

Cover to Cover:
Through the Bible in 365 Days
John A. Carroll

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For Mary, world's greatest wife

FOREWORD

Endorsements for Cover to Cover

Solomon notes in Proverbs 23:7, “As a man thinks...so is he.” A person is not identified by outward looks, but rather by the thought life. A strategic objective in the Christian life is to think biblically, to see reality as God sees it. If this is your objective, I recommend John Carroll’s devotional. In its pages you will find him forcing you to evaluate your worldview in light of Scripture. I have known and co-labored with John for many years, and commend him to you as a man of God who has the ability to articulate key biblical thoughts.

Rev. Walter A. Henrichsen

Founder – Leadership Foundation

Author: “Thoughts from the Diary of a Desperate Man”;

“Disciples are Made, Not Born” (with Dr. Howard Hendricks)

Food for the soul, one right-sized plate full at a time! John Carroll has seen into our souls & felt our deepest need. How can we get more of Jesus in heart & life? The incarnate Word has given us His written Word to draw us ever closer. With lives so busy that we cannot breathe much less think, John has measured just enough & prepared it for tasty eating. Never too little or too much, the meals here prepared are just what we need. Holding us by the hand & taking us on a tour of the selected portion, John does not leave us with just an emotion, but he challenges our minds & lives. Are you lazy-minded, lacking serious reflection? John does not abandon you, but leads you to the mind of God. Is your heart cold even when facing living truth? John calls you out, insisting that you wake up & see the Lord. I hope you will find this helpful aid to the habit of regular Bible reading a real encouragement. John Carroll has touched many lives with the penetrating eyes of a pastor and missionary. Here, he reaches out through the page for our good and God's glory!

Dr. Duncan Rankin,

Associate Pastor-Christ Church, Katy, TX

Visiting Professor of Theology, Reformation Bible College, Ligonier Ministries

Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary

Board of Directors, GRACE—Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment

I've used many different "read through the Bible plans," but this one is different in several beneficial ways. First, the readings are divided into readable sections that don't feel overwhelming and smoothly work together. Second, Mr. Carroll's reflections are spot on and clearly tied to the passages just read. Third, the challenge sections leave you with something to ponder and think about giving you opportunities to bring your mind back to the Scriptures often in the course of the day.

Home School Mom, Katy, TX

I suppose my personally knowing the author makes me a little biased. Be that as it may, I started the new year with his "Cover to Cover" and have been totally pleased with the simplicity of his approach to reading the Bible through in a year. I much prefer to read books in context rather than jumping around, and Dr. Carroll has designed this Bible reading to take the reader book-by-book through God's Word. In addition, he provides his own brief, select comments on a portion of each day's reading. These comments are not only quite insightful, they provide a template for the reader to jot down his own comments. Each morning, first thing after a cup of coffee (to wake up), my wife and I read the assigned biblical text and Dr. Carroll's comments. Then we share what struck us from our reading. What a great way to start the day! Thank you, Dr. John Carroll.

Dr. Tim Hoke, Pastor and Professor – African Bible University, Kampala, Uganda

John Carroll's book not only gives the reader a goal for the year, but also breaks the Bible down into "do-able" reading. His insight into the highlighted daily scripture brings the Bible into the reader's heart and mind in such a personal and understandable way. He is an excellent writer, and I truly have enjoyed the devotions I have read. John has a heart for the Lord and for helping others have a closer walk with Him. The challenges that John gives are extremely helpful in doing that. We all need to be challenged to a more satisfying, fulfilling life, and John does just that. I highly recommend this book.

Mrs. Barbara Baranowski- President - The Roanoke Valley Christian Writers Group

John's approach is clear, simple and manageable for anyone who is interested in getting to know their Bible. "Cover to Cover" reminds its readers that God wants us to reflect upon His Word so that our lives will be challenged to grow in Christ. But it does so in a manner that makes reading the entire Bible a delight. This book is valuable for personal devotions or for use in fellowship groups in any church ministry. So join others who have taken the step to enjoy a journey through the Bible this year!

