



bits from bob....

## Christians Need the Shared Reading of God's Word October 5, 2020

Many Christians know the spiritual strength that comes from individually spending regular time with God's Word. Yet, in many churches, the value of shared time spent in reading the Word of God is overlooked. In general, Bible reading is a very small part of the shared worship experience of the faith community.

Why are churches slow to recognize the value and the joy of sharing God's Word together? We know the value of sharing a meal with others. Bible reading is spiritual nourishment — we can do it alone, but we miss an important part of life if we never share it with others. Here are some suggestions to help you get started on reading the Bible with another person or in a small group.

The simple guidelines I set forth in this article can be used in any situation. My newest book, *Dwelling in the Word*, can be helpful as you apply these principles. The book will also be a blessing in the life of the church when members share a reading plan — reading individually, in small groups, and in the public assemblies.

**1. Have a plan, but keep it simple.** Reading the Bible with others does not have to be time-consuming or complex. Meeting regularly with someone to read the Bible together is different than Bible study. Bible study requires preparation. Reading the Bible together needs a schedule, a reading plan, and time to share responses.

The reading plan you choose will depend on the time commitment agreed to. With weekly meetings, Christians often choose to read several chapters together. Agreeing to read for a set amount of time, 15 minutes, is usually more helpful than setting the number of chapters.

Here's a sample plan: Pray with thanksgiving for the Word and to seek understanding and applications. Read aloud together. Share your thoughts about the reading. Close with a brief prayer.

Some Christians meet for coffee or a meal and include the Bible reading. This plan helps Christians get to know one another and talk about important matters in life, as well as reading God's word together. Be careful that the coffee chit-chat or the meal do not push the Bible reading into second place!

**2. Make a short-term commitment that everyone involved can fulfill.** Begin with a short commitment for a specific time. Several of the shorter New Testament books could be read in a month. Longer books could be read in eight meetings (weeks). This plan gives natural entry and exit points to include additional persons, or when a person no longer wants to participate.

**3. Read with other Christians, read with your family.** The possibilities are endless. Begin with the people who are already in your life. Is there someone you want to know better in your small group or at church? A close friend you would like to read with? You can read with one other person; you can invite two or three others to read together in a group.

**4. Read with non-Christians.** Many people want to understand the Bible and know who Jesus is. Some reject the Bible because they do not understand it. Simply reading the Bible with others can bless them. Ask your neighbor, coworker, or friend to read with you. Be specific: "Could we read through the Gospel of Mark together, two chapters at a time?" Since response is an essential part of reading, be sure to mention in the invitation that you plan to share your reaction and how the reading can alter your life.

The Bible is God's word for us. God speaking to us. We were made to know God; we were made for community. Reading God's word with others fulfills these purposes. Shared Bible reading is a key for spiritual growth — for individual Christians and for churches. Nothing will contribute more to the spiritual growth of a church than a shared Bible reading plan that is reinforced in Bible classes, small groups, and sermons.