

Five Lane Bible Reading Program

Prologue

Everyone says, "Read the Bible." But nobody tells you how to do it.

So you try reading it from cover to cover and do not get very far. Thus the reading gets broken.

This unique plan tells you how to pick up reading from broken points. It divides the Bible into five unequal but meaningful sections. You read from all five sections in a parallel manner—and hence the name Five Lane Bible Reading Program. These sections are:

1. Genesis to Ruth
2. 1 Samuel to Job
3. Psalms to Song of Songs
4. Isaiah to Malachi
5. Matthew to Revelation

This kind of reading helps you see the Bible's unity of thought. This happens quite effortlessly as you recognize passages from different sections saying the same truth inter-relate and inter-lock with each other in your mind.

The advantages of this plan is that you can have flexible timings and flexible number of chapters to read according to your choice. It is a plan which helps you read more in less time. It helps you enjoy the infinite variety of the Scriptures. It also breaks down tough and seemingly boring portions into easy manageable units.

Above all, this plan helps you fall in love with God's Word and find delight in it. And it helps you hear from God in your good times and times of need.

Introduction

The Bible was written by around 40 authors over a period of 1600 years spanning from around 1500 B.C. to around 100 A.D. These people were all inspired by the Holy Spirit to write though they wrote in different times and in different circumstances. The following scriptures make this point clear:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV).

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21 NIV).

From these passages it is clear that the Bible is the Word of God.

Let us take note of two more characteristics of God's Word:

1. The Bible is not just a compilation of words; but it is a living and powerful Word.
 - (a) For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 NIV).
 - (b) "Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29 NIV).
2. The Bible is unchanging and endures forever.
 - (a) The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8 NIV).
 - (b) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33 NIV).

Chapter and Verse Divisions

The Bible consists of 1189 chapters. 929 chapters are in the Old Testament and 260 chapters are in the New Testament. Originally the Books of the Bible were not divided into chapters and verses. It was introduced later for having ease in reading and studying the Bible.

Importance of Reading the Bible

Let us look at some of the benefits that we get from reading the Bible:

1. It keeps us from sinning (Psalm 119:11).
2. It purifies us (John 15:3).
3. It is our guiding light (Psalm 119:105).
4. It gives us hope (Romans 15:4).
5. It gives us faith (Romans 10:17).
6. It gives us joy (Jeremiah 15:16).
7. It helps us to know God's will (Daniel 9:2 & Jeremiah 25:11).
8. It helps us to realize the fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 4:16-21 & Isaiah 61:1-3).
9. It makes us blessed (Psalm 1:1-3).
10. It helps us to overcome temptation (Matthew 4:4,7,10 & Luke 4:4,8,12).

Reader's Difficulties

1. The problem of lack of time

This is a problem faced by those who are reading the Bible for the first time. Actually, it is not a problem of lack of time. The reality is that the mind of the reader is reluctant to find time to read the Bible because he does not find it attractive nor has he realized the benefits of reading the same.

2. The problem of stopping midway

There are many who do not know where to begin and how to continue reading the Bible. Usually it is found that those who start reading the Bible begin at the first book which is the Book of Genesis. But when they encounter some difficulty in reading they stop reading midway. After some time they will start reading again, beginning with Genesis. This cycle is repeated many times and it is a common occurrence in the life of many people.

Five Lane Plan

This is a reading program which has been designed to meet the difficulties mentioned above. **According to this plan the Bible has been divided into 5 Sections.**

Section 1: *Beginnings*: Genesis to Ruth (236 Chapters)

This section talks about the beginning of God's creation, the origin of sin, suffering and death on earth. It also talks about the flood of Noah's time, the calling of Abram, the lives of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. It talks about how the people of Israel went down to Egypt and came back through a mighty deliverance under the leadership of Moses, the institution of the Passover, the giving of the ten commandments and various other laws, the setting up of God's tabernacle, and the conquest of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Finally, it talks about the period when judges ruled the land and about the marriage of Boaz to Ruth, who together then became the ancestors of David.

Section 2: *Nation Building*: 1 Samuel to Job (242 Chapters)

This section talks about how the nation of Israel consolidated itself, first under Samuel, who was the last judge of Israel and then under Saul, the first king of Israel. It gives us a detailed account of David's life and reign; followed by the reign of his son, Solomon, and his building of the temple of God in Jerusalem. It also talks about how the kingdom was divided into two and how they kept sinning against God and how God finally allowed Assyrian and Babylonian armies to destroy their nation. This section also contains the stories of the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall and the temple under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, when the people return from exile and also carries the story of Esther, who spoke up for God's people in crisis. Finally this section ends with the story of Job's life; his loss, suffering and restoration.