Rev. Donald Broadwater – Pastor, Author, Missionary to Australia

If you are looking for a plan to read the Bible through, particularly in one year, Dr. Carroll's book will be very helpful. The benefit to this book and its reading plan is that each reading has a focus on a specific passage, with a practical and devotional thought included. Each reading will include relevant, thoughtful observations, encouraging the reader to continue forward in the goal of reading the Bible through in one year.

Dr. Rod Culbertson, Jr.

Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Dean of Student Development, Director of the Institute for Reformed Campus Ministry- Reformed Theological Seminary/Charlotte

Extremely well thought out guide to help you read through the Bible in a year. Mr. Carroll offers his insights but encourages his readers to chose verses out of the daily reading to ponder and meditate on.

Diane R. Haun

So helpful in keeping focused in daily reading. Appreciate the author's additional interpretations of certain verses. The length of reading is just right.

Homemaker, Katy, TX

I started about a week late and caught up quickly as this particular method has me looking forward to my daily reading of Scripture. John Carroll's plan helps me take the Old Testament passages and see how God continues to work in this present time, just as He did so long ago. The readings are broken into very manageable sections; I enjoy this approach so much that I am taking advantage of a rainy day to read ahead because of an upcoming full schedule. I especially appreciate his insightful "Selection, Reflection, and Challenge" at the end of each reading. Thought provoking messages that leave me meditating on what I have read. It is not too late to start your New Year off with this wonderful plan to read through the entire Bible in a year.

Nancy Shell

Very, very well organized and John's daily "Reflections" and "Challenge" sections have actually caused me to reflect and challenge myself in my walk with God. Each day's reading take about the same time and have a logical starting and stopping point (sometimes mid-chapter). I find that I try to guess what his verse "Selection" will be and actually get it right occasionally. He usually surprises me though. I've recommended "Cover to Cover" to several friends and relatives and have gotten good feedback.

Businessman, Salem, VA

This is a great guide for reading the bible in 365 days. Easy to use.

Tina Constive

I am so pleased to have this on my Kindle and to be studying under Dr. Carroll again. It arrived just in time for the New Year and is a great "through the Bible in a year" plan. Keeps me focused on my daily reading with the plus of Dr. Carroll's insights on particular passages. Looking forward to the availability of a print version for gifts to family and friends!

Accountant, Houston, TX

John Carroll has provided a day by day devotional for believers to use. Out of his pastoral experience, he brings a clear understanding of the passage along with a challenge on how to apply the passage to your life. It does not matter where you are in your spiritual walk with the Lord, you can profit from this book.

Rev. David Gilleran

Chaplain (US Army), Pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church, Martinsville, VA

Straight forward, simple method of reading through the Bible. John Carroll's comments on each Bible reading portion serve as a stimulating incentive to continue the Bible reading program. It has encouraged me to be faithful in reading the scriptures on a regular basis.

Robert Rossbacher, Businessman

A big thank you to John Carroll for this wonderful book. Not only am I encouraged to read through the Bible in a year, but even better, each day I am challenged to apply what I have read, and to live a more godly and Christ-centered life!

Mrs. Diana Dugan

Love how each day's reading is manageable and has application to make the reading personal.

University Administrator – Houston, TX

A super way to read the Bible in one year. Everyone can do it.

John Baranowski – blogger <http://christianhiker.blogspot.com/>

Wonderful day by day devotional!

Interior Decorator, Katy, TX

Preface

It's January 1, New Years Day. You are holding a Bible in your hand. You love God's Word. You have never read it through, but you have told yourself that you are going to read through the Bible. You are going to do it beginning today and you are going to finish this year. You will not fail. This is a must-do.

Fast forward one month. You are behind schedule, but only a few days. You are determined to double your speed and catch up.

But too many urgencies crowd your days. It was slow going in the second half of Exodus. Oh, and Leviticus? That was tough going, too. Some days you read just to get it done without much joy or understanding.

Now it's March. You are so far behind you are discouraged. You say, "I'll try again next year."

The problem is that happened last year. And the year before that.

You truly wonder if you will ever succeed in reading the Bible "cover to cover" in one year and actually benefitting from reading it every day.

This book is for you. You are not alone. You are not the only one who has struggled to maintain a daily time of Bible reading. You are not the only one who has bogged down in some of the tedious sections of the Old Testament, desperately wondering if those passages are really "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16).

Here's how "Cover to Cover" can help you.

