



**“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.”**

Psalm 119:105

Daily Bible Reading & Journal Guide

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Tools You'll Need

1. Bible
2. Bible Reading Plan
3. Journal
4. Pen
5. Daily Planner or Note pad

The first four tools are obvious things you will need to do your daily Bible reading and journaling, but you may not be familiar with the value of the fifth tool you will need.

Having a daily planner or note pad with you when you are reading your daily Scripture passages and journaling is a healthy mental tool. For some people spending quiet time with God can be a struggle, because you know the second you try and read or pray your mind will begin to think of all the things you have to remember to do later. I know for me I have found times where this has happened and then when I have finished my devotions I struggle to remember all the things I have to do that came to mind while doing my devotions. You want to focus on your time with God, but with all the things on our to do list and the things to remember can make it hard sometimes. The best way to alleviate this situation is to have a daily planner or note pad beside you. If something comes to mind that you need to do later write it down. Once you write it down you will find that because you don't have to mentally retain the information for later you will be able to jump back on task quicker. You want to make sure your mind is clear and open, ready to hear and receive from God. The last thing you want is to miss something from God because you remembered you finished the milk today and you need to add it to the grocery list when you are done.

Setting Up Your Journal

1. On the first page of your journal put:
 - a. Start Date:
 - b. End Date:
 - c. Your Name
2. On the next page, if you would like to keep a prayer list, put "Prayer List" at the top of two to three pages.
3. After the Prayer List pages is the "Table of Contents." An example of the table of contents is on the next page. A table of contents is important because who remembers the day you wrote about something when it comes to your mind a year later. This way you can go to your table of contents and find what you are looking for without having to scan each journal. Depending on the size of your journal you may want to leave about four pages blank for your table of contents.

S.O.A.P Journaling Method

First thing you need to know is that there is no right or wrong way to journal. The S.O.A.P. journaling method is just one example of how you could go about it. The S.O.A.P. method can be a helpful tool to help you stay on task with what you are trying to achieve in your journaling.

S.O.A.P. stands for:

- Scripture
- Observation
- Application
- Prayer

Step 1

Read the Scripture passages for that day, which are laid out for you in the “Daily Bible Reading Plan.” If you do not have a daily Bible reading plan be sure to pick one up in the connection area at the church or see Pastor Dustin to get one.

Step 2

Read with an open heart and Jesus will give you words of encouragement, direction, and correction (2 Timothy 3:16).

Step 3

You can do step 3 one of two ways. (1) You can read all of the Bible passages first then journal on a passage where Jesus is teaching you a life lesson. (2) You can read the Bible passages until you come to a passage you feel Jesus teaching you about, stop reading and journal, then when you are done journaling finish up your Bible reading for the day.

Either way, once you are ready to write in your journal turn to a fresh page in your journal and begin to record what He has revealed to you.

- ▲ Write today’s date
- ▲ Give your entry a title (*remember it may be easier to give your entry a title after you are done writing*).

Here is where S.O.A.P. comes in:

- ▲ **Scripture:** write down the main scripture passage that is speaking to you.
- ▲ **Observation:** write what you observe from the Scripture passage.
 - “Take into context the setting and the situation. Make an observation of what’s happening, who’s affected, what’s taking place.”
- ▲ **Application:** write how you will be different today because of what you have just read.
 - Application answers the question, “How does this verse or thought apply to me?”
 - “Application is a crucial part of this process, for without it, all you’re doing is amassing facts, trivia, and bits of knowledge. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus thought of that kind of practice? In a classic confrontation with the Pharisees, He said: ‘I know that you are

Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill me, because My word has no place in you (John 8:37).”

- ▲ **Prayer:** in light of all you have learned and written finish your journaling time by writing out your prayer.

There is a sample journal entry below to help you visualize this journaling method.

Step 4

Turn to the table of contents and record the date, scripture reference, title and page number.

Sample Journal Entry

Date	Title	Page
2/02/11	Devoted	151
<hr/>		
Read: 2 Samuel 22:1-23:23, Acts 2:1-47, Psalm 122:1-9, Proverbs 16:19-20		
<hr/>		
S - Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.		
O - God was able to do great things through the early church because they made God the priority in their daily lives together as evidenced through their study of Scripture, acts of compassion, worship, and prayers.		
A - It's not enough to be devoted to God on my own - God calls me to seek His grace, His truth, and His power in relationships with Jesus and others.		
P - Father, I want to be devoted to you like the early church - 100% for You. Free me to serve You alone in my day-to-day life. Help me to order my days around opening up my heart and eyes to You through Scripture, acts of kindness, worship, and prayer. Most of all, I want You to move in grace and power in the lives of my family, my school, and my church. Show up in my relationships like You did back then.		

