



APPENDIX

Some additional resources:

ruralchurchym.org

spreadinggoodness.org

yesgod.info/foundations

Man in the Mirror / YouTube series

Bible Read-Through by Dr. Ron Frost

Sam was a retired global worker—with years spent in Africa—who in his retirement decided to plant a church in British Columbia. My home church in Spokane recruited two of us to travel north to help them build a chapel. During our two months there Sam and his wife treated us to breakfast at their beachside cottage each morning. And that always included a casual conversation on some Bible topic. Sam was a natural teacher and I was a ready student. I'll never forget our first morning as I mentioned the tall local trees. Sam then took off with a discussion of Bible trees, including the trees of life in Genesis and Revelation. And the tree represented by Christ's cross in between. The next morning it was Melchizedek. And so on, each morning.

Sam's ready supply of Bible content amazed me. Verses flowed spontaneously in ways that were natural and interesting. I asked him where he gained all his Bible themes. He laughed.

"I just read my Bible."

"How much reading?"

"I try to get through the Bible two or three times a year. It's a good habit."

I almost dropped my coffee. He had been reading at this pace all his Christian life, for fifty years!

The challenge captured me, and two months later I finished my first Bible read-through. In the reading I started to "feel" God's triune personality—his vast dimensions, threaded concerns, and constant care. I discovered emerging motives that shape a compelling salvation narrative. By reading in fast flow I picked up the distinct yet related features that by the end offer the basic unity of the two testaments. The promised blessing of a coming king tied it together. And in reading I was pursuing God, but I soon realized he was pursuing me! 'Listening' moved up to be the first priority of my day. I never slowed down and it never gets old.

In time I discovered that robust Bible reading can work with others too. I spent two years in the Army and John, my roommate and fellow MP, was a believer. But his faith was young. One morning he complained about being badgered for his faith by other guys in our unit while I was somehow exempt.

"Johnny," I said bluntly, "they watch you, and you don't seem to stand for anything! Every now and then you mention your faith, but I never see you spending time with God or his word. Neither do they." I pressed him about the Bible. I was reading each morning. Had he ever tried reading it through?

That was a morning conversation, and he had the day off, so I left for work. When I came back for lunch he had almost finished reading Genesis! And by that evening he was through Exodus. Soon he was carrying his Bible to work. As the shift radio dispatcher he was at a desk all day—reading when he could—and was quoting lively texts to his amazed military police buddies. He finished reading the whole Bible by the end of the second month.

John gained new credibility with the platoon and it ended any badgering. He also helped stir a strong young adult fellowship at our church. After his time in the Army he went on to Bible college. As John left, he commented on how the Bible touched him—"I came to love God through my reading." And I enjoyed watching it happen!

I've continued with this partnership read-through approach over the years, with one or two men at a time. The "method" got started when I was a singles group pastor at a church in Idaho. I invited a man, Way, to join me in a read-through. He was a young believer and ready to grow. It worked—his spiritual life took off! And others in our singles group saw the change in him. A few even started their own reading partnerships—which was a discovery to me! Reading can prosper even without becoming a formal ministry activity. Basic spiritual hunger makes it go.

Two weeks ago I started another partnership read-through. Chris, my reading partner, is a 19-year-old in a singles group I'm leading. He grew up in a Christian home but until six months ago he was spiritually indifferent. Yet he came alive as we did an early morning Bible study for a few weeks. And he asked for another study, so I proposed doing a fast Bible read-through.

The functions are simple. We selected a date for completing the project—in just four months. Then we meet every Tuesday morning for an hour. The time starts with a few minutes of catching up, and then we read verses aloud—one of us reading all our verses at a time. The verses are picked randomly from among the verses we've underlined during our individual reading. We rarely overlap in our selections since we read at a personal pace. We swap honors each week on who reads first, and that person gets to read as many verses as possible in ten minutes. A timer goes off and then the partner gets to read. A key feature that surprises many is that we read aloud, verbatim, the whole time. No explanations or efforts to apply the verses are allowed. We just note our target verses so the partner can track and see the context. We never finish all the verses we've underlined, but it doesn't matter. The idea is to share some wealth! After our reading exchange we share some personal updates and pray for each other. It sounds modest—kept to just an hour—but it's very strong. And it's the highlight of our respective weeks.

The Dynamics

One benefit comes from reading the Bible in flow, the way we read any good book. I usually start my day reading for thirty to forty minutes. Other times of day work too. I also use free evenings or Saturdays as added read slots. It's never a duty. In fact, if we give the Spirit room to work the reading times can be unique spiritual pleasures. Last Thursday, for example, Chris read for five hours. As he would if he had a great book and spare time. Which, of course, he had on both counts! This doesn't dismiss close Bible study. They complement each other.

As I mentioned already, partners read at a personal pace, so we rarely share verses from the same part of the Bible. That's not a problem since we aren't doing a study. In fact, we enjoy getting a double exposure to every section of the Bible. Instead we just keep the end date.

The one essential task is to underline the texts we pick as our only "homework." So, in our meetings we read some of these selected passages without offering any

commentary or reasons for the selections. Yet the verses we pick soon display our hearts!

We selected a completion date that would challenge us. It uses some of our discretionary time but it's not a chore. I start the day with my reading—as a practical, “seek first the kingdom of God.” I also look for longer reading stretches whenever I can to catch more of the storyline in flow. As a sidebar note: I encourage first-time readers to skim sections that are repetitive or technical—Old Testament law lists, genealogies, and the like. Follow the narrative for now and come back to those items later on. One key insight: get rid of “guilt-based” reading!

Some Questions

Isn't the Bible too complex for an untrained reader?

