

Introduction

I remember the first time I read through my Bible from cover to cover. I found it to be an enlightening and sometimes joyful experience, a humbling and sometimes fearful experience, and at times a frustrating and confusing experience.

I discovered that many historically or otherwise closely related scriptural passages were often located several, even hundreds, of pages apart. For example, Old Testament laws and regulations found in Exodus through Deuteronomy were scattered and repeated throughout these four books. Moreover, some of the events recorded in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers were repeated in Deuteronomy, but with new details. I kept having to search out and re-read verses I had previously read, to understand fully the laws and regulations depicted in them or to see how the historical events they complemented actually fit together. Then after reading 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, I found that much of the Scripture describing the events in these books was more or less repeated in 1 and 2 Chronicles. But there was new information here too. More re-reading. Next I discovered that the Psalms were closely tied to the kings and leaders in 1 Samuel through Nehemiah, and that half of the psalms were David's! (Remember, this was my first time reading through the Bible.) To top it all off, I discovered that the prophetic books, Isaiah through Malachi, were an integral part of 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles through Nehemiah, but oh so difficult to link to the kings and events within these historical books!

Just how did all these Old Testament events, laws, prophecies, teachings and prayers fit together historically? And when did they occur within the time frame of 4000–400 BC?

The New Testament also, with its four similar but differing Gospels expounding the life and teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And all those apostolic letters, so closely connected to the book of Acts but at the same time so totally separated. Plus, a new time frame to contend with, 7 BC to AD 95.

I found this all very frustrating. Something had to be done. After all, Christians are not supposed to complain like this – especially about the Word of God. I came to the conclusion that every new Christian, and most mature ones as well, would benefit greatly from being able to read through their Bibles without having to deal with the confusion that arises from its established format. And so I was moved to write *Footsteps Through the Bible*, a unique, one-year chronological Bible reading plan and study reference that resolves all of the problems described above.

Footsteps Through the Bible lists all of the Bible's events in their chronological order – the order in which the events described actually took place. The plan is divided into fifty-two weekly sections. Timelines identifying the time span for events related to the week's readings are included at the beginning of each week's *Old Testament* and *New Testament* reading list.

Old Testament laws and regulations are harmonized by subject matter and logically grouped with the historical events they complement, thereby providing a uniform perspective on both God's laws for living as a holy people, and on the events associated with the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Scripture from the Old Testament's historical books, the book of Psalms, and the prophetic books is completely reordered and integrated, imparting fresh spiritual insight into the interaction between God and the kings and spiritual leaders of this historic period.

The New Testament Gospels are completely harmonized providing a clear, concise picture of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Finally, the letters of the apostles and other New Testament books are rearranged and integrated with the book of Acts, offering an inspiring new perspective on the birth and spread of the church.

Footsteps Through the Bible is written as a reading plan rather than a chronological Bible so you can use your own Bible with its familiar wording, cross-references, study notes, book introductions, maps, charts and personal annotations. To the greatest degree possible, both daily and weekly readings are logically grouped, listing all of the scripture pertinent to a specific theme, series of related topics, or historical sequence of events.

As a study reference, *Footsteps Through the Bible* lets you quickly find a previously read Scripture, or uncover all of the Scripture associated with a specific topic, theme, person, series of events or period of time.

Over 200 Old and New Testament verses taken from several versions of the Bible are included in the body of the reading plan. These verses constitute a brief summary of the Christian faith and life. I pray that you will be blessed and strengthened in your walk with Christ as much as I have been by these inspired and thought-provoking scriptural verses.

Using the Plan

The reading plan is arranged into 52 weekly sections. In keeping with the objective of knowing Jesus Christ, readings from the New Testament are included each week throughout the year.

Each weekday you will read an average of 86 verses from the Old Testament, and each weekend an average of 77 verses per day from the New Testament. Based on logical content and presentation, daily readings vary somewhat in length.

Although the reading plan is arranged so you can read through your entire Bible in one year, it is not necessary that you do so. Whenever you miss a day, or feel led by the Holy Spirit to stop reading and pray or meditate on a Scripture passage you have just read, continue reading the next day from where you left off. If you are trying to read through your Bible in a single year, catch up when time permits. Remember, it's regular daily reading, meditation and study that are important, and the blessing and growth that come from continual immersion in and obedience to the Word of God.

The following table shows part of the Scripture reading for Thursday of Week 33. (Note that within the body of the reading plan, this table is split into two tables with topics placed on the left-hand page and readings on the right-hand page.)

Where two or more topics are listed on a single line, the topics are separated by a slash (/) symbol.

Old Testament readings in Weeks 32 through 36 cover events before the fall of Israel during the period when Israel was divided into two kingdoms. An I (for Israel), J (for Judah), IJ (for both Israel and Judah), and – (for neither Israel nor Judah) are used to identify which king(s) or kingdom(s) are associated with the Scripture you will read during these weeks.

DAY	TOPIC	✓	1 Kings	2 Kings	2 Chronicles
Thu	I Elisha makes an ax head float	_____		6:1-7	
	I Elisha purifies a stew / Elisha feeds a hundred men	_____		4:38-44	
	J Jehoram rules Judah / Jehoram's character	_____		8:16-19	21:5-7 †
	J Other events in Jehoshaphat's reign	_____	22:45-47		20:34 †
	J Jehoshaphat's death / Jehoram becomes king of Judah	_____	22:50 †	→	21:1-4

A cross (†) symbol is used to mark Old Testament verses that are identical or virtually identical to verses you have already read or are about to read. Where verses are virtually identical, one or two words, a name or a number may be different; in some cases, an additional name or short, incidental clause may be found. You do not need to read these verses as part of your

daily reading. They are listed in the reading plan for reference and study purposes only.

Read the verses associated with the topic(s) listed on the first line, then on the second line, etc., until you have read all of the Scripture given for the day's reading.

When reading the verses shown on a line, read the verse(s) in the first verse column (e.g., 1 Kings), then in the second verse column, etc., until you have read all the verses shown on the line. In the example shown above, since there is no initial reading in 1 Kings, your first reading would be in 2 Kings. The arrow (→) symbol is provided occasionally to remind you that there is another verse to read on the line.

To measure your progress or quickly find your place within the reading plan, check the appropriate square after you have read the specified verses on a line.