

Hey Southwood Family,

God has put you and me on this earth to pursue relationships that impact eternity, and the very first relationship in each of our lives that will impact eternity is our relationship with God. Nothing could be more important in 2025 than our experiencing more of his marvelous grace and growing our hearts' worship and trust of Him – and there's nowhere better for that to happen than in his living and powerful Word! You may have your own way of engaging God's Word on a daily basis (great!), but we as a church family have been reading together each year to encourage one another in our relationships with God.

On top of that, a renewed relationship with God will impact every other relationship we have. Following along in God's Word *together* can enrich a Grace Group, strengthen a family, or unite friends and neighbors. We are trying a chronological reading plan in 2025 (tips below!) to help us grasp the context of the biblical stories. If you've never read the entire Bible before, here's your chance – and you won't regret the time you invest with God! If you're a younger reader, I've found it helpful to join in by reading the New Testament in a year. Regardless, the goal is for all of us to engage with God as He speaks to us day by day.

Tips for Engaging with the Chronological Bible Reading Plan

1) The free YouVersion Bible App has this plan included (The One-Year Chronological Bible 365-Day Reading Plan), and you have the option to LISTEN to the Scriptures read to you as well as to read for yourself and track your progress electronically. *Tip: To stay on pace with Southwood, you will need to activate the plan on January 1!* If you prefer to read in your own Bible (which I encourage as well), download a PDF of the plan at southwood.org/about-us.

2) One of the benefits of a chronological reading plan is that it helps you to grasp the Bible's big story and where events fit into it. Try to remember as you read that God is writing you a love letter about your relationship that includes many twists and turns and many different types of writing. But rather than analyzing every word for a long time, you're wanting to focus on the heart and flow of the story to hear Him speaking to you through centuries.

3) One of the challenges of a chronological reading plan is making it through the early months of the year without many psalms or New Testament Scriptures. Knowing that hurdle ahead of time can help manage expectations, and so can reading the Bible in a fresh translation you're not used to or adding a psalm each day for yourself. Regardless of which part of God's Word you're reading, though, ask Him to show you more of his heart for you.

Looking forward to reading, praying, and growing with you this year,

Pastor Will