

DAILY BIBLE READING (December)

By following this suggested schedule you will be able to read the entire Bible in one year. If you've missed previous months' installments, you may begin with this one and finish at this time next year. Others in the congregation are reading the same material each day.

GALATIANS

This letter is addressed to Christians in a region (Galatia) rather than a city. Luther considered it one of the greatest statements of the Gospel and John Wesley was converted by reading it. Paul answers three questions: 1) to whom does the Gospel apply? 2) what are the conditions of discipleship? 3) what is Christian freedom?

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Dec 1	Gal 1-3	Paul discovered that people were "following a different Gospel" (1:6). So he sets forth clearly the only true Gospel. See 1:7-8, 2:15-16, 3:3, 3:21-25. What is "freedom under the Gospel"? <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>
Dec 2	Gal 4-6	What is Christian servitude? (5:6, 5:13). <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>

EPHESIANS

This letter is often called the "crown of Pauline theology." Its subject and theme is the church.

Dec 3	Eph 1-3	The Gospel is the foundation of unity in the church (2:8-9). The church, despite its faults, is the Body of Christ (1:23). <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>
Dec 4	Eph 4-6	Note the emphasis on unity despite the diversity of its members (4:1-6).

PHILIPPIANS

This letter is filled with joy. The Philippians were very dear to Paul. It's a prison letter, written from jail. But Paul still has so much to be joyful about.

Dec 5	Phil 1-4	Paul writes to the first congregation he helped form in Europe. 2:1-2 and 4:4 say it all! <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>
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COLOSSIANS

Another of Paul's letters from prison. This one is written to people Paul had not yet met. It's a magnificent treatise on the deity of Christ addressed to people who may have questioned Jesus' divinity.

Dec 6	Col 1-4	Are you starting to notice similarities in Paul's letters (e.g. the salutations, prayers, advice, conclusions)? Note the emphasis on Christ's divinity in 1:15-16. Which of the creeds makes the same emphasis?
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1 THESSALONIANS

This is regarded as Paul's first letter and therefore probably the earliest written book in the New Testament (written in 50-51 AD). It's addressed to a troubled people and is the New Testament's fullest expression of

ethics and eschatology (study of the “last things”).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Dec 7	1 Thess 1-5	Topics include the return of Christ, death, church order, sexual morality (a big problem for Christians living in a pagan world) and Paul’s credentials.

2 THESSALONIANS

This second letter to the same congregation is a reinforcement of their long-suffering and a plea for them to continue their normal routines. The end of the world is not coming as soon as they might think!

Dec 8	2 Thess 1-3	2:13-14 is a fine statement of the origin, scope, method and goal of our salvation. <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>
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1 TIMOTHY

The two letters of Paul to Timothy and the one to Titus are called the “pastoral epistles.” They are letters from an aging churchman to younger pastors and give a keen insight into pastoral care and theology.

Dec 9	1 Tim 1-3	Timothy is to stand his ground against false doctrine (1:3-4, 6-7). The beginning of chapter 3 is spoken at ordinations of pastors.
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Dec 10	1 Tim 4-6	What is the pastor’s primary responsibility (4:11-16)? We call the pastor’s work a “ministry of Word and sacraments.” 6:3-7 is a good warning.
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2 TIMOTHY

Scholars believe this is the last letter of Paul preserved in the New Testament. Persecutions have begun. This is another letter of pastoral advice to a younger brother in the faith.

Dec 11	2 Tim 1-4	What is the Gospel (it can never be stated too often! – 1:8-10)? Good advice in 2:14. Is the resurrection simply symbolic (2:18)? How well does 3:1-4 describe our era? <i>Your Questions & Comments:</i>
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TITUS

This letter to another, younger, gentile pastor is similar to the letters to Timothy. Note the similarities.

Dec 12	Titus 1-3	Besides the practical advice, Paul gives a clear Gospel statement in 2:11-15.
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PHILEMON

This is a short, personal letter to Philemon, when Paul sent back his slave, Onesimus, who had fled from his master and met Paul. Note the evangelical way in which Paul handles the situation.

