

Read Through the Bible FAQ

I've heard about a program at Shepherd of the Valley called Read Through the Bible. Can you tell me more about this program?

Starting in September 2006, Shepherd of the Valley will begin a program designed to support members to read the entire Bible. This program will run for 15 months, continuing through summer 2007 and ending in December 2007. There will be a daily reading schedule outlined for those who would like to participate. We'll be offering opportunities in the Adult Christian Education classes to share your thoughts and experiences of the daily readings. Also, there will be helpful materials available for those who would like to use this program for family devotions or personal Bible readings.

Why is it important to read the Bible?

God encourages each of us to move ever deeper into our relationships with Jesus and with the entire Body of Christ. Immersing ourselves in Scripture assists us to learn more about God's interactions with people of faith throughout the ages, and thus to learn about his will and intentions for each of us. To intimately know God, we must know his message for us and "meditate on it day and night," as the psalmist declares.

As members of the Body of Christ, we recognize the value, benefits, and blessings of sharing our faith journey with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We would encourage you to join the classes and participate in the discussions about the readings. However, The Read Through the Bible program is available to all members whether attending Sunday School classes or not.

How will the Read Through the Bible program fit into the Adult Christian Education Program? Will it be the only class offered for adults on Sunday mornings?

The Read Through the Bible Program will begin in September 2006 and will end in December 2007. It is designed to allow those choosing to participate to read the entire Bible in 15 months. However, the philosophy of the Adult Christian Education program is to provide offerings for adults that represent a variety of interests and points of view to better assist members on their faith journeys and to develop their spiritual gifts. For this reason, three different classes are offered during each unit. We feel strongly that each of us should be well grounded in God's word and in the teachings of the church. God yearns for us to immerse ourselves in His word and in our relationship with Him. To assist members in this journey, at least one class during each unit is dedicated to the study of Scripture. During the course of the Read Through the Bible program, the classes in which we discuss scheduled readings will be the primary Scripture offering.

We welcome anyone who wishes to commit to the entire schedule. We certainly understand that your lives and schedules are demanding, busy, and at times unpredictable, though. We've designed the units to be self-contained enough to allow you to participate when you are able to attend. We want you to feel welcome and comfortable to participate in the Sunday School sessions whenever it fits your schedule.

Also, given the length of the Read Through the Bible program, many facilitators for the Sunday School sessions will be needed. Many of your favorite adult Sunday School teachers will be asked to facilitate the Sunday School discussion sessions. We are happy to accept volunteers as well. If you would like to facilitate the Sunday School sessions, please contact either Kris Van der Ploeg (888-5892, kris.vanderploeg@oracle.com) or Kirsten McCannon.(322-3672, k_mccannon@yahoo.com).

I'd like to learn more about the daily Bible reading schedule. What can you tell me?

While the program was originally designed to facilitate reading the entire Bible in 52 weeks, our program will actually last 15 months. Our schedule is less rigorous than the ELCA model, but is aligned with the 6-7 week units used for our Adult Christian Education program. There will be units throughout summer 2007 in order to finish in December 2007.

Ideally, we would like to discuss the prior week's readings in our Sunday School sessions. While the reading program provides a recommended schedule, you are welcome to read chapters when it best fits with your schedule. In addition, there are a number of days with no scheduled readings, which will give you an opportunity to adjust readings to keep pace with the program if you wish to participate.

Do I have to commit to the entire program?

We'd welcome anyone who wishes to commit to the entire schedule. We certainly understand that people's lives and schedules are demanding, busy, and at times, unpredictable, though. You may join the Sunday School class for any units that fit your schedule. The units are designed to be relatively self-contained so that you can participate whenever you are able to attend.

How can I involve my family in this activity?

There are several ways you can involve your family in the Read Through the Bible program. If you feel your children are old enough, you can use the daily reading schedule provided as part of your family devotions. If you have younger children, they may have a children's Bible with selected stories that you can incorporate in your reading schedule. If you are interested in involving your family, we will have materials available to help you structure the readings, provide discussion questions, and provide you with ideas to engage your children in reading the Bible.

What materials do we need for the Read Through the Bible program?

Your Bible will be your primary source of information. We will provide you with the reading schedule, as well as background material for the readings. You may choose your preferred version of the Bible as different translations make for interesting discussions. You may find it helpful to read a study Bible that includes notes and commentaries by biblical scholars. Examples are the New Interpreters Study Bible or the Harper Collins Study Bible. These can be purchased online or from most Christian bookstores.