



FBC Reading Plan
May 2021

Why a Reading Plan: God speaks to people through His Word. It is what He uses to transform our lives by orienting our minds toward His truth and aligning our heart toward what He loves. The aim of this reading plan is not to merely check a box off a list, but to encourage our church body to spend time hearing from God. Reading the Bible is critical to a Christian's growth. But it is especially powerful to read the Bible with others. This reading plan is the basis for all of our D-Groups, and we hope it fosters deeper spiritual conversations in our families and between our members.

How to use this booklet: Each day has a passage of Scripture for you to read. There are also some questions to prompt your reading and reflecting on the passage. We encourage the H.E.A.R. method for reading Scripture, especially if it is a new discipline for you. First, **highlight** a verse or verses that speak to you from the passage. Then, **explain** what those verses mean in relation to the broader context and how they support the big idea the author is trying to communicate. Next, **apply** this verse to your everyday life. For example, how should this change your desires, your behavior, or your relationships? Application should always be done in a spirit of prayer, as you are asking God to reveal to you how it applies. Finally, it is not enough to settle for knowing some truth or how it might apply to your life without a specific response. So finally **respond**. This can be a prayer or a specific action you will take after hearing this verse or passage.

Memory Verse: Because Scripture is God's Word, it is important that a Christian spend regular time memorizing God's Word so that he or she can always find encouragement and guidance from God. This month's memory passage is provided on the next page in the ESV, NIV, and NLT.

May's Memory Verse

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV)

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV)

2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. 3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

Colossians 4:2-6 (NLT)

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Day 1 Highlight: 2 Kings 17-18

Explanation:

How did the kingdom of Israel finally come to an end? And why did this happen?

What is Hezekiah tempted to do in ch. 18?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Application:

God rebukes his fellow Jews for their disobedience, and he prays to God about his enemies outside of the Jewish community. How might that be a pattern for our lives in the church?

Response:

Are you mistreating any of your fellow brothers or sisters in Christ?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Day 5 Highlight: Nehemiah 5-6

Explanation:

What were some of the problems the Jews faced that were caused by their own people?

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Application:

These two chapters are essentially about trust, trusting in Yahweh versus trusting in Baal and/or Egypt and/or Assyria, etc. What does it mean for you to trust in Yahweh today? How does such trust affect how you live?

Response:

Ask God to cause you to trust him more.

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Day 2 Highlight: 2 Kings 19-21

Explanation:

Why does God spare Jerusalem from the Assyrian army?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Application

What relevance do these chapters have to your life?

Response:

Pray that you and our church would be faithful to God's mission in the face of opposition.

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Day 4 Highlight: Nehemiah 3-4

Explanation:

Why is rebuilding the city walls so important? How do they deal with the threat of attack on the building project?

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Application:

If Hezekiah was a righteous king, why was Jerusalem nearly overthrown by the Assyrians? And if Manasseh was such a wicked king, why was he able to reign for such a long time? What relevance does this have for your life?

Response:

Pray that God would make you and our church faithful to him during the specific time in history when he has called us to follow him.

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Day 3 Highlight: 2 Kings 22-23

Explanation:

Josiah, one of the most godly kings in Judah, reigned immediately after one of the most evil kings in Judah, Manasseh. And despite his reforms, Josiah was followed by another evil king, Jehoahaz. What were some of the reforms Josiah made? What lasting effect do you think they would have had among everyday Israelites?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Application:

What can we learn about prayer from Nehemiah?

Response:

Based on these chapters, how do you need to respond to God in prayer today?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Day 3 Highlight: Nehemiah 1-2

Explanation:

Why is Nehemiah sad before the king?

Why does Nehemiah examine the walls at night?

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Application:

How might this chapter teach us how to reform our own churches today?

Response:

Pray that our church and our members would be always willing to reform our practices into further conformity with the Word of God.

