

Hey Southwood Family,

I've been reminded through our recent study of the Old Testament stories how important relationship with us is to God – remarkable! May this most precious and glorious relationship be just as important to us in 2026 as it is to Him. Relationship basics involve conversations with the other person, where we both listen to God speak (read his Word) and speak to Him what is on our hearts (prayer). I've never spent time in this kind of conversation with God that didn't result in growing trust in God or growing worship of Him, so I'd invite you to join me in prioritizing time with Him this year.

On top of that, a renewed relationship with God impacts 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. One of the reasons we are slowing the pace to a two-year plan in 2026-27 is to enable more of us to participate together, especially more of our younger readers and those new to the Bible, as we cover only 2-3 chapters per day. Another benefit is that we have more time to contemplate what we read and respond by talking to God, which is why we're including the daily prayers prompted by the daily readings this year.

### **Resources for Engaging with this Bible Reading Plan**

1) **Bible Plan:** The YouVersion Bible App has this plan (2-Year Bible Reading Plan, Volume 1, by Riverside Church), and you can listen to the Scriptures read to you as well as read yourself and track progress. *To stay on pace with Southwood, you need to activate the plan on January 1!* A PDF version is available at [southwood.org/bibleplan](https://southwood.org/bibleplan) if you prefer to read from your Bible!

2) **Daily Prayers:** Southwood pastors and leaders are writing daily prayers prompted by the Scripture readings to help in your time talking with God. An electronic link to these prayers is on the cover page of the Bible Plan PDF on our website. Hard copies of the prayers will be available one month at a time (January 2026 booklets are already in the Narthex!).

3) **Commentary:** Theologian D.A. Carson has a daily devotional companion to this plan. This is certainly not a requirement to participate in the reading plan together, but it can be a resource for explanation/application. If you would enjoy having that, you can order *For the Love of God, Volume 1* (a great Christmas present!) and have that aid any day you like.

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

Pastor Will