

Sisters and Brothers at Kalahikiola, *Let's Read Our Bibles!*

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
Colossians 3.16

Paul tells the church in Colossae that they share the responsibility of ‘teaching and admonishing’ one another with the ‘word of Christ’ – even in song! We need to know our Bible, so we can help ourselves, and others, dwell richly in Christ.

1. READ your Bible: *Concentration*

We are so used to being entertained and diverted it is difficult to carve out the space and silence necessary for serious and thoughtful reading of Scripture. I urge you to establish a daily time with God to read the Bible and pray. Everyone is different, some are morning people, others not. But, as Stuart Briscoe said, *“Before you put your head on the pillow, make sure you put your nose in the Book.”*

Read your Bible book by book. Do not jump around, but purposefully read from chapter 1 to the end of each of the 66 books of the Bible. I suggest a balance from New to Old Testaments. (Reading plans are suggested below.)

When reading, the first question is, *“what was the original author saying to the original audience?”* God’s ‘message’ from the Bible will not contradict what He said to the first readers. Scripture is an ancient document.

The ‘ESV Study Bible,’ notes and www.bibleproject.org videos are helpful to explain the backgrounds of author and audience of each book of the Bible.

2. REFLECT on your Bible: *Conversation*

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2.2-3).

Scripture is a living document. The primary author of the Bible is the living God. Before you open His book, you should have a talk with God. Ask Him to help you concentrate and understand. You’re meeting with a friend, who loves you, savor the privilege.

“I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread” (Job 23.12)

As our culture drifts away from its former rootedness in a Judeo-Christian understanding of God, the Bible seems stranger and stranger. Devotional guides might cite a Bible verse, but they're followed by man's ideas. Even worse are the 'Jesus Calling' that puts man's phrasing in God's mouth. We are not invited to rewrite God's message; or interpret it how we think best.

Jesus prayed for us: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17.17).

Devotional guides read alone promote the profoundly wrong idea that God exists to sort out my problems. The few and random verses cited in these 'Daily Breads' are not placed within the framework of the big picture of the whole Bible. Reading through books of the Bible is the only way to understand the "plot" or "story line"—the big picture that makes sense of God's inerrant Word. Understanding this scope of Scripture can help anchor your life on the Rock. God is lifted up, we are rightfully humbled below Him – then we find our good in His glory.

3. REJOICE in your Bible: *Celebration*

God forbid your Bible reading become drudgery! May it be a delight for you! I confess that sometimes I get distracted. It is a duty that demands our devotion. I have read through the whole Bible for many years now. Sometimes it has been a slog – I confess to speed-reading some of the lists – discipline is required. I testify that serious concentration and conversation results in sincere celebration.

"I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil" (Psalm 119.162).

One problem I often face is getting 'behind' on my reading plans. When I miss a day or two, I wonder if I should quit, or start over? Just keep going! Do not fall into shame, make time tomorrow! God is merciful and gracious. We are in a relationship with Him – that should make us eager to read and get to know Him more and more. I am sure you have found that even the 'old familiar' passages have fresh insights as we ask Him to be our teacher.

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."
(John 10.27,28)

Learn to distill what a passage says - and pray it back to the Lord - in petition, thanksgiving, praise, or frank uncertainty. In time your Bible reading will be so linked with your praying that concentration, conversation, will flow freely in celebration.

I suggest you follow a reading plan through the Bible. There are many available. Here is one I have found helpful, produced by Robert Murray M'Cheyne, a Scottish pastor who died at the age of 29 in the early 1800's.

He designed this plan for his congregation - reading through the New Testament and the Psalms twice, and the rest of the Bible once, in the course of a year—or, at the pace you choose.

There are four columns for reading, reflecting M'Cheyne's view that Christians should read from more than one part of the Bible at a time. You can designate one 'column' for reading with the family, morning, evening, etc.

Not only will this help you link various passages in your mind, but it will help carry you through some of the parts of the Bible that are harder to slog through than others (e.g., 1 Chronicles 1—12). If you fall behind, do not use that as an excuse for giving up the commitment. Sometimes you can catch up by an afternoon of diligent reading, perhaps some Sunday.

You may want to follow this reading program on the YouVersion app, look under 'Plans' and find Robert Murray M'Cheyne. YouVersion also has 'Whole Bible' reading plans from the BibleProject ("One Story that Leads to Jesus"). Their plans offer their videos to help you understand as you read through the Bible books. Currently I am using the Chronological plan on my YouVersion. (I get more out of it when I turn on the 'audio' and listen to it read...sometimes while I walk!)

Lots of plans, translations, opportunities to grow in the Word of God - get started, and stick with it. Read, reflect, rejoice!

God said, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66.2)

Robert Murray M'Cheyne's Bible Reading Calendar

DAY

1	Genesis 1	Matthew 1	Ezra 1	Acts 1
2	Gen 2	Matt 2	Ezra 2	Acts 2
3	Gen 3	Matt 3	Ezra 3	Acts 3
4	Gen 4	Matt 4	Ezra 4	Acts 4
5	Gen 5	Matt 5	Ezra 5	Acts 5
6	Gen 6	Matt 6	Ezra 6	Acts 6
7	Gen 7	Matt 7	Ezra 7	Acts 7
8	Gen 8	Matt 8	Ezra 8	Acts 8
9	Gen 9-10	Matt 9	Ezra 9	Acts 9
10	Gen 11	Matt 10	Ezra 10	Acts 10
11	Gen 12	Matt 11	Nehemiah 1	Acts 11
12	Gen 13	Matt 12	Neh 2	Acts 12
13	Gen 14	Matt 13	Neh 3	Acts 13
14	Gen 15	Matt 14	Neh 4	Acts 14
15	Gen 16	Matt 15	Neh 5	Acts 15
16	Gen 17	Matt 16	Neh 6	Acts 16
17	Gen 18	Matt 17	Neh 7	Acts 17
18	Gen 19	Matt 18	Neh 8	Acts 18
19	Gen 20	Matt 19	Neh 9	Acts 19
20	Gen 21	Matt 20	Neh 10	Acts 20
21	Gen 22	Matt 21	Neh 11	Acts 21
22	Gen 23	Matt 22	Neh 12	Acts 22
23	Gen 24	Matt 23	Neh 13	Acts 23
24	Gen 25	Matt 24	Esther 1	Acts 24
25	Gen 26	Matt 25	Est 2	Acts 25
26	Gen 27	Matt 26	Est 3	Acts 26
27	Gen 28	Matt 27	Est 4	Acts 27
28	Gen 29	Matt 28	Est 5	Acts 28
29	Gen 30	Mark 1	Est 6	Romans 1
30	Gen 31	Mark 2	Est 7	Rom 2
31	Gen 32	Mark 3	Est 8	Rom 3

<https://www.mcheyne.info/calendar.pdf>

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