

## Podcast 247 Developing the Habit of Daily Bible Reading

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for families that You've created and designed, and thank You for inspiration from Your Holy Spirit. And I pray that you'll bless this podcast as we discuss this next topic, and may it be edifying and encouraging to all who listen. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The topic today is daily Bible reading, and I know that you and I have made this a practice for some time and we're going to give ideas and share resources. On my website, BuildingFaithFamilies.org, I have a tab at the top entitled "Bible Resources." When you click on this link (<http://www.buildingfaithfamilies.org/bible-resources/>) you will discover several Bible reading schedules: There is one for the Old Testament, one for the New Testament and Psalms, and another that is a simplified Old Testament with just one chapter a day. I also wrote a brief three page list of passages called; "Twenty-Five Benefits from Reading the Word of God." I'm going to read a couple of them right now. I'm not even sure we need this because I think that most of us would agree that reading the Bible is important and understanding it is important.

### Reasons for Reading the Word of God

#1. The Scripture points me to Jesus. John 5:39 says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about Me."

#2: Every word of Scripture is inspired. 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired of God, profitable for teaching, correction, etc." One of my favorite passages is, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." God's Word is going to stand the test of eternity.

#3 If you ask me why I read the whole Bible every year, here is my answer. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus was speaking, and He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Every word. Even the less inspiring portions like 1 Chronicles 1-9 which I recently read. These are not my favorite chapters in this inspired book, reading lists of names in a genealogy. But I tell myself, "Yes, but that portion is a part of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Word of God, chose these lists to be added. As I'm reading Leviticus I've found some wonderful insights. All Scripture is inspired, and every word is profitable. When Jesus was speaking in Matthew 4:4, He was quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, so obviously Jesus was familiar with the Old Testament, because that was His Bible. We know that the Old Testament is the basis and the foundation of the New Testament. It's really hard to understand the New Testament without reading the Old Testament.

It was a shock to me when I went to seminary as a young believer when I went to seminary and discovered how many of my classmates, and myself, had not read the entire Bible. One class I took was, "An Overview of the Bible." Our primary assignment was to write a one-page summary of each book of the Bible. During the class I asked

some of my friends, “Why did you take this class?” They said, “Because I’ve never read the whole Bible.” I hadn’t either, and we were trying to become familiar with the Word of God. It seemed sad to me that we were taking classes in theology and church history, but we hadn’t even read our Bible through.

While I was at seminary, I started attending a local church about three miles down the road, and these people knew their Bible. While Sunday morning was more of a gospel service, Sunday night was a deeper Bible study. One evening I remember looking at some of the seminarians who would go with me, as the teacher asked a question that we had no idea how to answer. But these electricians and carpenters, everyday guys, knew the Word, and they would say, “Oh, that was King Hezekiah, or quote a passage from the book of Isaiah.” We would look at each other and be convicted that we did not know the Word of God as well as these people did.

As I continued to attend the church, I found this little yellow folded-up piece of paper, half of a sheet of 8.5 by 11 folded into thirds, and it had a Bible reading chart which started in January 1 with Genesis 1–3, and finished the last three chapters of Revelation on December 31. I picked up that Bible reading chart and started that very day which happened to be September 20. I read the book of Joel that day Joel. In my Bible, I have “Begun” written in the front of the Joel. I read through the rest of that year and followed this schedule every year until we had a young family.

In our church, I was trying to encourage other families to read the Word of God together, but that schedule is pretty hard to follow as a young person, so I came up with the schedules I referenced earlier. I my New Testament/Psalms schedule, which runs from January to December, you read Matthew, Mark, and 30 Psalms. Then you read Luke and John, and another 30 Psalms. If you follow this approach you will read one chapter a day and complete the whole New Testament with 261 chapters and all 150 Psalms.

Then I made a simplified Old Testament chart for somebody who wanted to read two chapters a day and become familiar with the Old Testament. This consists of one chapter of the Old Testament a day, covering all of Genesis, Exodus, a few chapters from Leviticus, a bunch of Numbers, all of Deuteronomy and the rest made up of the historical books. If you read those two charts together, you have two chapters that you’re reading a day. After you have made a habit of reading God’s Word regularly, eventually you could do the complete New Testament and Old Testament charts, which I follow.

Today I’m immersed in 2 Chronicles in the Old Testament and Psalm 79 for my New Testament/Psalms reading. I’ve been following this since the 80s, and I really like it. I recognize that there’s no one chart that’s better than another, but if you want to give one a try, you can download them from the website. I keep mine as a PDF on my computer, so I just look in the morning and see what it is.

One of my favorite things to do as I’m reading through the Old Testament is think about Jesus reading the same passages. I just finished reading through Kings,

where I followed the lives of Elijah and Elisha. I thought, “Those two men really encouraged Jesus.”

Remember when Elisha fed a bunch of people with a little bit of food which they said couldn't be done. “A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, 'Give to the men, that they may eat.' But his servant said, “How can I set this before a hundred men?” So he repeated, “Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’ So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.” (2Kings 4:42–44) Jesus performed the same miracle in feeding the 4,000 and 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes.