Dec 13	Philemon	Paul asks him to receive his slave back as a brother in Christ (16). This is a good example of how Christians should appeal to each other.
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(we read the Letter to the Hebrews earlier this year following our reading of Leviticus)

JAMES

James is the first of the “catholic epistles” (“universal letters”, i.e. written for an unspecified audience). It is much disputed. All of the major Christian teachings are missing and Christ himself is only mentioned twice. The letter also has very little organization. Some consider it an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, a book that can be compared to Proverbs in the Old Testament.

Dec 14 James 1-5 2:14-26 has been hotly debated because of its apparent contradiction to “justification by grace through faith.” What do you think?

1 PETER

Another “catholic epistle” (“universal” or “general”), written by one of the leading disciples. It is often called the “Epistle of Suffering,” in the midst of which Peter calls for hope. It contains almost every doctrine of the Christian faith and is considered by some a sermon, perhaps a baptismal sermon.

Dec 15 1 Peter 1-5 The author describes 1) the blessings of the Christian life, 2) the duties of the Christian life, and 3) the purpose of trial and temptations.

2 PETER

This is very different from Peter’s first letter. It’s concerned mostly with apostasy (people leaving the faith). He quotes 19 consecutive verses from the letter of Jude, which we’ll read later.

Dec 16 2 Peter 1-3 1:16-21 is a clear warning that people should not rely on their own religious opinions and interpretations, but adhere carefully to the apostolic faith.

1 JOHN

A magnificent letter! Read every bit carefully!

Dec 17 1 John 1-5 A truly beautiful and practical statement of the Gospel!

(we will read 2 & 3 John and Jude in one sitting)

2 & 3 JOHN

Written by the same disciple. Scholars don’t know if the “elect lady” refers to a woman or the church. 3 John is the shortest book in the Bible.

JUDE

Probably written by the “brother of Jesus and James.” The author warns against Christian freedom leading to lawlessness. Someone has said that all heresy is simply true Christian teaching carried to a radical extreme.

Dec 18 Read 2 & 3 John and Jude

REVELATION TO JOHN

Undoubtedly Revelation (singular, not plural!) is the most difficult book of the New Testament, but one of the most popular for Bible study groups which like to bite off more than they can chew. The Apocalypse (“uncovering” or “revelation”) is entirely figurative. Remember: difficult portions of Scripture are always to be understood in the light of clearer portions of Scripture. This is a book in which “a child could safely wade, and an elephant drown.” The pastor has some good material on this book, if you’d like further study of it.

Dec 19	Rev 1-3	Do these descriptions sound like any churches you know?
Dec 20	Rev 4-6	It’s a beatific vision. A description of heaven is as difficult for us to grasp as it would be for an embryo to understand our description of earthly life.
Dec 21	Rev 7-8	Note the number of times the words, “after this I saw,” are used. Do they show chronological order? Do the 7 trumpet blasts concur with the 7 seals?
Dec 22	Rev 10-12	Does the whole vision, with different imagery, begin all over again in chapter 12?
Dec 23	Rev 13-15	The “beast,” “dragon,” “false prophet,” and “harlot” all meant something specific to the Christians under persecution. A form of code language lost on us.
Dec 24	Rev 16-18	Beginning with 17:1 we have 7 angels coming down (another description of what happened with the 7 seals and 7 trumpet blasts?).
Dec 25	Rev 19-21	However the end is described, our Lord is victorious. It is, after all, his creation we are the people who celebrate his gift today.

(We accidentally skipped part of Jeremiah a few months back. Use the rest of December to read Jeremiah 28-52 if you missed it)

This year has been a special treat. Why not read the Bible through every year! Congratulations on sticking with it!

If you joined in the daily reading after January 1st of this year, you can continue to download copies of the schedule from our website or pick them up each month in the narthex

