

# 2025 Challenge: Know God Better and Love Him More

## Acts 17:11

December's Bible Memory Verse

Matthew 28:19–20 (CSB)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

### Introduction:

If you're a believer, God has saved you. Salvation isn't just to get you into heaven. Going to heaven is the final step in Salvation. Salvation is also for the here and now.

Jesus tells us what **eternal life** is:

John 17:3 (CSB)

This is eternal life: **that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—** Jesus Christ.

Matthew 7:21–24 (CSB)

<sup>21</sup>“**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.**

<sup>22</sup>On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, **didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?**’

<sup>23</sup>Then I will announce to them, ‘**I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**’

<sup>24</sup>“Therefore, **everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**

### Application

Everyone will face the **Day of Judgment**.

For **some**, it will be the most glorious day. For God's people – for **those who surrendered their lives to Jesus**, it will be the most glorious day.

For most, it will be the most dreadful day.

And for **some of those**, it will be one of the most horrible days.

For those who are **lost and have not come to a knowledge of God**, it will be dreadful, especially for those who thought they knew God, but didn't. They thought their good deeds of:

**Prophesying [or preaching] in God's name,**

**Driving out demons in God's name and**

**Doing miracles in God's name would gain a special recognition by God.**

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<sup>1</sup> Scriptures designated CSB are *Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017. Print.

Matthew 7:21 (CSB)

**“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.**

Matthew 7:21–23 (CSB)

<sup>21</sup>“**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.**

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Just **doing things ... even outstanding things ... in Jesus’ name is not sufficient** to be granted eternal life – knowing God and His Son – in this world and in the world to come.

But **Jesus says** if you’re relying on your good works alone – and not **relying on the finished work of Jesus alone**, you will be **rejected by God as a lawbreaker!**

James echoes his half-brother:

James 1:21–25 (CSB)

<sup>21b</sup>...humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup>But be **doers** of the word and not **hearers only**, deceiving yourselves.

<sup>23</sup>Because if anyone is a **hearer** of the word and not a **doer**, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror.

<sup>24</sup>For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.

<sup>25</sup>But the one who **looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer** but a **doer** who works—this person will be **blessed** in what he **does**.

Later, James tells us:

James 2:14–26 (CSB)

<sup>14</sup>**What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?**

<sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food

<sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it?

<sup>17</sup>In the same way faith, **if it does not have works, is dead by itself.**

<sup>18</sup>But someone will say, “**You have faith, and I have works.**” **Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works.**

<sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one. Good! **Even the demons believe**—and they shudder.

<sup>20</sup>Senseless person! **Are you willing to learn that faith without works is *useless*?**

<sup>21</sup>Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar?

<sup>22</sup>You see that **faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made *complete*,**

<sup>23</sup>and the **Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s *friend*.**

<sup>24</sup>You see that **a person is justified by works and not by faith *alone*.**

<sup>25</sup>In the same way, wasn’t **Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route?**

<sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

### **Application**

Many people think that the God of the **Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament**: God in the Old Testament is **mad, vengeful, and full of wrath** and that the God of the New Testament is a **God of love, grace, and mercy**. But didn't you just see what Jesus said in Matthew 7?

**God is the same God in all of the Bible. He never changes! Even back in Abraham's day, Abraham was justified by simply believing in the sufficiency of God in keeping His promises. That is loving. That is gracious. That is merciful.**

**God's people throughout the Old and New Testaments are justified** – given a right standing before God – just as Abraham was justified simply by believing that **God is God and He keeps His promises**.

And where do we find out about God's promises?

**The only place we can find out about God's promises is God's Word: The Bible!**

**If you want to know about God's wonderful promises, you have to read and study God's Word. You have to listen to God's Word explained and applied. You have to memorize God's Word.**

If you aren't **reading and studying** God's Word, **you're missing out!**

If you aren't **listening to** God's Word explained and applied, **you're missing out!**

If you aren't **memorizing** God's Word, **you're missing out!**

Did you see Jesus' definition of eternal life: to Know God and His Son, Jesus Christ. **You cannot know God and His Son apart from God's Word!**

### **1. God's Word Will Increase Your Desire to Know God (Acts 17:10–12)**

Acts 17:10–12 (CSB)

<sup>10</sup>As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

<sup>11</sup>The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since **they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily** to see if these things were so.

