

# How to Stay with Daily Bible Reading All Year Long

by Mark Roberts

Congratulations! You've taken the first step in developing the habit and discipline of daily Bible reading - you've found and downloaded a reading schedule. But while thousands of people have successfully read their Bible using the Five Day Bible Reading Schedule the reality is that many people start strong on January 1 but by the middle of February are many chapters behind, and by March they have quit altogether. You want to read the Bible and you know should read the Bible. You know that daily Bible reading is the primary way to grow in your understanding, trust and love for God. So how can you stay with it this year? Here are five keys that will help you stay in the Word all year.

***First, tie your Bible reading to something you enjoy.***

One of the surest ways to fail at Bible reading is to make it into a chore. If it is drudgery to read the Scriptures it won't be long before we're making excuses why we aren't reading the Bible, and once the excuses start it usually isn't long till Bible reading stops. The trouble is we simply don't like doing it.

It is true sometimes we have to do things we don't enjoy (perhaps your job isn't enjoyable and no one likes to go to the dentist) but we will do a lot more of what we like doing. So make Bible reading likable! Do you enjoy a good cup of coffee or tea? Get that cup and use that coffee or tea break as a time to sit down with the Bible. Do you like nice pens and notebooks, or maybe journaling is a joy to you? Buy yourself a nice notebook, pen, or journal and dedicate them to your Bible reading time. Is there a particular place, like a park bench, where you like to read? Go there! These are all ideas of ways to reward yourself for reading the Bible. "If I read my Bible I get to have that cup of coffee" or "If I'll read my Bible I can use that new fountain pen I bought to take notes" or "I love being outside. I'll use time in the Bible as an 'excuse' to go do what I enjoy." Add something to your Bible reading that makes you look forward to it.

Make Bible reading something you love! The psalmist says “*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day*” (Psalm 119:97).

***Second, set a specific time and place to read the Bible.***

In a study reported in *Fast Company* magazine three groups of people participated in a study designed to see what would get people to exercise regularly. The first group was asked to exercise once in the next week. Only 29% did. The second group was given information on the importance of exercising. 39% of the people in that group did exercise. The third group was asked to commit to exercising at a specific place, on a specific day, at a specific time. How many in that group exercised? 91% of them exercised!

When we say vague things like “I want to read my Bible every day” without making explicit plans on when we will do that and where we will do that we’re just giving voice to a vague hope. Our ability to read the Bible then comes down to our day going nearly perfectly so that some extra time shows up unaccounted for and we can then get into the Word. Guess what? Rarely does that happen.

Plan now the when and the where so that Bible reading isn’t a nebulous desire but instead something very specific you have built into your schedule.

**Pro-tip:** name a backup time as well, so if your first choice gets clobbered with something unexpected you still have time in your day to read the Bible!

“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily* to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11).

***Third, never miss two days in a row.***

Everyone misses a day of Bible reading now and then. That’s why we built the Five Day Bible Reading Schedule - because reading continuously, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks out of the year, is extremely difficult for most people. We all need a little slack in our lives.

What causes quitting is when we let the misses pile up. Instead of regular reading now we’re regularly missing. So, if we have missed three days in a row missing one more doesn’t seem that terrible, and the habit that we’ve been trying to build is in serious danger of drying up.

Decide now that if you miss you won't beat yourself up for it. We don't want Bible reading to become a pain or a source of guilt in our life. But if something happens and we have to skip a day, we forgot to read, or we got busy and can't read we want to make extra certain we are back on track the very next day. We want to pile up successes, not failures. We want to see a steady stream of check marks on the Bible reading plan. We want to say to ourselves "I've decided to do this, I am doing it, and I will keep doing it. I won't let an occasional mis-step derail me."

*"For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).*

***Fourth, don't be discouraged if a magic moment doesn't happen.***

Due to social media devotional Bible reading sometimes can have impossibly high expectations put on it. We see photos of the Word of God open on a beautiful table with a steaming cup of coffee beside it, a meticulously decorated and perfectly clean house gradually fading out of focus in the background - it's all so perfect. And we know that a quiet time like this must lead to a virtual spiritual revolution, right?

Let's be careful. It is true that Bible reading lets us draw near to God and that can be very powerful. But we don't have to have a picturesque setting for daily Bible reading, and while sometimes the day's reading can provoke in our spirit and heart a deep sense of awe and wonder that doesn't always happen, does it? Yes, in a reading we may see an application in the Bible we hadn't seen before and suddenly we feel like God's word is an arrow pointed straight to our heart, or at the end of our reading we may find ourselves rejuvenated spiritually, or even that we made immediate spiritual progress, but again ... that doesn't always happen, does it?

Thus, if the standard for our daily Bible reading is having an amazing spiritual experience or getting a big "aha" moment we may end up disappointed and quitting. Instead we need to recognize that growth is usually a slow process, and that soaking in the Word of God regularly and repeatedly has a definite effect *over time*. Remember the tortoise and the hare? Slow and steady wins the race. Keep at it, even if you don't feel like what you're doing is worth writing about on social media. After all, our goal is knowing God, not impressing people.

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).*

Finally, always apply to your life what you read. This is the missing link in many people’s Bible reading. They don’t meditate on God’s word so it doesn’t have the powerful effect it can and should in their lives. Remember, meditation in the Bible means carefully and thoughtfully turning over the Bible’s truths in your mind. That is an essential part of daily Bible reading because our goal is not to simply information but transformation. We want to come to know God, not just read about long ago people in a far away land. Thus when we’re done with the reading we always need to ask the big questions of that day’s chapters: what does this teach me about God? What have I learned here about what God likes and dislikes? How does this reading cause me to trust in God more? What here helped me persevere on my way to heaven? These are questions that get Bible reading off the page and into our lives. Bible reading has to become Bible living and that happens when we meditate on God’s word.

*“Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders” (Psalm 119:27).*

Reading the Bible for an entire year is not an easy task. It’s important not to make the quantity of reading done your gauge for success but instead measure what you did get read and how it drew you closer to God. That’s our goal, and these tips and strategies can help you get there all year long. May your heart rejoice in God’s word!

*“The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:8).*