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Day 4 Highlight: Jeremiah 1-3:5

Explanation:

What was Jeremiah called to do? What was his message?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Application:

Not only does this book not mention God, it does not mention divine or spiritual realities. What might it teach us about how we should live in a secular world? What might it teach us about how God works in a world in which he seems absent?

Response:

Pray that God would give you wisdom to live faithfully in our world.

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Day 2 Highlight: Esther 8-10

Explanation:

How does the narrative of this book climax and resolve?

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Application:

What will happen to Judah as a result of forsaking Yahweh?

Response:

Describe some of the attitudes and actions of Judah in 2:1-3:5. Do you see anything similar in your own heart and life?

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Day 5 Highlight: Jeremiah 25, 29

Explanation:

Nebuchadnezzar is God's "servant" who carries out his will (25:9), and yet Babylon is also going to be punished for its iniquity (25:12). Describe how God can both use Babylon to bring judgment on Judah and judges Babylon itself for its evil.

To whom is the letter in ch 29 addressed? Summarize its message.

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Application

Once again, God is never mentioned in this story. However, where do you see him at work in these chapters? Does that have any relevance to our own lives?

Response:

Haman's anger and pride eventually lead to his downfall. How does his example serve to keep you from similar attitudes?

Week 5: Rebuilding the Walls
Starting Date May 31

Day 1 Highlight: Esther 5-7

Explanation:

Describe the character of Haman.

Week 1: Defeated by Assyria
Starting Date May 3

Application:

How should we apply the message in ch. 29 to our lives today? How would it be wrong to apply this passage to our lives today?

Response:

Pray for the welfare of our community and our country.

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Day 1 **Highlight:** Jeremiah 31:31-40, 32-33

Explanation:

What is the significance of Jeremiah buying a field in ch. 32?

How does God give hope to his people in the face of their imminent destruction?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Application:

The book of Esther is famous for never mentioning God. Where do you see him at work in these chapters? What might that teach us about our own lives?

Response:

Esther is an example of doing what is right in the face of danger. How can you do that yourself today?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Day 5 Highlight: Esther 3-4

Explanation:

Why is there a decree to wipe out all the Jews in the empire?

How do Mordecai and Esther respond to the royal decree?

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Application:

What do these chapters teach you about God?

Response:

“Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” who has fulfilled his promises in Christ and blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (33:11).

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Day 2 **Highlight:** Jeremiah 52, 2 Kings 24-25

Explanation:

Jerusalem was besieged twice by Babylon, first in 597 BC (2 Kings 24:10-17) then in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:1-21; Jeremiah 52). After both sieges, people were exiled, but the city was ultimately and totally overthrown in 586 BC. How could God bring these disasters upon his people?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Application:

This story is about Jews living in exile. How might such a context be similar to ours today?

Response:

Pray that God would give you wisdom and discernment to live wisely in our world.

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Day 4 Highlight: Esther 1-2

Explanation:

Describe the character of King Ahasuerus.

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Application:

What does God teach us about himself, that he could cast his covenant people out of his presence (24:20)?

Response:

This passage is a culminating point in Scripture that reveals how sinful humanity is and how utterly hopeless we are without God's grace. Ask God to reveal sin in your life, ask for forgiveness, and turn from it.

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Day 3 Highlight: Ezekiel 1:1-3, 36:16-38, 37

Explanation:

Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon and prophesied to those who were living in Babylon (1:1-3). How is God about to “act,” that is, what is he going to do (36:22)? And why is he going to do it?

What does Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of Israel symbolize?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Application:

Should this passage be applied today? If so, in what way?

Response:

Despite having recently returned from exile, the people already turn from following God wholeheartedly. How can you keep watch over your own life so that you are not guilty of similar behavior?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Day 3 Highlight: Ezra 9-10

Explanation:

How have the returned exiles been faithless to God? Why is Ezra so distressed about this?

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Application:

We are the recipients of the promises of 36:25-29 in Christ. Based on the context of the passage (vv. 16-38), what is the purpose of receiving the fulfillment of these promises?