<sup>12</sup>Consequently, **many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men.**

### **2. God's Word Will Guide You Through Life (Psalm 119:105)**

Psalm 119:105 (CSB)

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

### 3. God's Word Will Grow You into Being More Like Jesus (2 Peter 3:18)

2 Peter 3:18 (CSB)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.

### 4. God's Word Will Lead You in Godliness (Psalm 119:11; 2 Timothy 3:16–17)

Psalm 119:11 (CSB)

I have **treasured your word in my heart** so that I may not sin against you.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (CSB)

<sup>16</sup>**All Scripture** is inspired by God and is **profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,**

<sup>17</sup>**so that** the man [or woman] of God **may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

#### Application

All Scripture. Have you read *all Scripture*? Does not Paul infer that without knowing all Scripture, you won't be complete and equipped for every living a life of faith?

### 5. God's Word Will Satisfy Your Spiritual Longings (Psalm 19:8–11)

Psalm 19:8–11 (CSB)

<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up.

<sup>9</sup>The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous.

<sup>10</sup>They are more desirable than gold— than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup>In addition, your servant is warned by them, and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.

### 6. God's Word Will Open Your Eyes to Spiritual Truths (Luke 24:31–32; 45)

Luke 24:31–32; 45 (CSB)

<sup>31</sup>Then **their eyes were opened, and they recognized him**, but he disappeared from their sight.

<sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "**Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?**"

...

Then **he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.**

#### Application

Hebrews 4:12 (CSB)

For **the word of God is living and effective and sharper** than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the **separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow**. It is **able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

## Application

Read the Bible daily.

Make it part of your everyday business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own seasons and hours. Do not scramble over and hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best, and not the worst, part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

~ JC Ryle

## 7. God's Word Will Lead You in Worship (Isaiah 6:1)

Worship starts with seeing, not singing.

~ Matt Redman

Isaiah 6:1 (CSB)

In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord** seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah then goes on to describe his experience from seeing God to worshiping God to serving God.

## Application

Challenge to read through the Bible in 2025. Chronological reading will show you the **big picture** and you'll see how it all fits together in *one storyline*.

Romans 8:1 (CSB)

Therefore, **there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,**

My aim this morning is not to condemn you, but **to encourage you to read all of God's Word** in 2025 ***in order to***

- increase your desire to know God
- be guided through your life
- become more like Jesus
- lead you into godliness
- satisfy your spiritual longings
- see spiritual truths, and
- be led into worship of God.

In other words, **read your Bible in 2025 so you can know God better and love Him more.**

## Application

**How do you eat an elephant? Just eat one bite at a time!**

You may find the Bible **intimidating**. There are **1189 chapters** in **66 books** in **two major sections**.

After all, in most Bibles, you're looking at reading somewhere around **900-2000 pages**, depending on how small the **font** is in your Bible.

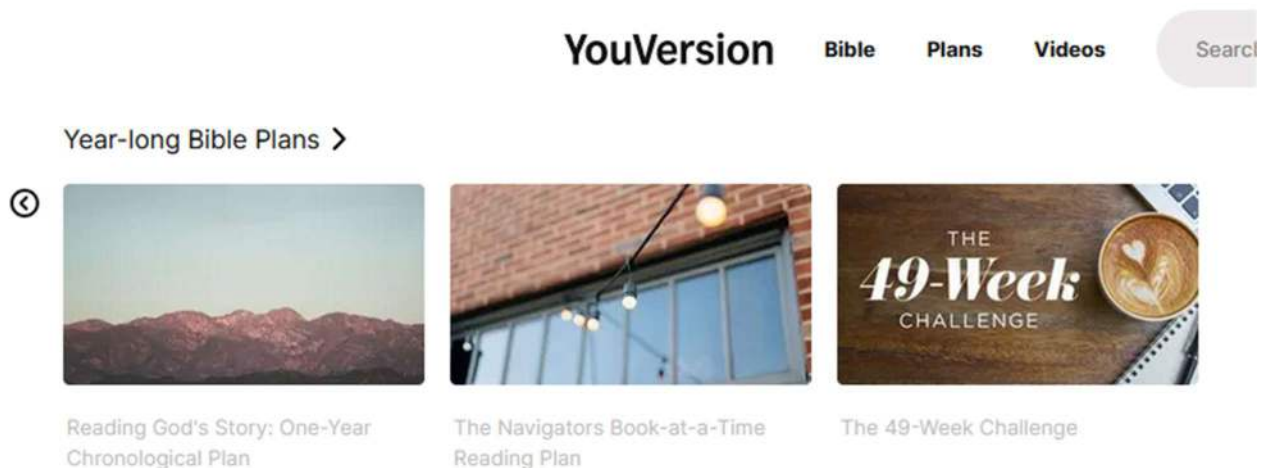
When you calculate this out, **you can read the entire Bible in about four chapters a day, six days a week. Again, depending on the font size your Bible uses, that works out to be about three to six pages a day, six days a week.**

This year, we will use the **same reading plan** we used last year. It is a **chronological** reading plan so you'll read the flow of God's Story *as it happened*. I have used this plan several times in the past and it is the **easiest plan to follow** that I have tried.

