

CHRONOLOGICAL/FAMILY BIBLE READING ORDER

Scott E. Slaughter, MBS, MAR, M.Div., 2009

The Gospels, Acts, James & John

Matthew

James

Luke

Acts

Mark

John

1, 2, & 3 John

Paul's Letters

Galatians

1 & 2 Thessalonians

1 & 2 Corinthians

Romans

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossian

Philemon

Titus

1 & 2 Timothy

Letters to Jewish Christians

1 & 2 Peter

Jude

Hebrews

OT Historical Writings

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 & 2 Samuel

1 & 2 Kings

Ezra-Nehemiah

Esther

Prophetic Writings

Jonah To Israel/ Assyrian

Amos

Hosea

Isaiah To Judah/ Assyrian

Micah

Zephaniah To Judah/ Babylonian

Nabum

Habakkuk

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Obadiah

Ezekiel

Daniel To the Jews
Babylonian/ Persian

Haggai To Judah/ Persian

Zechariah

Joel

Malachi

The Apocalypse

Revelation

Poetic Writings

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

EXPLANATION OF SUGGESTED ARRANGEMENT

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Why did you recommend starting with the N.T.?

The New Testament is placed first for two reasons:

1. Reader orientation – In family worship there are usually one or more children. Starting in the O.T. can have the effect of overwhelming children with too many details. By this I do not mean to insinuate that the O.T. is less important but I only suggest this for practicality. I have found that my children grasp the N.T. books quicker than the O.T. books. Genesis could be an exception to this. Children do seem to be able to grasp Genesis with relative ease. It may also be recommended that the suggested arrangement be amended in order to place a reading of Genesis early or even at the beginning. I would have no disagreement with such an order.
2. Theological orientation - Since our goal is to bring them to faith in Christ, we should start with the N.T. and allow them to gradually add to their understanding knowledge of the O.T. By starting in the N.T. we may be preparing them to behold Christ as those disciples on the Emmaus road did (Luke 24:13-27).

Why do you recommend I read the N.T. books to my family in this order?

I have sought to arrange the reading so that the redemptive theme of the whole Bible is more readily observable by those listening in a family worship setting. The reading starts with the N.T. Gospels and Acts thus setting Jesus Christ before the family at the onset of the family's Scripture reading. Acts is placed early thus introducing the ascension of our Lord, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of the church in continuing Christ's work in a fallen world. The family is then moved into the important teachings of the Apostle Paul and the Hebrew Epistles. There is a natural flow, a progressive development of thought suggested to those listening as they move together through this order.

About the suggested reading order for the New Testament:

- ⇒ *The Gospels & Acts* – are distributed for interest of reading and to break monotony. Children have a shorter attention span.
- ⇒ *James* is placed early for two reasons. First, because James can be separated from the Hebrew Epistles and easily be made to stand alone. Secondly, James' epistle was written early about A.D. 44-49. Thus it can naturally be placed early in the list to help provide interest.
- ⇒ *1-3 John* are placed after his gospel account because of their similar genre. This will facilitate recognition of similar themes and John's wonderful writing style.
- ⇒ *The Pauline Epistles* are in basic chronological order.
- ⇒ *Philemon* is placed after Colossians because of their association.
- ⇒ *The Hebrew Epistles* are listed in Chronological order with the exception of James.
- ⇒ *Revelation* has been moved to the end of the O.T. reading arrangement to allow it to provide, as it does, a sense of consummation of God's redemptive work.

What are your reasons for suggesting that the family read the O.T. in this order?

The O.T. is fascinating reading! The more I grow in the Lord the more often I find myself in it. But I can remember what it was like being both a young man and a new believer and trying to understand the O.T. It was confusing and intimidating. The names and historical information seemed to bury the message. I know that this is not true, but it was my feeling at the time. There were just so many pieces of the puzzle missing in my understanding. I found solace back in the N.T. time and time again. As I grew in the Lord my knowledge of Israel's history increased and the O.T. became much easier to comprehend. Because of this I

assume that most children will experience what I did. Secondly, to help facilitate this I have suggested a reading that is more chronological and historical. The arrangement reflects more accurately the order in which Israel's history and God's plan of redemption unfolded. My goal is to help parents demonstrate God's progressive work to our salvation in Jesus Christ as they read the Scriptures to their families. I want children to see the Bible as a record of God's unfolding plan of salvation. Hopefully the Spirit will use this and Christian parents to lead their children to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