Section 3: *Poetry*: Psalms to Song of Songs (201 Chapters)

This section mainly consists of poetry. It begins with Psalms which are actually sung in the Hebrew language. They reflect human experiences, emotions, man's longings for God and contain praise, thanksgiving and worship. It has inspired people down through the centuries. Most of the psalms were written by David, "Israel's singer of songs." This section also contains the Book of Proverbs which is fully of wisdom for practical living. Then comes the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is a philosophical reflection on life with the conclusion that fearing God and keeping His commandments is what matters at the end. The final Book in this section is Song of Songs which praises the beauty of love in marriage.

Section 4: *Prophets*: Isaiah to Malachi (250 Chapters)

This section contains the writings of the prophets. These books contain some great visions of

God, great prayers, great promises, great warnings, great judgments and great prophecies of the salvation to come. There are many great references to the restoration of the people of God from exile and judgment, the plan of the new temple, and the coming rule of the Messiah at the end of Time. The Book of Isaiah has been a favorite of Christians down through the centuries with its famous prophecies about Jesus' birth and death. The Books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah are vital in understanding the message of Revelation and God's plan for the end times. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. His was, in a sense, the last voice of prophecy in the Old Testament. For the next 400 years there were no prophets until the coming of John the Baptist who announced the arrival of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Section 5: *New Testament: Matthew to Revelation* (260 Chapters)

This section contains the story of the birth, life, work, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the four writers of the gospels containing the story of Jesus' life. The Book of Acts is the story of the beginning of the Church; starting with the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on believers on the day of Pentecost. Then we have a lot of letters or epistles written by Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude. Finally we have the Book of Revelation written by John while he was at the island of Patmos in exile. It gives us the strong conviction that God is on His throne, and every event of history is moving towards a God-destined end. It tells us that there is coming great and fearful events in this world. It tells us that God has a special plan for the nation of Israel and that He will intervene in world affairs and bring an end to war, sin, suffering and death. It also speaks of the final doom of Satan and all his agents who led the world astray. The book of Revelation closes with the promise that Jesus is coming soon!

Characteristics of the Five Lane Reading Plan

1. **Balanced Food**

The Bible contains such varied elements as History, Biographies, Poetry, Prophecies, Gospels, Letters and Revelation. It is doubtful whether there is any other one book which maintains such variety in content. Those who use this reading plan will read from all the five sections at the same time in a parallel manner. This will help the reader to have a balanced diet every day which includes all the ingredients found in the content of the Bible.

2. **Habit Forming**

Bible reading is limited to a few favorite verses or chapters to a beginning reader. They read only these portions each time they read the Bible. As a result they miss great treasures from God's Word. This plan helps the reader to overcome this pattern of reading. Instead it makes Bible reading a daily habit. That helps him to have a strong urge to read the Bible everyday whether he is feeling like reading or not.

3. **Enjoy Parallelism**

This reading plan makes extensive use of one of the main characteristics of the Bible. It is the fact that important truths are recorded in two or more places in the Bible. So the right interpretation of the Bible is found in the Bible itself. But it is the Holy Spirit, the real author of the Bible, who reveals it to the reader (John 14:26, 16:12-15).

Since the reader reads from all the five sections at the same time in a parallel manner, it becomes easy for the reader to identify the inter-related passages in the Bible. When the reader finds such inter-related passages he will feel the Bible come to life. The reading also becomes exciting as you keep discovering truths that lay unnoticed before.

Examples to show the inter-relatedness of scriptures in different sections:

(a) An example which speaks of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross

Section 1: Exodus 12 —the Passover Lamb (Ref. 1 Corinthians 5:7 "for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.")