Response:

Praise God for giving you a new heart and a new spirit, and pray that you might be careful to obey God's rules.

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Day 4 Highlight: Daniel 1-2

Explanation:

What is the point of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Application:

Throughout Ezra, God works through pagan governments to bless his people. But in ch. 8, Ezra deliberately refuses the help and protection of the king: "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him" (8:22). How do we know when God is using others or when he is going to act more directly in our lives?

Response:

God protects those who seek him and entrust themselves to you. Where do you need God's protection today? Ask him for it.

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Day 2 Highlight: Ezra 7-8

Explanation:

Why do you think Artaxerxes acted so favorably toward Ezra and the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem?

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Application:

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were all immersed in Babylonian institutions for three years (1:5), and yet somehow kept their allegiance to the one true God. How were they able to do that?

Response:

How do you respond to your God, who is able to raise up and tear down nations, who himself is king of a kingdom that stands forever?

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon
Starting Date May 10

Day 5 Highlight: Daniel 3-4

Explanation:

The beginning of chapter 3 emphasizes that people from all of the places that Babylon had conquered came and bowed down to this image of gold. Why were other nations able to bow down to this image and presumably forsake their own gods? Why could Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah not participate in this?

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple
Starting Date May 24

Application:

What relevance does this have for us today?

Response:

Zechariah looked forward to a day when God's people would be secure because God dwelled in their midst. Praise God that we have his presence through the Spirit, and ask that the day would come quickly when he will come and dwell with us on the new earth.

Week 4: Rebuilding the Temple

Starting Date May 24

Day 1 Highlight: Zechariah 1:1-6, 2, 12

Explanation:

Based on these passages, summarize Zechariah's message to the returned exiles.

Week 2: Exiled to Babylon

Starting Date May 10

Application:

Every nation and every ruler demands that its citizens worship its gods. What gods are we or might we be pressured to worship today?

Response:

Imagine a situation in which you are attacked for holding traditional, orthodox Christian views. Would you be able to entrust yourself to God, even if he does not free you from great suffering (3:16-18)?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Day 1 Highlight: Daniel 5-6

Explanation:

What was the meaning of the mysterious writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace? What was the point of revealing this to him?

Why did Daniel not follow the law of the king?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Application:

The temple was finished "by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia." What does this teach us about how God may work at times in our own lives?

Response:

Despite being exiled, God eventually brings his people back to the land; and despite many setbacks, the temple is rebuilt. How do you respond to a God who is faithful to keep all of his promises?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Day 5 Highlight: Ezra 5-6

Explanation:

In these chapters, how does God work in and through human leaders and institutions for the good of his people?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Application:

In what situations are we justified in disobeying the law of the land?
Should we expect to face consequences for that?

Response:

It seems God's goal in much of this book so far is to prove that his kingdom and dominion will last forever. Have you entrusted yourself to the ruler of all today?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Day 2 Highlight: Daniel 9-10, 12

Explanation:

If God had already given his word for how long the exile would last (9:2), why did Daniel seek God with prayer and fasting (9:3)? Why does Daniel repent not only for his sins but for the sins of all Israel?

What is the purpose of Daniel sharing this vision?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Application:

It is one thing to get started; it is another to keep going. What relevance does this passage have for your own spiritual journey?

Response:

The people of God have always faced opposition. How will you keep faithfully pressing on?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Day 4 Highlight: Ezra 3-4

Explanation:

Why were people so excited to lay the foundations for the temple? Why then did they eventually stop building the temple?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Application:

What does ch. 9 teach you about prayer?

Response:

Do you seek God in repentance as zealously as Daniel did?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Day 3 Highlight: Ezra 1-2

Explanation:

Who is it that sends Israel back to its land?

What is the significance of the return from exile back to the land of Israel?

Week 3: The Return from Exile
Starting Date May 17

Application:

How does this passage instill greater trust in God?

Response:

God keeps his promises and never abandons his people. Do you believe that today?