- **Simplicity.** The daily reading schedule here starts in Genesis and goes through the 66 books of the Bible in order to Revelation. You will not be reading from different parts of the Bible (although that is a popular way to read). This plan is simple. It is easy to keep your place.
- **Uniform lengths of daily readings.** The daily assignments (set up using Logos Bible software) are about 85 verses long and break at the end of paragraphs.
- **Fellowship.** Within the limitations of the printed page and the author-reader relationship, I share my own daily reflections and challenges with you from the passage you are reading. I hope you will read the daily assignment in your Bible. Then, time permitting, make a selection of a favorite verse or passage, do your own reflections and challenge, and, then, check and see what I got from my reading.

I can assure you that it is do-able to read the Bible through in one year and to gain great benefit each day from your reading. Of course, you don't have to wait till January 1 to begin. Today is the best day to begin. Let's go.

INTRODUCTION

As a missionary and pastor, I have long sought to encourage all, who desire to know God in truth, to maintain regular personal Bible reading. This book was written to present a plan for reading through the Scriptures cover to cover in 365 consecutive passages of approximately the same length, and to model a simple method for gleaning truth from each reading.

My method is to:

- Read the assigned passage. I usually have pencil in hand as I read to underline or otherwise mark passages that I wish to reflect on more deeply.
- Selection. I choose a passage of about one to three verses for further thought.
- Reflections. I write out my thoughts and questions about the selected passage. What does this passage teach me about the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? What does it teach me about man? What does it teach me about faith, salvation, sin, etc.
- Challenge. I note how this passage applies to my life. What is commanded here? How should I respond to the teaching of God's word today?

You will not find here a commentary on every chapter of the Bible. I have merely included some brief thoughts from one passage that stood out to me in my reading each day for a year. It is not necessary that you read my thoughts and comments, but I hope you will read God's Word and seek to apply it to your life and circumstances.

What is the Bible and why should we read it?

To me, as a Christian in the reformed tradition, the Bible is the Word of God. It is a book inspired by God and recorded by human writers. The thoughts are God's not those of the writers who recorded them. Thus, the Bible gives us information we could not have known (things that took place before human history began, things still in the future, or things that take place in invisible spiritual realms) apart from God revealing it. For example, we learn in Genesis how the earth began. We learn why it began and what Man's role is in it. We also learn how evil and death came into the world and we begin to see what the solution is for it. In Revelation, we get a picture of what is going on in heaven and what will happen as human history ends and the eternal state begins.

I read the Bible because it instructs me as to how I may be saved from the just consequences of my sin. I read the Bible to gain understanding as to how I should live my daily life in this world. I read the Bible because God has commanded it in the Bible.¹

How should we read the Bible?

If I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, I will read it diligently. It is a very long book containing a variety of types of writing: history, law, poetry and prophecy. Some passages are easy to understand; others are not only difficult but controversial. I will not let this deter me but seek to read daily and attentively.

When I began reading the Bible on a daily basis over 50 years ago, I was not certain I believed it. I thought I should read it to be educated but not necessarily to be changed. Through God's grace to me, I was changed by it.

¹ For the classic statement on Scripture see the [Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1](#).

There are a number of approaches to Bible reading, but the one used here is what I call “Cover to Cover.” This is the simplest plan as it begins on page one and continues straight through to the end of the Bible with daily readings of approximately 85 verses. The reading schedule was set up using Logos Bible Software and uses paragraph (pericope) divisions not verse or chapter divisions (although the readings may end at a chapter break). The advantage of this is that the length of each daily reading is about the same.

There are many other Bible reading plans available online. Some have you read the books of the Bible in chronological order as they were written. Some have you read in several places each day working your way through different genres of the Biblical literature. I have used a number of approaches over the years and all are useful. If you read the Bible repeatedly you will probably want to use different approaches for variety.

This material was originally posted in 2013 on my blog at <http://ThistleDewFarm.us>. Some editing has been done since this was posted.

My sincere thanks to my faithful wife, Mary, for her constant support and editorial skills to many of the posts. Any errors are mine alone.

May God bless your reading and study.

