevere!** Do not quit. If you miss a day, or even several days, get back into the schedule. Pickup where the schedule is and not where you left off. This plan allows for catch-up on weekends. But this is not a license for laziness! Keep up on your reading, this is key.
2. **Discipline is key!** Remember the first several weeks may be challenging. Persevere and be encouraged to know that with practice discipline becomes easier. Thank God that we are creatures of habit, and take seriously your responsibility to form godly habits.
3. **Read quickly for exposure!** You will have to discipline yourself to read straight through the chapter without stopping, rereading, cross-referencing, consulting commentaries, taking notes, or otherwise studying the passage. Reading for exposure is the key. It is not reading for memorization or theological synthesis, it is reading for the overall sense, one chapter at a time. Having said that, mindless scanning, or 'speed-reading', is not the intent either. As Horner says, "Read as fast as you comfortably can with moderate retention."¹
4. **Review later!** It is important that you do not stop reading. But it is inevitable that you will come across something that strikes your curiosity or raises a question or unearths a treasure you have not before noticed. I recommend simply (and quickly) taking note of the chapter or verse *after* you have finished reading it. This may furnish excellent reading and study time on weekends!

¹ Horner points out that "there are different kinds of reading: super-quick skimming, careful moderate-paced, studying the text, deep meditation. You should be between the first and the second. Most people decrease their time spent and increase their retention after just two-three weeks! . . . Don't look up anything you 'don't get' – real understanding will come through contextualizing by reading a LOT of scripture over time. Get through the text!"

5. **Use one Bible!** This is important for cultivating a deepening intimacy with the Word of God. Staying with one Bible will assist you in recalling where something is written and eventually its context.

Optional Readings

If you are able, I encourage reading more than what is prescribed by this plan. You can come very close to Professor Horner's Bible-Reading System using this plan with very little effort.

List 1 — Rotate through both subgroups in this list. If you are reading through Genesis-Deuteronomy, simply read also through Job-Song of Solomon. For example, on day one, for List 1, you would read Genesis 1 and Job 1. Rotate through in order. Continue cycling through the Wisdom books as you read through the Torah. When you finish the Torah, start over. *This will give you two chapters per day from list 1.*

List 2 — Instead of reading one chapter from Psalms OR Proverbs, read one chapter from Psalms AND Proverbs each day. Simply cycle through each book (restart from the beginning of that book) when you reach its end. *This will give you two chapters per day from list 2.*

List 5 — In this list, you have four sub lists: *Gospels* (Matthew-John), *Acts, Paul's Letters* (Romans-Philemon), *General Letters* (Hebrews-Revelation). Stay on track with the group by reading through the scheduled book for that day, but then choose to read a chapter from each of the three other sub lists. For example, if the plan calls for reading Matthew 1 on day one, you would also read Acts 1, Romans 1, and Hebrews 1. Cycle through each of the optional reading sub lists while you progress through the aggregate list. *This will give you four chapters per day from list 5.*

If you include the optional readings, you will stay in sync with the group while experiencing the same saturation as with Professor Horner's Bible-Reading System.

What are the advantages of this plan?²

- Exposure to the breadth of God's Word every day
- Constant variety (which is enjoyable and stimulating) with constant conviction (which is edifying and sanctifying)
- Experience the interrelationship of Scripture — as Professor Horner says, "you will experience the Bible commenting on itself in constantly changing ways—the Reformer's principle of '*scriptura interpretans scripturam*' -- 'scripture interpreting scripture' IN ACTION!"
- Unity as a church — there is no higher means of pursuing one mind in one faith and in one love under one Lord than trekking in one accord through the one and only Holy Bible.

~*Sola Scriptura!*

² There are obvious disadvantages to this approach; including: (a) it does not facilitate the chronological or canonical flow of redemptive history; (b) it lacks the aid of dwelling on immediate context; (c) it makes it more challenging to recall precisely where you read something. But these drawbacks are answered by the goal of this plan. It is not design as an introduction to the Bible, gospel, or God's redemptive history (answering: a). It is not intended as a Bible study (answering: b). The advantages of breadth exposure have their cost (answer: c). But two observations should be considered. First, this reading plan is not intended to displace personal study; it is a daily reading plan. Weekend reading may supplement more contextually focused studies. Second, As Professor Horner says, "real understanding will come through contextualizing by reading a lot of scripture over time."