FAQ about Daily Bible Reading and Journaling

Too Much Reading!

Some people might feel, in following the Daily Bible Reading Plan, that there are just too many chapters to cover. For those who are unaccustomed to reading, it may appear to be true.

Here are three ways to resolve that perceived problem:

1. **Read just half of what is presented.** (It may still be twice as much as we've ever read!) Begin with the New Testament reading only. Or just the Old Testament.
2. **Read until the Holy Spirit reveals a gem of wisdom.** As you read, you will come upon a verse that stands out. Stop there. Journal on that verse. It will contain an amount of wisdom you will need for something you will be facing soon.

When Is The Best Time To Do My Devotions?

The answer to this is a lot easier than we make it out to be. It's simple, the best time to do your devotions is when you are at your best. If you are a morning person do them in the morning. If you are a night person do them at night. The important thing to remember is that Jesus deserves your best so give Him your best.

What If I Miss A Day ... or Three?

There will be times that you will miss a day (or a few days) of reading. You are fearful of beginning again because you will have to "catch up!"

Don't try to catch up. Start on today's reading. Whatever day it is, start there. Don't try to rewind the tape and catch up all the days you missed. That will discourage anybody! Start with today. Don't worry. You'll come around to it next year. Or if I have a day off, I will go back and read one or two that I missed. But don't get discouraged. Get back on the bus and discover what God has for you today!

Refuse condemnation. Reject discouragement and guilt. We're all growing and developing godly habits. Don't induce fault, remorse, or a sense of failure into your discipline. Reading the Bible and journaling should be fun and refreshing do not make it dreadful because you are stressing over missing a few days.

But I Don't Understand!

Some people say, "What if I don't understand 90% of what I am reading?" Then don't journal on the 90% you don't understand. Journal on the 10% you do! Begin there. If you toss the Bible out with the bathwater, your understanding will actually decrease. But if you will be faithful to journal on what you do understand, God will reveal more to you next time around.

You're not alone in this. Peter understood exactly what you're going through. Listen to these words:

*...just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him...His letters contain **some things that are hard to understand**... (2 Peter 3:15-16)*

I love that. If Peter had a tough time, we certainly don't need to be wound up about not comprehending everything. However, we don't end there. If you don't understand 90 percent, then don't get tied up about what you may be "missing" this time around. Journal on the 10 percent you *do* understand.

Be faithful with what God reveals to you. When you are, next time around, you will understand 20 percent ... then 40 percent ... then 60 percent. Obeying what you do understand is crucial to receiving future revelation. Stay faithful and don't let our lack of understanding decide how we will live our life. Choose the best for your life. It will last you the long haul! If I don't apply the truths I do understand, why should the Lord reveal to me truths I don't yet understand?

"Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only one thing is necessary*, for Mary has **chosen the good part**, which shall not be taken away from her." –Luke 10:40-42

And here's a great prayer for when you begin reading the Scriptures. David taught me this one, and the same is offered to you.

Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in Your law. (Psalm 119:18)

He will.

Why Should I Journal?

Some people say, "I read the Bible, but I don't journal. Should I journal?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Well, partly because in the book of Deuteronomy, God required Israel's kings to write out all of His Word in their own handwriting, then read, every day, what they had written. He mandated this practice, He says, so that the hearts of the kings might not be lifted up above their fellowman and would not become prideful.

If God made this a daily requirement of Israel's kings, then I think it's not too much to ask of the King's kids. Regular, prayerful time in the Bible keeps our hearts from straying.

How about other reasons? For one thing, journaling will help you when the tests come—and they *will*.

Also, as a communicator, I (Wayne Cordeiro) counsel people to journal because I know that the more you learn to write, the better your communication will be. You become

better able to take tangled thoughts and articulate them. You develop the ability to compose your feelings and ideas in an effective and powerful way. When you're called upon to stand and speak, you'll be able to communicate more effectively because you've learned to write.

Sir Francis Bacon once said, "Reading maketh a full man; conference maketh a ready man; and writing maketh an exact man." Today, we'd say that writing makes us more precise thinkers.

As you write, you become a wordsmith: "Hmm, this adjective doesn't work; this adverb is better; this turn of a phrase is better." Writing teaches you to do it on the fly. One practical serendipity is that one day, when you begin to speak extemporaneously, you'll also start to wordsmith on the fly. You'll say in your head, *This phrase works better than that, and this is better than the other*. In nanoseconds, you're wordsmithing. The regular practice of journaling will be a tremendous help in developing your communication skills.

