

develops within them to read even more.

If you want to read even more, there are helpful schedules for that as well. My favorite reading schedule is Dr. Grant Horner's Bible-reading system (you can search this online and find it). This method has you reading from ten different books of the Bible each day. It takes about forty-five minutes a day, and you end up reading most of the New Testament at least five times a year and most of the Old Testament at least two times a year. It immerses you in God's Word each and every day. It sounds difficult but it is far easier to do than it sounds. If you try this one, try it for at least three months before you give up on it. There are a variety of plans out there. The best one is the one you will follow and use daily.

If you start doing this today, imagine how much the Lord will be doing in you and for you as you read His Word in faith. You will be truly blessed!

May this prayer be your fervent desire as you read God's Holy Word: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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AD FONTES
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READING YOUR BIBLE

BY REV. ANDREW PACKER

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Why did our Lord give us His Holy Word? What was His purpose in having it written down and preserved for you for thousands of years? Those of you reading this know the answers to these questions. As Lutherans the answers have been drilled into you from childhood. Thanks be to God for that. You know that God gave the Bible to make you “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” and to train you in holy living.

If you know the answer, does it change how much time you spend in your Bible?

Luther said, “Letters of lords and princes should be read twice and thrice, for they are carefully worded. But, verily, the letters of our Lord God - for thus St. Gregory calls the Holy Scriptures - one should read three times, seven times, yea, seventy times seven, or to make it still stronger, without end. But we do not do it. I myself do not do it; therefore, I hate myself. But when I get at it and read it, I derive strength from it; I feel that it is a power and not a mere story.”

I think most of us feel like Luther: “I do not do it; therefore, I hate myself.” Why is that? Why is it such a struggle to read God's Holy Word? We know that the world, the devil, and our own sinful flesh rage against us and do not want us to spend time in the Scriptures. But, if we are honest, I think we know the answer is even more straightforward - we don't value it for the treasure that it is and so we do not make it a priority.

Consider this, if you asked one hundred Christians why they don't read the Bible, the number one answer would be – "I don't have enough time." Is that true, though? Take your phone out. Look at your daily/weekly summary. How much time do you spend on your phone each day? Your computer? Your television? On average, Americans spend over two hours a day on social media and about four hours a day watching videos. Americans average about five hours a day on their phones. There is obviously some overlap in those statistics, but the numbers are striking.

What this means is that most Christians know more of what is happening in the news, social media, YouTube, and TikTok, than they do the content of the Bible. This should never be! This is especially true for pastors but is true for all of those who bear the name of Christ.

Reading through the entire Bible in one year only takes twelve minutes a day. Reading through the entire Bible twice in one year only takes 25 minutes a day. If you are telling yourself that you don't have enough time to read your Bible when you are spending so much time on these other things, what you are actually confessing is that you do not find it as important as social media and watching videos.

One of the reasons your Creator and Redeemer has given you His Holy Word is so that you read it. The goal for the Christian is for the Bible to shape his heart and mind, his thinking and speaking – indeed his entire being. As a Christian, to paraphrase Paul, you are to live and move, and have your being in God's Holy Word. A Christian should seek to know God's Word as well as is possible for him – both its content and its meaning.

In the quote above, Luther said that when he does read the Bible he gains strength from it and realizes its power. What are some of the benefits of regularly reading the Scriptures?

Psalm 1 teaches that the Word is to be meditated on day and night because it blesses and sustains you. Psalm 19 teaches that the Word of the Lord is perfect; that it converts, makes wise, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, and because of this it is to be desired more than the finest gold. Hebrews 4 makes it clear that God's Word is living and powerful – it can accomplish in you what it says and promises to do.

That barely scratches the surface of all the promise of what the Word of

the Lord does for you and in you. Luther summarizes these blessings in the preface to the Large Catechism. He says that God's Word drives away the devil and evil thoughts, strengthens, comforts, and helps you beyond measure. It gives power, profit, strength, and fruit.

God's Word does so much that Luther finally has to say: "And what need is there for more words? If I were to list all the profit and fruit God's Word produces, where would I get enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God's Word, which drives away and brings to nothing this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? The Word must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts."

If this is all true, and Christians believe that it is, why would any Christian reject this treasure and all its benefits for the devilish distractions of the world? Of course, this doesn't mean you have to quit your job or neglect all your duties so that all you do all day is read God's Word. But is less than thirty minutes a day really too much for you to do?

The most straightforward method for reading through your Bible in a year is to read three chapters of the Old Testament and one chapter of the New Testament every day. If you want to read through the Bible twice a

year, you just double that (six chapters for the OT and two chapters for the NT). There are a variety of ways to do this. You can read everything in one sitting. You could read the Old Testament chapters in the morning and the New Testament chapters in the evening. You could split up the reading throughout the day – morning, midday, and nights. There are no rules, just read! If you did this, would you have to stop reading a faithful devotional book? Absolutely not – you can always do both. The more Christians read the Bible, the more a thirst