Section 2: 2 Chronicles 30 & 35 – Hezekiah and Josiah (Ref. 2 Kings 23:21 to 23) celebrate the Passover

Section 3: Psalm 22 —exact descriptions about the events on the day of crucifixion

Section 4: Isaiah 53 —the sufferings and death of Jesus foretold

Section 5: Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 & John 19 – the sufferings and death of Jesus described

(b) An example of description of sin

Section 1: Exodus 20:13,14 & Deuteronomy 5:17,18 says not to commit murder or adultery

Section 2: 2 Samuel 11 to 12:25 records David violating both these commandments and confessing his sins to God

Section 3: Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance over these sins

Section 5: Matthew 5:21–32. Jesus reinforces the commandments that say not to commit murder or adultery

(c) The three references to the person of Melchizedek in the Bible

Section 1: Genesis 14:18 to 20

Section 2: Psalm 110:4

Section 5: Hebrews 6:20 to 7:28

When you read from the five sections at the same time in a parallel manner, inter-related passages like quoted above will interlock and interlace in your mind. This will give you a really satisfying Bible reading as well as open your eyes to the treasures hidden in God's Word.

4. Fresh Experience (every time)

This reading plan has yet another special feature. There is difference in the total number of chapters in each section. Because of this, each consecutive time you read the Bible, the portions you will be reading from the five sections at one time will not be the same. In other words, each time you read the Bible according to this plan, passages that you will be reading at one time will be different from the last time reading.

Example: The first time you read the Bible you will be reading Genesis 1, 1 Samuel 1, Psalm 1, Isaiah 1 and Matthew 1 at the same time (or within two or three days' time). The next time you reach Genesis 1 (Section 1), you will be reading the last part of Job (Section 2), Psalms somewhere around the 35th to 45th chapter (Section 3), the Prophets somewhere in Zechariah (Section 4) and the letters of John (Section 5). Exact portions may vary slightly according to the reading plan you follow.

So you can see that every time you will read the Bible you will be reading different portions at the same time. It is highly doubtful whether you will be repeating the same combination of reading portions even once in your lifetime. This peculiarity of the reading plan keeps Bible reading a fresh experience always. Please see "What to do when a section ends" for more details.

Preliminaries

1. Decide how much time you can spend to read the Bible everyday.
2. Decide how many chapters you want to read everyday.
3. Decide from how many sections you want to read everyday.
4. Fix a goal as to how many times you want to complete reading the Bible in one year (or in 5 years).
5. Select a suitable reading plan from the 5 plans given below

The Five Reading Plans

Plan 1: *The Bronze Plan*

This Plan helps you to finish reading the Bible nearly 3 times in a year. For that you can follow this pattern.

Read 5 chapters from section 1 and 5 chapters from section 2 on day 1. Then read 5 chapters from section 3 and 5 chapters from section 4 on day 2. On day 3 read 5 chapters from section 5 and 5 chapters from section 1.

Keep a small notebook to help you keep track of your reading program. This record will remind you *from where to start reading* when the turn comes to read from a section.

After day 1, your record will look like this:

Genesis 6 1 Samuel 6

After day 2 your record will look like this:

Genesis 6 1 Samuel 6 Psalm 6 Isaiah 6
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So at the end of reading on day 3 your record will look like this:

Genesis 6 1 Samuel 6 Psalm 6 Isaiah 6 Matthew 6 Genesis 11

After completing reading on day 3 you can score off Genesis 6 when you record Genesis 11. That means on day 4 you will start reading with 1 Samuel 6.

Plan 2: *The Silver Plan*

If you want to finish the Bible nearly 4 1/2 times in a year (nearly 9 times in two years); read 5 chapters from three sections every day.

After day 1, your record will look like this:

Genesis 6 1 Samuel 6 Psalm 6

After day 2, the continuation of your record will look like this:

Genesis 6 1 Samuel 6 Psalm 6 Isaiah 6 Matthew 6 Genesis 11

On day 3 you can start reading from 1 Samuel 6.

Plan 3: *The Gold Plan*

If you want to read the Bible nearly 6 times in a year, read 10 chapters from 2 sections each day. Your record will show like this:

At the end of day 1:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11

At the end of day 2 the record continues:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11
Psalm 11
Isaiah 11

At the end of day 3 the record continues:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11
Psalm 11
Isaiah 11
Matthew 11
Genesis 21

On day 4 you can start reading from 1 Samuel 11.

Likewise you will be able to read the Bible nearly 6 times in a year. (Imagine, in 5 years time, you will be able to read the Bible nearly 30 times). Approximately every two months (60 days) you will finish reading the Bible once.