No, especially if a young Christian has an experienced partner to answer any early questions that come up. Our first exposure to learning anything—in school or at a job—can seem pretty complex. But we soon learn lessons that set up further understanding. This all emerges naturally in the conversations between partners. And the Bible makes sense in time.

What's the best age level for this approach?

A middle school youth pastor used this method to help two dozen of his youth read the New Testament during the summer. He reserved a “report” period during each Wednesday meeting. The students then shared some of what they had underlined to a partner or two. Every single participant finished on time and loved it. On another occasion after I shared the “Read-Through” approach to a church family camp, I had two fourteen-year-old boys commit to try it. Later they called me to say they finished reading the entire Bible in just one month and loved it!

What if I'm not a good reader?

At times I'll pace my own reading with an audio Bible. I love the double exposure. The point is to underscore that reading is done at a normal speaking pace. And an entire reading of the Bible, aloud, takes about 72 hours. Let me add here that I once had a partner with a reading disorder who used an audio-Bible to help him. And while he listened, he also marked verses on his Bible. Afterwards he said it was a huge boost, and his reading skills improved dramatically.

Final Thoughts

Bible discipleship works because it's Christ's approach. Jesus called on his followers to “abide” in his word (John 8:31). As we take up his words at face value—reading “relationally”—the Bible offers personal spiritual growth. And spiritual fruit follows.

Nicholas and his family left for Asia as global Christian workers this past August. Years earlier Nicholas had become a Christian when Way and I were starting our read-through, so he and Way also met separately. Nick assumed this was standard fare! And his continued appetite for Scripture led to formal theological training. He still has this appetite and now it's overflowing to others.

Bible discipleship like this also expresses Christ's love. It displays the body of Christ at work: as two or three people enjoy regular fellowship, pursuing God, growth happens. As the partners meet and share sections of the Bible—realizing that the Spirit is busy doing his own “underlining” in lives—biblical love follows. Along with personal vulnerability, accountability, prayer, and friendship.

Paul assured the Ephesian elders that they had been given the “whole will of God” (Acts 20:27) in his ministry to them. The Bible offers us this access to God's heart. In most instances the New Testament writers assumed their readers had a knowledge of the Old Testament. It's important for contemporary Christians to be equipped to respond to that assumption.

Sam's mark on my life is eternal, not because of any exceptional wisdom, but because he was a channel of the living Word of God. Jesus told the woman at the well about the very principle that Sam shared with me: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13). Isn't it time for us to read the Bible vigorously, steadily, and fully?

[Published as “Make this the year!” in Moody Monthly magazine, January 1987]

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES?

All of us have a need to be loved. Most of us have been let down by someone. Many people give up on love and pursue empty relationships or indulge in substance abuse. Some spend most of their free time on digital entertainment. Others have an out of balance focus on being successful or popular. Finally, there are those who consume themselves with good things to make up for not finding love. So, is it possible to find real love, the love that will fulfill us and give us meaning? Could it be that God has the answer to Real Love?

Let's consider some questions about God and his love.

IS GOD FOR REAL? He can't be seen or touched. Neither can love, our thoughts, the wind or electricity. Just like we experience the effects of many other unseen things, we experience the effect of God by all that is around us. Even our limited science indicates that the universe is wearing down and that matter can't make itself. The universe points to a beginning and a Creator. Rom 1:20

DOES GOD CARE? A loving, personal and caring God desires to communicate with His people. I John 3:16-17 He sent His only Son into the World to live a perfect life and to be sacrificed for us. He has communicated to us through a timeless and most published book in the World. 2 Tim 3:16 It tells us that God created us to have a personal relationship with Him. John 13:34, Matt 28:20

DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT GOD? Many people have strong beliefs in their own mind. Some think that everyone goes to HEAVEN, others that there is no HEAVEN or God at all, and others that it takes a certain amount of good to get to HEAVEN. They can't all be right. A strong belief doesn't make something happen here on earth or when we die.

Maybe, by looking outside of ourselves, we'll find answers. Here are some answers, according to God's letter to us, the Bible.

GOOD COMES FROM GOD. God, whether we believe in Him or not, is the only way to adequately fill the hole in our souls. Unlike people, God still loves us even when we let Him down (sin). All good comes from God, 1 Jn 3:16 and every good thing we've experienced is because of God. James 1:17

**For further Study, go to
www.yesgod.com.**

TWO UNQIIE BOOKS:

"The Man Code" by Mark Henry, Harvest House Publishers

"Without Excuse" by Julie Von Vett & Bruce Malone, Search for the Truth

Listed on the next page is the table of contents for the Ministry Toolbox Book Vol. II that you can download off our web site ruralchurchym.org

MINISTRY TOOLBOX BOOK VOL. II

Master Table of Contents

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(Scriptures used are from the New American Standard Bible 1995)

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Appendix

INTRODUCTION

To Ministry Toolbox Volume II

A Word of Explanation

Section #1 continues along the line of the first “Ministry Toolbox” book which is a resource book for any believer. Here you will find what I call “Timeless Ministry Principles” and “Timeless Ministry Resources” that could be a benefit for any believer in their walk with the Lord, but especially for those wanting to serve Him more effectively.

Section #2 is directed more at those working with young people. Here I share principles of ministry that I learned over the 28 years in youth ministry. I call these principles “Classic” because they come from my experience as the youth director at Boulevard Park Church in Seattle, WA. where I served in youth ministry from September 1st 1968 to September 1st 1996.

The lesson plans listed were created mostly out of my devotional times because there was very little bible study resources materials available during those years and what there was seemed to me to be too shallow.

For any parents of teenagers, you might find most of these studies a great help as you disciple your own children during those very formative years.

For any pastors wanting to provide parents in their congregation with materials for them to use helping them teach their own children as they go through their teen years.