About the suggested reading order for the Old Testament:

- ⇒ *The Pentateuch* (Genesis-Deuteronomy) has been left in its original, ancient order because time and hermeneutics (the science and art of biblical interpretation) have attested to its validity.
- ⇒ *Joshua through Esther* are in basic chronological order with the exception of the Prophets and the Poetical Writings.
- ⇒ *The Prophets* as a group are arranged in chronological order.
- ⇒ *The Poetical Writings* (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Song of Songs) are placed last because of certain benefits to reading them together. It is also helpful to orient the hearers to wisdom literature. Another reason is that these books are often read out of sequence on various occasions (holidays, special occasions, or times of trial) in family worship. Their devotional and didactic nature facilitates their being read sporadically. Lamentations may also be considered in this list but I have grouped it with its author, Jeremiah, due to its subject matter. Lamentations, to me, belongs with the lamenting prophet. He so loved Jerusalem that he wrote and sang about her destruction. The Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) has been set alone due to its subject matter. This is not to impugn it in any way. I simply suggest, by placing it alone, that special thought should be given to the proper venue of its reading.

Suggestions for Reading Scripture in Family Worship:

- ⇒ Especially in the case of children, it is recommended that a more up-to-date translation be used for family worship such as the English Standard Version (ESV), the New American Standard Version (NASV), or the New King James Version (NKJV).
- ⇒ Try to read 2 to 4 chapters at each sitting. This will help facilitate story progression and a more rapid pace through the Bible.
- ⇒ Warning! Do not force your chapter goal. It will be counter-productive if family worship becomes an endurance race. Be natural. If the family is busy read one chapter. Other times they will be exceptionally interested – read more. Be sensitive to everyone's mood and schedule. There is no need to be hard-nosed about it. Family worship must be a time of resting in God. Do not make it drudgery! To do so is to do disservice to our Lord. It is important that everyone look forward to meeting with/before God for a time. Avoid turning family worship into a church service.
- ⇒ If you are unable to have family worship one day simply pick it up again the next. Do not waste time with guilt – love the Lord your God and enjoy His Word with your family.
- ⇒ Others may be allowed to read for the family. Dad may be the regular reader but mom or one of the children may want to as well.
- ⇒ Pick a time that is in sync with the natural rhythm of your family's life. Avoid forcing a specific time that "interrupts" routine family activities. For my family the best time is just before dinner. This time works for us for several reasons. Lori and I believe in the immense value of gathering around the dining room table for our meals. Because of this it seems only natural to add family worship to this routine but life-changing event. Secondly, all of our family is typically home at this time. Thirdly, we have family worship before our meal (with some inconvenience for mom) because we have found that attention spans are better before dinner than afterward. After dinner everyone desires to do those last things before retiring. This said, your family may have a different rhythm. Work with it; not against it. Let God in the pattern of your life. If you isolate Him with an inconvenient time-slot you will be more tempted to leave Him out.

Ideas:

⇒ ***For Scripture Reading***

- ✓ - Have a Scripture reading plan. Choose a Bible reading plan or devise your own.
- ✓ - Read it through. The Bible is the Divine record of God's work in redeeming His people. It is meant to be read contextually from beginning to end not as a book of isolated inspirational thoughts.
- ✓ - Read in conjunction with your pastor's expositional preaching. This only works if your pastor preaches through the Bible, book by book.

⇒ ***For Prayer***

- ✓ - Take prayer requests.
- ✓ - Make a prayer list.
- ✓ - Adopt a missionary for prayer.
- ✓ - Allow anyone or everyone to pray.

⇒ ***Singing*** – Let it come naturally. Do not force it. Build interest. Let them choose a song.

⇒ ***Discussion*** – Read Scripture, pray, and let the discussion happen over dinner.

⇒ ***Q. & A. Time***

- ✓ - Dad and mom may field questions informally and conversationally.
- ✓ - Dad may ask a key question before reading Scripture that will be answered by the reading.

⇒ ***Look it up!***

- ✓ - Did something happen at school? Does someone have a question about God or the faith? Pull down a few Bible study helps and "look it up!"

⇒ ***Reading*** – Read good, age-appropriate Christian books together!

⇒ ***Sharing***

- ✓ - Something that someone in the family is working on for church (memory verses, catechism, lessons, music, plays, etc.).
- ✓ - Something each has gotten from the Word lately.
- ✓ - A prayer or a poem.