What's Wrong With Using Other Books for My Devotions?

Some people say to me, "I do my daily devotions, but I read *My Utmost for His Highest* or *Our Daily Bread*. What's wrong with using books like these? Aren't they based on the Bible?"

To that I say, There is only one book in the universe God promised to inspire; it's not by J. Oswald Chambers, and I'll bet Chambers himself wouldn't find any argument with that statement! The only book the Lord has pledged to inspire is the one that Paul, in Ephesians 6, calls the sword of the Spirit.

The Bible has stood the test of time. Other volumes may be classics that remain popular for a hundred years or even a thousand. The Bible has endured from the start, and its end will never come. We simply have to get back to the Bible.

Why Is It So Important to Do Devotions Every Day?

Let's change the question a bit. What if God traded out our eyes for His? What if, by divine dispensation, we were allowed to see things through His eyes ... to see, not as man sees, but as He sees? What if we were granted a momentary metamorphosis and saw people's true, spiritual condition? Would we be heartbroken or heart-lifted at what we saw? Sad or surprised? In anguish or in awe?

What if we could see, not how we look to one another, but how we look to God? What would happen if we could pray, in faith, a prayer like that of Elisha regarding his servant?

"O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

What would the people in your church look like if they snacked on meager food morsels during the week and ate only one good meal on the weekend? You know the answer,

don't you? You'd find yourself surrounded by emaciated, gaunt people in desperate need of nutrition.

And how would these undernourished believers fare against a demonic adversary? Can you imagine how this army would look? You'd see threadbare skeletons with hollow cheeks and sunken eye-sockets, lined up like phantoms. Weakened by famine, that shriveled militia could barely stand at attention; each would struggle to find the strength to keep his or her bony frame upright.

Could this "army" conquer an opposing force?

No way. No earthly general would send them out to fight.

Well, then, how about the army of the Lord? What of those who gather on Sunday mornings? Are they spiritually nourished to fight the battles ahead? Considering what most members of God's army subsist on—an occasional tidy snack from a devotional book and perhaps an average-sized meal on Sundays to satiate conscience—you'd have to conclude that God's fighting force has some serious training to do.

Have you ever wondered why marriages seemingly crumble overnight, and—out of the blue—Christians leaders fall to luring temptations?

The truth is, no marriage *instantly* disintegrates, and no one *suddenly* falls away from Christ. For that matter, no one dies from an eating disorder after missing a day or two of meals.

It could better be described as a slow decline—gradual spiritual starvation, barely even discernible to the outside observer. The malnourishment of God's sons and daughters happens over time, as they eat less and less. Then, in their weakness, they do something that shocks everyone, finally revealing what was really going on in their spiritual lives.

Did you know that more than 80 percent of those who call themselves Christians read their Bibles only once a week? And that's usually on Sundays, at church. They come to church to get their spiritual fill, and then snack on devotional tidbits for the rest of the week (if even that).

I wish for just one day God would change the way our eyes work, so we would see ourselves spiritually. We'd see most American churches filled with skeletal, hollow-eyed saints, looking as if a gust of wind would blow them away like tumbleweeds.

Which is why, when some new trend floods America and pushes our nation further away from God, further away from our spiritual roots, the church is unable to withstand the tide. We simply don't have the strength.

So what's the solution?

As I mentioned earlier, the *American Journal of Medicine* recently published a highly

revealing conclusion: The health of twenty-first-century America will no longer be determined by what people can get doctors to do for them but by what doctors can get people to do for themselves.

Do you see how this prescription applies equally to the church? If we eat only once a week, it's no wonder the church is weak and struggling. But daily fresh bread can change all of that. Regularly dining on fresh bread makes for a stalwart, strong, developed army—the only kind of force that will always make a difference in this world.

But What If I Just Don't Have the Time?

Sometimes even though we know reading the Bible is important, we don't think we have the time to do it regularly. So many things are happening in our lives—we are just too busy! We'd like to feast on God's Word, but when will we have the time?

Here's what I say to that: "We will *always* have time for the things we see as important and enjoyable."

If we think golf is important, we find time to play. We might feel listless and tired on Sunday morning, in no mood to attend a boring church service—but if a friend invites us to try out a new course, we'll find the energy.

Because we always have time for the things we enjoy and consider important, what does it say to us if we claim we simply can't find forty minutes a day to spend alone with God?

References used in creating this guide:

Cordeiro, Wayne. (2007). *The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House.

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