John Carroll

July 23, 2014

God Created Man

January 1

Today's reading: [Genesis 1:1-3:24](#)

My selection: Genesis 1:27-28

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. ²⁸And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'

My reflections: These three chapters set the context not only for the rest of the Bible but for all of human history. Volumes have been written about these brief passages but I must pause at verses 27-28 of chapter one to reflect on who man is, what he is, and why he exists.

1. Man was created (therefore, not self-existent, not self-sufficient, not a random result of time and chance).
2. Man was created in God's image (therefore not a mere animal, not worthless).
3. Man was created male and female (therefore not asexual, homosexual, nor bisexual).
4. Man was blessed and commissioned by God to multiply and to have dominion over the earth (therefore, not purposeless, not useless, not solitary).

How many of the current problems facing our society stem from our losing sight of one or more of these foundational claims of the Bible?

My challenge: We cannot instantly solve all of these ills, but I challenge you to start this year of Bible reading with thanks and praise to God for His good and hospitable creation, corrupted though it became and continues to be by man's sin. Praise Him for His coming kingdom in which all the good of original creation and more will be established forever.

Worship that Pleases God

January 2

Today's reading: [Genesis 4:1-5:32](#)

My selection: Genesis 4:3-5

³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

My reflections: There is much I would like to know about this incident that God has not told us. What prompted the brothers to worship in this way? Why did they each choose different kinds of offerings? Why did God not accept Cain's offering?

None of this is clear.

However, what is clear is, first, that an offering is needed for the one who seeks to worship God. Second, not every offering is acceptable. Third, God indicated here whether the offering was acceptable or not and, in the case of Cain, showed him grace and mercy, giving him the opportunity to repent. From the rest of the Bible we see that, though for a time God prescribed animal sacrifices as offerings before Him, these merely pointed to the ultimate and only truly, acceptable sacrifice, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the perfect offering for sin. We come before God on the basis of His offering Himself for us on the cross. Our own offerings are not just inadequate, they are offensive to a God who is pleased with nothing less than the offering of His Son for sin. [See [John 1:29-34](#); [Ephesians 2:8-9](#); [Hebrews 10](#)]

My challenge: Thank Him for the perfect offering for sin. Believe in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Come to God by Him alone. This is worship that pleases God.

Salvation: Enduring and Undeserved

January 3

Today's reading: [Genesis 6:1-9:17](#)

My selection: Genesis 8:20-22

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

My reflections: Noah apparently could not wait to show his gratitude to God for preserving him, his family, and the animals through the flood. His first recorded act is to build an altar and make offerings to the Lord that were pleasing to Him.

God graciously made a covenant with Noah in response to this act of worship. But God's graciousness was not and never is based on any worthiness in man nor any illusion by God that man is upright in himself. God was pleased with the sacrifice of Noah but was not deceived that man would or could be perfectly holy. In fact, part of this covenant included a provision that has been seen as the basis for human government and capital punishment in the case of murder (9:5-6). God anticipated continuing murder after the flood. God knew man's heart and He knows your heart and mine.

My challenge: Have you seen how the Lord shows you grace and mercy despite your persistent sin? If you are trusting in Jesus Christ, give thanks for God's undeserved salvation through His Son, a salvation even more precious and enduring than the temporary preservation of life from drowning in a flood, a salvation of complete forgiveness and deliverance from eternal destruction.

Covering for Sin

January 4

Today's reading: [Genesis 9:18-12:9](#)

My selection: Genesis 9:22-23

²²And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

My reflections: Here is an illustration of what we saw yesterday, that "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth" (8:21). Noah showed no self-control in foolishly becoming drunk and disrobing where he could be seen. Canaan made a bad thing worse.

Canaan may have seen his father inadvertently (it is not said), but it seems his sin was to report the incident to his brothers and to make his father look shameful before them as well. Shem and Japheth showed respect and creativity in solving the problem rather than exploiting an opportunity for evil. The result was blessing for Shem and Japheth and a curse upon Canaan.

My challenge: Shem and Japheth loved their father and, literally, covered him and his many sins. They portrayed what Jesus Christ would do for all His people: show mercy and cover sin.

We, who trust Christ for the covering of our sin, are called to be like Him in our relationships with others. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Remember it was because of God's love for us that, in Christ, He has covered our sins. Do the same for others.