Plan 4: *The Diamond Plan*

This plan enables the reader to complete the Bible nearly 9 times a year. For this, read 10 chapters from 3 sections everyday. It means a total of 30 chapters each day. Approximately you complete reading the Bible once every 40 days.

At the end of day 1 your record will show like this:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11
Psalm 11

At the end of day 2 the record continues:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11
Psalm 11
Isaiah 11
Matthew 11
Genesis 21

On day 3 you can start reading from 1 Samuel 11.

Plan 5: *The Platinum Plan*

This plan enables the reader to complete the Bible 14 times in a year. Read 10 chapters from all 5 sections every day. It means a total of 50 chapters a day. Approximately you complete reading the Bible once every 24 days.

At the end of day 1 your record will look like this:

Genesis 11
1 Samuel 11
Psalm 11
Isaiah 11
Matthew 11

On day 2 you can start reading from Genesis 11 and at the end of day 2 your record will look like:

~~Genesis 11~~
~~1 Samuel 11~~
~~Psalms 11~~
~~Isaiah 11~~
~~Matthew 11~~
 Genesis 21
 1 Samuel 21
 Psalm 21
 Isaiah 21
 Matthew 21

Those who find it difficult to read two or three sections in a single sitting due to time constraints can read the Bible in two or more sessions. You can read one or two sections during your morning reading session and the rest in the afternoon, evening or night.

Refer Table ?? to compare various reading plans.

What to do when a Section Ends

Always remember this principle: The last chapter of every section is followed by the first chapter of that section.

Explanation:

It is to be noted that you should not stop when you reach the end of a section. For example you are reading 5 chapters a day according to Plan 1 (Bronze) or Plan 2 (Silver) . Section 3 (Poetry) will be the section that ends first. On the day Section 3 gets over, and before you start reading, your record will say: Song of Songs 8.

Don't stop reading after finishing that one chapter. Your quota is 5 chapters for that section that day. So you should read 4 more chapters from the beginning of that section. That is 4 chapters from Psalms. Your record will show Psalm 5 for the next time reading.

This means that you need not wait for other sections to be over to start the next cycle of Bible reading. As mentioned earlier the advantage is that you won't be reading the same portions simultaneously every time you read the Bible.

Table 1: Comparing various reading plans

Plans	Goal for a year	Chapters/Section	Sections/Day	Chapters/Day
1. Bronze	3	5	2	10
2. Silver	4 1/2	5	3	15
3. Gold	6	10	2	20
4. Diamond	9	10	3	30
5. Platinum	14	10	5	50

A Note of Encouragement

- The first time you read the entire Bible using any of the reading plans above you will find that only around 20% of what you read sinks into your heart. Do not get disheartened. After every reading the percentage of understanding will keep going up. So cheer up!

- Sometimes you may miss reading for one day or some days. It can happen at times. There is no need to feel guilty about it and stop reading altogether. That temptation is from Satan and should be resisted. Return to reading as soon as possible.
- One important thing to note is that you should not skip reading the Bible simply because you are not “feeling good” or because you are not in a “right mood” to read the Bible. Make it a discipline to read the Bible at a set time everyday. And as soon as you start reading the Bible, you will find your heart warm up to its contents.
- One deception that Satan uses to keep us from reading God’s Word is that he repeatedly tells us that today’s portions are difficult or boring. And many times we believe these lies and do not read the Bible. Go ahead and read and you will be surprised to see the very portions that Satan told you were difficult or boring bring strength to your soul! (He will also tell that “today’s reading did you no good. You just wasted your time,” as soon as you finish reading. Don’t listen to this liar!).
- A problem that can trouble you while reading is the difference in impact. On some days you may feel totally enriched after the reading session. On other days, now and then, you may feel totally dry after the reading session. No need to be upset about these variations. They are very normal. It depends much on our physical, mental and spiritual condition during those times.
- In connection to this it should also be understood that some portions that really had an impact on you last time you read it may not have the same impact during the current reading and vice versa. This is also a normal occurrence.
- Sometimes you may read the Bible, but be unable to finish all the sections you wanted to read that day according to the reading plan that you are following. No need to get discouraged at all. Trusting God, continue your reading the next day. Even if you do not reach your goal by the end of the year, to your amazement you will find that you have finished reading the Scriptures far more times than you could have done otherwise!

The Importance of Prayer

Pray for a moment before you start reading the Bible:

1. For understanding well the portion being read.
2. For receiving the guidance needed for that day.
3. For experiencing the presence of God while reading.