Elijah prayed for a dead child to come to life. 1 Kings 17:17–24. I like to think that this encouraged Jesus to raise the widow's son from the dead. “As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then He came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.” (Luke 7:12–15)

Consider Deuteronomy 17:18–20, “When he (the king) sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.”

IN the 18th verse, the phrase “copy of this law” is translated from the Septuagint to be deutero-nomos. That's where you get the title for the book – Deuteronomy. This command is given to the kings of Israel, but since we're a kingdom of priests and kings, (Revelation ) I think it applies to each of us as followers of Jesus.

Here are some of the perks from reading God's Word every day. He'll be humble, he'll be obedient, he won't get into error, he won't turn aside to the right or to the left, he'll be blessed, he and his children in Israel, for a long time.

I find that if I read the whole Bible every year, it does keep me from going off on tangents. If I just live in one book or just study one topic over and over, I'm going to become unbalanced, but reading the whole Word of God helps me stay on track and be balanced.

My advice to parents wanting to begin this activity is to set small goals. So what if you just say, “Let's all of us as a family see if we can read one chapter a day for a

week, and then we're going to compare notes, and maybe we'll even do it around the breakfast table or the dinner table. Everybody bring your Bible to the meal, and we're going to finish our food, and when you're done eating, just pick up your Bible, put it on the table, and read a chapter of Scripture."

You might select the book of John, or you might pick the Psalms, or whatever you want to decide, and read one chapter at a time, for a week, and then talk about it as a family. Then at the end of the week ask, "What did you think?" And then try for two weeks. Maybe have prizes. Families know each other, and you can figure out what the carrots are that are very attractive to your kids. And I think that there is a benefit in setting rewards because Scripture says "In keeping them there is **great reward**." (Psalm 19:11)

Ultimately, what we're trying to do is establish a habit. There's some wonderful YouTube videos on creating a habit by trying it for thirty days, it's a Ted Talk found here: [https://www.ted.com/talks/matt\\_cutts\\_try\\_something\\_new\\_for\\_30\\_days/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days/transcript)).

The Bible does not say whether to read Scripture in the morning or in the evening or during lunchtime or during your break, it just says read it. In fact, it says in Revelation 1:3, "Blessed are those who read and hear the words of this prophecy." When I'm in the car by myself, I often listen to Scripture. And sometimes, when I'm behind in following my chart, and I've got a long trip to the airport, I'll put in Scripture and I'll listen while I'm driving down Interstate 83 to Baltimore to the airport.

If I don't have a Bible reading chart that I'm following, I will probably never finish it each year. But I since I do have a chart, and I don't like to get behind. Some weekends I'll take a Saturday or Sunday morning and read ten chapters to catch up. When you don't have a schedule, I think you're going to have trouble reading the whole Bible through in a year, because you're going to be real inspired in the beginning, but you're going to hit a couple slow times, and then you're going to get way behind, and then the temptation is to be discouraged. Make a plan and stick to it.

I think reading Scripture daily the best habit I ever developed as a Christian. I'm so glad that I started attending that church and getting into that habit. Attending a church with other believers who were doing the same thing was a huge impetus, too, because you knew that everybody else in the church was following the same schedule you can help each other. That is what I am hoping for in families. If dad, mom, and each of the siblings is reading the same portions of Scripture recall that "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

If you try it to do it by yourself, unless you're amazing, you're probably going to fall. But if you can, find another friend to do it with you. However this podcast is geared towards family activities and we're trying to encourage each member of the family to be engaged. Knowing that your kids are reading will probably help mom and dad to be more consistent in their reading, and so you can stir one another to love

and good works by reading it together. And as you read Scripture it as a team, perhaps you can take one day a week where people can share what they have read throughout the week and share insights. Maybe at meal time different people could share insights they received from reading the Word of God. But I think that if you read it as a group, you're going to be much more consistent and successful and make a nice reward for yourself.

You're not disobeying God if you miss a day, and the Word of God says there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. So don't beat yourself up. Just get back up and do it again. But I think it's a wonderful habit to pursue and make a part of your Christian life. There are many things that I've done as a Christian to develop habits, you know, like going to church, etc. But reading the Word of God is probably the best habit I feel like I've ever developed, and I encourage everybody listening, if these charts don't work for you, there's a plethora of resources online now. But I mainly chose those charts because I was thinking that parents would read the New Testament and the Old Testament and if their children would just read the New Testament or just the New Testament and the simplified Old Testament, everybody is moving through Scripture together.

Maybe the kids haven't read Chronicles and Kings, and maybe they're just reading Luke and John, but it's okay. You're all going through Luke and John together as a family, which is why I wrote those charts in the first place.

Let's close in prayer, Father, thank You for Your inspired Word that the Holy Spirit managed, and You came upon men and women of God, and they wrote these words under the inspiration of the Spirit. This is not something man put together, it's something You put together, and it points to Jesus, and He was the Word made flesh, and so as we learn more about the Word, we learn more about Jesus, and back and forth. It's a wonderful thing. Encourage us. Deliver us from condemnation. Help us when we miss a day to just get back up, and God, help us to develop this habit of family Bible reading and personal Bible reading of Scripture. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you have a question for the show, email Steve at [spdemme@gmail.com](mailto:spdemme@gmail.com).