God's Mercy through Suffering

January 5

Today's reading: [Genesis 12:10-16:16](#)

My selection: Genesis 12:17

¹⁷ But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

My reflections: Abram foolishly "leaned to [his] own understanding" as he tried to protect himself by lying to Pharaoh (Proverbs 3:5-6). God intervened to protect Pharaoh from the consequences of Abram's folly. So even Pharaoh and his house were blessed by plagues which they correctly understood to be sent to show them they were in danger of committing an illegal or immoral action. Abram's plan to protect himself backfired and he, Sarai, and their entourage were sent out of Egypt in humiliation.

God is merciful and gracious to His sin-prone children. God showed Abram that He does not need His people to deceive, lie, and manipulate in order to protect themselves.

My challenge: Think about how you have seen God's goodness in sending trials, obstacles, and setbacks in your life? Thank God that He is able to stop us in our foolishness and that the trials He sends are for our good, but do not presume that He will always rescue us from the immediate consequences of leaning to our own understanding.

God's Covenant People: Who Are They and what Do They Have?

January 6

Today's reading: [Genesis 17:1-19:29](#)

My selection: Genesis 17:7

⁷And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

My reflections: God graciously chose Abraham and made with him a covenant which extends to his offspring.

But who are his offspring? Can I be included?

The Apostle Paul in [Romans 2](#) and [Galatians 3](#) shows that these offspring are not the biological descendants of Abraham, but rather his spiritual children by faith. Some, of course, may be both biological and spiritual children of Abraham, but the decisive element for inclusion in the covenant people is faith not genetics. Yes, I can, by faith, be included.

What does it mean to be included in the covenant? What do covenant people have?

It means to have God as our God, to belong to Him, to be His children. Born in sin and, to put it bluntly, by nature children of the devil ([John 8:44](#)), we need deliverance from the power that the serpent gained over mankind at the fall ([Genesis 3](#)). In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. That seed was Jesus Christ who definitively defeated Satan by dying on the cross. He rose again leading His people to eternal life. Now all who by faith are in Jesus Christ are included in the covenant with Abraham

My challenge: God's covenant with Abraham had in view blessing for all the families of the earth ([Genesis 12:3](#)). This is the good news of the gospel, that God has made a covenant to save all who believe in the One who crushed the serpent's head. These are His covenant people. Are you among them? If not, believe in Him. If so, rejoice in His salvation and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

Selfish or Selfless?

January 7

Today's reading: [Genesis 19:30-22:24](#)

My selection: Genesis 19:30

³⁰Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters.

My reflections: While his uncle Abraham was surveying the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 27), Lot was settling in a cave in the hills. Although the angels had reluctantly given him permission to live in Zoar, Lot, seeing the destruction of his former city and the judgment on his wife, in fear decided to head for the hills. He set up housekeeping in a cave with his two daughters.

These are the same daughters that, in their last night in Sodom, had been offered by their father to a mob of perverse men to gang rape (19:8). Lot saw his daughters as expendable resources available to solve his problem with the locals in town. Fortunately, the offer was rejected and the daughters escaped with their lives and their father. But they had grown up in Sodom and the values and attitudes grew in them. Taking them out of Sodom did not take Sodom out of them. They plotted to get pregnant by their father. The children they bore would father the tribes of the Moabites and the Ammonites, tribes that would be mortal enemies of Israel.

Lot and his daughters all demonstrated an appalling disrespect for each other and a willingness to sacrifice others in their selfish pursuit of their personal goals.

My challenge: Let it not be said of you, "he took care of Number One at all costs." Jesus Christ "made Himself nothing" to serve those He came to save. Make His mindset your own. (Philippians 2:5-8). **Introduction**

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About the Author

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Carroll is pastor emeritus of Christ Church in Katy, TX, former pastor of Central Presbyterian Church, Kingstree, SC, and a member (honorably retired) of the Blue Ridge Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. He served for over two decades as a staff member with the Navigators on university campuses in the Philippines, Argentina, and various locations in the United States.

A graduate of Virginia Tech (BS), Columbia International University (M.Div), and Reformed Theological Seminary (D.Min), John and, his wife, Mary, have three daughters and five grandchildren. They live on Thistle Dew Farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and enjoy hiking, gardening, time with family, touring historic sites and, of course, daily Bible reading.