You can use the prayer of the psalmist: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18).

Epilogue

1. The Five Lane Bible Reading Program has transformed the lives of those who have followed it.
2. They found that this Reading Program had enabled them to keep on reading without getting distracted during times of discouragement, doubt and busy schedules. This is possible because the reader has a definite goal in mind and there is great variety in the pattern of reading.
3. The impact that this Reading Program will have on your life and work will be immense. You will definitely be inspired to have a close walk with God.
4. As far as possible, it would be good to begin each day by reading the Bible. It is that time of the day that you will be fresh. Your mind will not be distracted. There won’t be much noise. And you will have the satisfaction of beginning the day with God. From experience it has been proved that there is a different quality of life during the day one had begun by spending time to read God’s Word first thing in the morning.

5. It would be good to keep a separate diary or notebook to record the inspiring thoughts that you get during each day's reading session. In this you can also note down the verses that spoke to you and the inter-related scriptures you were able to find. This recording would also be a record of your spiritual journey through the years.

Dedication

We are submitting this Five Lane Bible Reading Program for your benefit and dedicating it to the great glory of God.

Appendix

1. The words "nearly" and "approximately" are used in the description of the five plans because some sections finish before the time specified and some sections finish later.
2. Every time you reach Matthew Chapter 1 (Section 5) in your cycle of reading you can note that you have completed reading the entire Bible one more time.
3. There is another method by which you can assess whether you were able to attain your goal for the year. Keep count of the number of chapters that you miss reading. At the end of the year, divide the total number you get by 1250. The answer you get will tell you how many times you were not able to read the Bible that year according to the reading plan you follow.

Example:

- (a) A person who reads the Bible according to the Bronze Plan (Plan 1) has to read 10 chapters (5 chapters x 2 sections) every day. If he does so without a break then he would be able to complete reading the Bible nearly 3 times in a year. Imagine that, due to a variety of reasons, this person was not able to read 450 chapters (accumulated total at the end of the year) that year.

Then $450/1250 = 0.36$

That means the reader could not read the Bible 0.36 times that year.

- (b) From this the reader can also find out how many times he was able to read the Bible that year. According to the Bronze plan, if the reader reads without a break, he would complete the Bible nearly 3 times in a year.

Then $3 - 0.36 = 2.64$

That means the reader could complete reading the Bible 2.64 times that year. Over a period of many years the results can be totaled to find out exactly how many times you were able to read the Bible. For example, in a period of five years.

4. Since the total number of chapters in Section 4 (250 chapters) and Section 5 (260 chapters) are multiples of 5 and 10, they will always end at Malachi 4 and Revelation 22 respectively every time you read those sections. Those who wish to add variety to their reading may read one chapter extra from section 4 and section 5 on any one day and record it in your notebook. Then you will feel a continuity in the reading of sections 4 and 5 since they will not end exactly at Malachi 4 and Revelation 22 respectively.
5. The four books in Section 3 (Poetry) of the Five Lane Plan lie very close to our human experiences. Therefore the Five Lane Plan is arranged in such a way as to enable you to read this section more times than the other sections (Those who wish may treat Psalm 119 as 22 different chapters for easy reading.)

6. Gear Shift

When you get more time to read the Bible you can shift from your normal reading plan to a higher reading plan for some days at least as shown below:

Bronze plan (Plan 1) to Silver plan (Plan 2)

Gold plan (Plan 3) to Diamond plan (Plan 4)

Diamond plan (Plan 4) to Platinum plan (Plan 5)

Those who follow the Silver plan (Plan 2), after completing their allotted quota of 15 chapters a day, can read 5 chapters each from the following one or two sections to make gear shift possible.

Those who follow the Platinum plan (Plan 5), after completing their allotted quota of 50 chapters a day, can read 10 chapters each from the following one or two sections to make gear shift possible.

It's benefits are felt in three ways:

- (a) It gives a varied and intense reading experience.
- (b) This kind of gear shift is doubly useful when you desire a closer walk with God. It definitely creates a double impact.
- (c) Gear shift also comes useful when you are preparing your mind for taking important decisions (like decisions for jobs, marriage, travel, medical treatment etc.). Gear shift will enable you to take the correct decisions. Thereby you will have the comfort, courage and confidence that God's blessings are upon your decisions.

Love's Ark wishes you a blessed reading of the Bible!

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