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Sunday, November 5, 2017  
Did You Know?

## The Chronological Reading Plan

So, what do you think of the chronological Bible reading plan, you ask? Well, actually, no one has asked me that, but I thought I'd comment anyway. I don't like it. Yes, it was my decision to have our church read through this plan, but the more I read through it, especially the New Testament, the more I don't like it. Why?

When we look at the way the Bible is put together in terms of the order of books, it is for the most part, ordered chronologically. The main exceptions are Job, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. The major and minor prophets, who spoke to the nation of Israel—pre, during and post exile—are all lumped together at the end of the Old Testament (OT). So, for the most part, the OT is chronological. What about the New Testament (NT)? The NT is also chronological. It begins with the life of Jesus in the four gospels. Then it moves toward the birth and growth of the early church -- Acts and all the letters, and finally concludes with Revelation. When you put the OT and NT together, it is, essentially, chronological.

Now, here's why I don't like the chronological plan. The main reason why I don't like it is because that is not the way the Bible was meant to be read. The chronological plan, at least the one we are going through, cuts up the Bible into small fragments and re-orders all these small pieces along a chronological time line. That is not the way the Bible was meant to be read. The Bible is actually a compilation of 66 smaller books and letters. Each book or letter was meant to be read in its entirety from beginning to end.

Especially when it comes to the gospels, sure there is something neat about seeing the life of Jesus harmonized across the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), but when we read it like that, we'll fail to see the theological emphases and major themes of each book. When read as a harmonization, we won't be able to see that Mark focuses on discipleship failure and the messianic secret. We won't notice that Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and has a special interest in the marginalized people in society. Matthew is specifically addressed to a Jewish audience and highlights the Kingdom of God. Would we catch that if we read all three of them chronologically? I highly doubt it.

Now, there is some value in reading Acts and the letters chronologically in that it helps the reader place the letter at a specific point in Paul's missionary activities. For example, Paul is in Thessalonica in Acts 17. It can help to pause there and turn to and read his two letters to the Thessalonians. It'll give us much valuable context.

So, what should you do now? Well, all is not lost. You can continue on and finish the plan you've started, or you can adjust it by reading through each gospel in canonical order (the way it appears in the Bible). Next year, we have a really cool canonical plan with really helpful videos of each book and major themes. The app is called **"ReadScripture"** which is made either by, or in partnership with the folks at The Bible Project. Take a look. It's really great, especially for younger readers.

Sola Scriptura!  
*Pastor Peter*