# Why read through the Bible in Chronological Order?

As we start reading through the Bible in Chronological order, it's worth asking why we should do it. To answer, ask yourself, why read any story in the order that the events happened?

The answers are obvious. With the exception of the use of flashbacks or other literary devices, we need to read and experience events and character development in their natural time-dictated sequence for the story to make sense, for us to know the characters, and to care about what happens to them. In a non-fiction book we have to know the premise, the background, the arguments for the practical recommendations that follow for them to make sense.

To illustrate the truth of this:

*Jump into the middle of a Harry Potter story with Muggles, Quidditch, Dumbledore, and Hogwarts*

*Open at random a book from Hunger Game Trilogy and read about  Mockingjays, Panem, and the Twelve Districts*

*Open a book on the popular Paleo diet find these terms: paleo/primal, autoimmune protocols, leaky guts, and ketogenic*

All of the above are nothing more than a confusing list of names and terms if you don't read the entire book but they would all make perfectly good sense if you read the entire book from start to finish and meet each term in context.

**It's no different with the Bible**

For someone who did not grow up listening to Bible stories or perhaps grew up in church and wasn't paying much attention, how much sense does it make when you hear about Shem, Jeroboam, and Barnabas or about atonement, sanctification, and justification?

We wouldn't claim to know the least bit about the Hunger Games or the Paleo diet if we only dipped into a few pages of each book here and there, even if we had favorite pages we went back to again and again, so why do we think we know the Bible when for many Christian they have:

* *Never read it all the way through*
* *Or ever read it in Chronological Order*

Though all Christians should read their Bibles regularly and many do, it's easy to go back to the books and passages with which we are most familiar.

In addition, and this is a simple, but extremely important reality—it isn't easy to read the book of the Bible in chronological order because they aren't organized that way in our Bibles today. In most Bibles, the books of the Bible are grouped by type: In the Old Testament: history, poetry, prophecy; the New Testament is similar: history, letters, prophecy.

**Why are they in the order they are in today?**

After researching many sources, the short answer seems to be "because they've always been arranged that way." When I tried to find out why they've always been that way, I didn't find a good answer, but I suspect that when the books were arranged this way, the scribes and later the editors of various translations, from their great familiarity with the content of all the books, knew which prophetic writings were spoken during what king's reign, which psalms David wrote at various times in his life, and what was happening in Acts to prompt Paul to write letters to various churches.

Sadly, that isn't true of most of us today. We may love Jesus, our church, and Christian friends, but many of us don't have any idea what Amos was preaching about or when or the setting of how Cyrus fulfilled a prophecy Isaiah spoke about him 150 years before he was born. We can't appreciate how Jesus fulfilled many prophecies in the Old Testament or the depth of his life and sacrifice as Paul explains them because we have no idea of the Old Testament rituals and sacrificial system he refers to. We sometimes don't understand the parts, promises, problems of individual passages because we don't understand the big picture.

**The end result of this method of interaction with the Bible is two-fold:**

* One, because we have no idea of the contextual meaning of the passage we pull out a promise or encouragement we like, interpret it in a way that makes us feel good, and then when God doesn't do what we think he should (and that in reality he never promised to do) we get upset with him and wrongly assume he can't be trusted.
* Two, because we tend to go back to favorite passages instead of reading the entire Bible, we skip the hard parts. These are the parts that are not easy to understand, like Leviticus (but without understanding it, the sacrificial death of Jesus won't ultimately make sense), or the difficult challenges of the minor prophets (who spell out what "to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" really mean), or the exclusive claims of Jesus as the only way to God and what his death demands of those who follow him (why we are also commanded to take up our cross and are reminded we are crucified with Christ).

It's a little like the description of Aslan, the Christ figure in C.S. Lewis book The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe:

“Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he-quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"..."Safe?" said Mr Beaver ..."Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.”

Reading the whole Bible isn't safe—it will shake and transform every part of your life if you will let it. But it's good.

**Why it's good for us to read through the Bible in chronological order**

***We'll understand the whole story of salvation as it unfolds:*** for many of us, we only have bits and pieces of the story, but when you read it in chronological order you'll see God's extraordinary planning and working out of every detail over the centuries. You'll see how the entire Bible builds towards the coming of Jesus, this death, resurrection, and promised return.

***We see how God is truly the author of the entire Bible:*** The Bible was written over 1600 years and yet it has one voice under all the voices and one clear theme—of God seeking, saving, and restoring his lost people.

***It will help us understand the uniqueness of the Christian Bible:*** no other religion has Scriptures written over a similar time period that are as internally consistent as the Christian Bible is. There are no other Scriptures that have historically verifiable prophecies that were fulfilled in verifiable historical settings as in the Christian Bible. These are bold statements and you have to read the Bible in chronological order, along with an understanding of history to see them.

***It will grow our trust and confidence in our God:*** the same God who mercifully clothed Adam and Eve after they sinned and promised them a Savior is the same God who formed Israel, guided, and disciplined it, and who from it brought his Son into the world and who lived, died, rose, and formed his church to carry his message of salvation and his return to restore all things. When you see that big picture and the sometimes difficult lives the Biblical characters lived in the midst of it, it can give you peace and trust to understand your part of the same great story. It will fill you with hope and assurance of our glorious ending when daily trials threaten to undermine your faith.

**To download a PDF of Bible Readings in Chronological order,**[**CLICK HERE**](http://www.untilfulllight.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/bible-reading-plan-for-the-year-most-condensed-and-with-links-4-columns.pdf)**.**

**To download an MS WORD file of the Bible Readings in Chronological order, that has clickable links,**[**CLICK HERE**](http://www.untilfulllight.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/bible-reading-plan-for-the-year-most-condensed-and-with-links-4-columns.docx)**.**