Other plans may take you from **cover to cover**, but it gets a little confusing when you read parallel stories such as those in 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles when they're spread out by several weeks. A chronological reading plan shows the **unfolding plan of God's relentless pursuit of His people in a covenant relationship**.

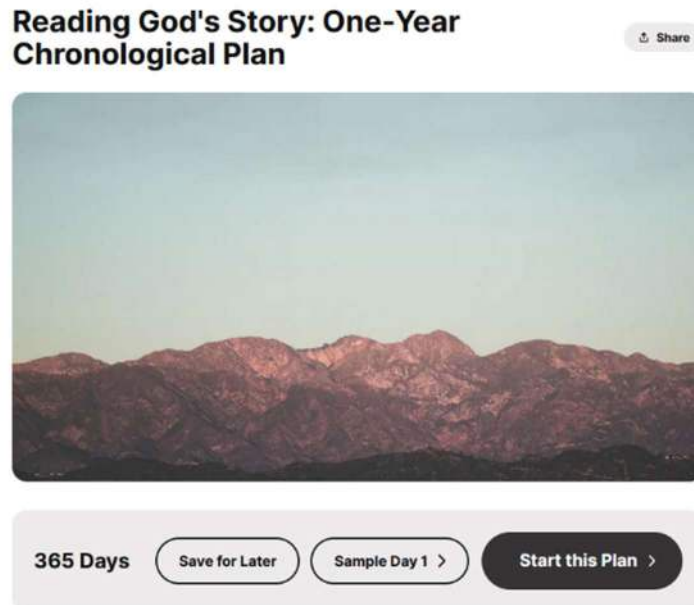
You can download the Bible plan for you to place in your Bible so you can check off the daily Bible readings at <http://Psalm34-8.com/2025brp/>. You can also find this reading plan on the **Bible App** to use on your smartphone.

- Search for ***Reading God's Story: One-Year Chronological Plan*** by clicking on **Year-long Bible Plans**. You may need to **scroll a little** to find Year-long Bible Plans. You may need to scroll a little until you find ***Reading God's Story***



- **Choose the *Reading God's Story* reading plan** and then
- Choose ***Save for Later***.

Make sure the reading plan you choose in the Bible App looks like this.



Go ahead and do that today. But make sure that you have chosen *Save for Later* so ON THURSDAY you can begin your reading plan with the rest of the church.

We'll **begin reading on Wednesday**, January 1 and **we'll take a break on Tuesdays**. On Tuesdays, you can read anything you want, or you can use that day to catch up if you missed a day or two. The Bible App and the printed reading plan will keep track of your reading.

**Do not let this Bible reading challenge become burdensome!** Look at this challenge as a chance to **get to know God better and love Him more** as you walk through it with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Each day that we have a planned day, I send out some **reflections on our readings** for that day. You can sign up for those devotional reflections at <https://psalm34-8.com/subscribe/>

**Summary Application Point: Read God's Word every day in 2025 so you can know God better and love Him more.**

## Time of Response

At the beginning of this sermon, I said that everyone will face the **Day of Judgment**. For **some**, it will be the **most glorious day**. For God's people – for **those who surrendered their lives to Jesus**, it will be the most glorious day.

For **most**, it will be the **most dreadful day**.

And for **some of those**, it will be one of the **most horrible days**.

For those who are **lost** and **have not come to a knowledge of God**, it will be dreadful, **especially** for those who **thought they knew God, but didn't**. They thought their good deeds of:

**Prophesying [or preaching]** in God's name,

**Driving out demons** in God's name and

**Doing miracles** in God's name would gain a **special recognition by God**.

Please don't leave this building without settling things with God. Come to terms with where you will spend eternity. And where you spend eternity will depend **entirely** on whether or not you have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

John 17:3 (CSB)

This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ.

Subscribe to my daily reflections at <https://Psalm34-8.com/subscribe>

