

A Blessed Year

“... Strengthen me according to Your word.” (Psalm 119:28b, Modern English Version)

“Strengthen me according to Your word.” What a wonderful prayer to start a new calendar year. Actually, what a wonderful prayer to begin each new day. And the psalmist’s prayer just a few verses earlier is an equally appropriate prayer: ***“... Revive me according to Your word” (Psalm 119:25b, Modern English Version).***

See, God’s Word delivers the forgiveness, salvation, and unending life that Jesus earned for mankind at the cross. His Word also creates the faith to receive the saving gifts that He delivers in that Word. For the Word of God is a Means of Grace. Therefore, the preaching of the Word is of very great importance to your life and mine – as is the frequent reading and studying of God’s Word. That is why God’s Word is preached every Sunday and taught in Bible class throughout the week (Tuesday afternoons at St. John’s and Thursday evenings at St. Paul’s).

And the private reading of God’s Word also is edifying. You may have been hearing me say that I’ve been working on creating a daily Bible reading schedule. Well, it’s complete. The daily readings for January can be found on the back of this month’s church calendar. This same reading schedule can also be accessed on the church’s website (just ask me if you have any trouble locating it on the website). As some of you may have also heard me say, for years I have looked for a daily Bible reading plan that divides out the reading of Scripture in the way that we do on Sunday mornings – namely, Old Testament, Epistle (New Testament “letter”), Holy Gospel, and a portion from the Psalter. There may be wonderful daily Scripture lessons that provide just such a way to meditate upon all the Bible, but I haven’t discovered one that I’ve found satisfactory. So, I devised my own. And I would love to share it with you.

The plan I’ve put together is a daily Bible reading schedule in a two-year format. If you read it daily, in the course of two years you will have read the entire Old Testament once, the entire New Testament twice, and all the Psalms four times (each year you read through the entire New Testament once, and all the Psalms twice). You are free to use this reading schedule in whatever way is most convenient for you. And you are also encouraged to make copies and share this plan with anyone you wish. This two-year Bible reading plan contains no copyright. It was put together to be used by Bible readers - not to be published for profit.

My friend, however you decide to use this Bible reading plan, the most important thing is that you read God’s Word as often as possible. As you may be aware, our hymnal also contains a daily Bible reading plan which is very much the same as the one provided at the bottom of the bulletin

insert each Sunday. While this reading plan does not take you through all the Bible, it nevertheless is a fine reading plan.

And in addition to these Bible reading plans I just mentioned, each congregation also provides the *Portals of Prayer* as a daily devotional for your spiritual edification. Each congregation even has a church library that provides books that you may freely borrow for your personal use (all borrowing is on the honor system). I'm also willing to help you if you are looking for other resources to aid you in your study of God's Word. I can even show you a plan to read through our Lutheran Confessions in a year. Just ask. And don't forget about Luther's Small Catechism as a daily devotional. You likely were given a Small Catechism with Explanation when you were confirmed. The Small Catechism written by Martin Luther can even be found in our hymnal. Yet, if you are having difficulty locating a Small Catechism, or desire to know how to obtain a new one, just let me know. Remember, depending upon which Small Catechism with Explanation you use, you can pretty much cover the entirety of its contents in a year by just reading one question a day – which will take no more than five minutes (and probably quite a bit less depending on how fast you read). For a small sacrifice of your time each day you can attain many spiritual riches by just reading the Small Catechism.

I only have one request of those who choose to use the two-year Bible reading plan I have put together. And that request is that you please let me know if you find any typographical errors or if you discover the omission of any passages. Last year I followed the plan for reading through the Psalms, Epistles, and Holy Gospels and discovered a couple of errors (and corrected them). But the Old Testament plan has not been as thoroughly “tested.” If you discover any errors, or have any advice for improvements, please let me know. I may even make adjustments over time, but they'll only occur at the end of the year so as to not mess up your reading schedule in the middle of the year. At this point, my goal is to print the Bible reading schedule for each month on the back of the monthly calendar. I plan on including it every month going into the future. I will also be posting this two-year reading plan on the church website each month. Once all the readings for both years have been posted, I intend to keep the entire two-year plan on the website going into the future for readers to access as they wish.

My fellow believers, God tells us that great blessings come from His Word. Therefore, no matter what else you will be dealing with this year, you will have a blessed new year if you are in God's Word each day. For God's promises sustain and strengthen us even when other things in life are not going well. I hope that this two-year Bible reading schedule I'm introducing is something that you'll incorporate into your devotional life. If not, I hope that you are continually immersed in God's Word in some way throughout 2025 – including attendance at worship each Sunday and even at Bible class on Tuesday or Thursday when possible. As your pastor, I am at your disposal if you have any questions that may arise while you read through Scripture. Contact me anytime.

I wish you a blessed year in God's Word. Always know that what your Creator tells you in the Bible is intended for your good.

See you in church throughout 2025.

Pastor

PS - Shay and I thank everyone who sent us cards and gifts this past Christmas. Your generosity and your encouraging words are deeply appreciated ~ Pastor.