

“Many Christians want to read the Bible more than they do, but a lot of them are unsure of where to begin. Rachel Jones writes this book from the deep well of her own personal walk with Jesus, and she provides a realistic and helpful guide for any follower of Jesus to start a quiet time.”

**J.D. GREEAR**, Lead Pastor, Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, NC;  
Author, *Just Ask* and *Essential Christianity*

“I love this book because it does brilliantly two things that are rarely found together: it coaxes and coaches. First, it coaxes anyone who has never read the Bible for themselves, or anyone who has lost the habit of doing so, to start. Its personal, engaging, realistic approach is motivating. Then it coaches you on doing that, starting small, getting bigger. It begins by demonstrating how to read God’s word, but by the end you will be equipped to read for yourself. And along the way, you will have found how nourishing, life-giving and sustaining the Bible is. I strongly recommend this book!”

**JAMES ROBSON**, Principal, Oak Hill College, London

“Oftentimes, getting started is the hardest part of forming any new habit. And consistent Bible-reading is no exception. Rachel Jones has given us an excellent and accessible little book that delivers a big impact in our devotional lives. *The Quiet Time Kickstart* will help you build a rhythm and structure into your life that will energise (or re-energise!) the way you approach God’s word, with biblically clear reflections and thoughtful questions. I highly recommend this book to anyone and everyone wanting to deepen their love for Scripture.”

**ADAM RAMSEY**, Lead Pastor, Liberti Church, Australia;  
Director, Acts 29 Asia Pacific; Author, *Truth on Fire* and *Faithfully Present*

“We’d all love to be one of those model Christians who enjoy their hour-long daily workout of Bible study and prayer. But the reality is that many of us find it difficult to spend even a brief, unhurried time meditating on God’s word and praying. And we can’t go from spiritual couch potato to the Bible-reading equivalent of an Olympic weightlifter overnight. It takes time. Perhaps a personal trainer would help... Enter Rachel Jones. In her eminently sensible approach and with a quietly-optimistic-but-not-in-an-overpowering-way spirit, she guides us through a simple and do-able programme of Bible study and prayer. *The Quiet Time Kickstart* lasts only six weeks; the spiritual habits it helps us develop can last for a lifetime.”

**SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON**, Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary; Author, *The Whole Christ*

“The living God has spoken to us in the Bible, and he continues to speak to us through the Bible. But starting to read the Bible can be a bit daunting. The good news is that *The Quiet Time Kickstart* walks you through the process, building up your confidence along the way. It does this not by talking about the Bible but by helping you to actually read the Bible for yourself. Rachel Jones doesn’t assume that you know a lot of theology, but neither does she talk down to you. It’s a great little guide to help you put in place some great lifelong habits.”

**TIM CHESTER**, Crosslands Training; Author, *Enjoying Jesus*

# The



# Quiet Time



# Kickstart

Six Weeks to a  
Healthy Bible Habit

RACHEL  
JONES

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A note from the author

Although all flaws in what follows remain my own, it seems only right to acknowledge that my thinking for this project has been most shaped by editing Gary Millar's little book *Read This First: A Simple Guide to Getting the Most from the Bible* (which would make a great follow-up if you're looking for more help with understanding Scripture) and by the excellent teaching of Tim Ward and others at Oak Hill College. This comes with gratitude to the whole Oak Hill community for helping me grow in my love for Jesus and my appreciation for his word over the last few years.

# Welcome

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**F**or a long time, I wanted to be someone who runs. Over the years I'd watched several family members and friends lace up their running shoes, bound out of the house and down the road, and return sometime later looking sweaty but invigorated. *I'd like to be that person*, I thought. But I'd tried it once. Maybe twice. And running was not something I did.

A couple of summers ago, with a little more time on my hands, I decided to do the “couch to 5k” programme. It is what it sounds like—an app-based training programme that, over nine weeks, aims to get you from “couch potato” to someone who can comfortably run five kilometres. You start off running for 60 seconds and then walking for 90 seconds, on repeat. You have the voice of a friendly celebrity coming through your headphones, telling you when to run and when to walk and offering you generic but surprisingly effective encouragements. As the weeks progress, you gradually increase the amount of running and decrease the amount of walking, until you're jogging for 30 minutes solid.

And it... worked.

I found I enjoyed it. It was satisfying to make progress. It wasn't always easy—there were moments when my chest felt like it was bursting and my

legs felt like dead weights. I had to fight the pre-run thought that I could just, well, not go running. But I liked how running made me feel after the fact: and sometimes even during the fact. I am now “a person who runs”: someone who laces up their running shoes, bounds out of the house and down the road, and returns sometime later looking sweaty but invigorated.

Sorry if all that talk of running is immediately off-putting. My point is that I’m writing this guide for anyone who would like to be “a person who reads the Bible” (or “has a quiet time” or “does a daily devotional”, or whatever else you’d like to call it). You know of friends or family members who make a hot drink and withdraw to a quiet room with their Bible in the morning, and emerge, sometime later, looking serene but invigorated. *I’d like to be that person*, you think. You’ve tried it once or twice or even a whole bunch of times over the years—or perhaps it was something you used to do regularly but now you’re out of the habit. Reading the Bible is not something you do.

But it can be.

And that’s where this little guide is designed to help. As with running, it’s getting going with reading the Bible that’s often the hard part; once you’re in the habit, it will feel much more natural. And as with running, it can be helpful to start small and build up. We’ll begin with just a couple of verses and a single thought—a three-minute devotional that anyone can make time and headspace for. Then we’ll build up gradually to something a little closer to a “5k quiet time”—a comfortable level of Bible fitness that is going to nourish your spiritual health and wellbeing. Along the way you’ll pick up some simple Bible-reading skills that will help you make sure you’re listening carefully to what God has to say.



There's something important to say upfront, though: there isn't one standard "quiet time" that everyone needs to aim for. There's no single "right way" to read the Bible—and certainly no "ideal quiet time" length or style. In fact, the whole idea of doing a solo daily quiet time is a 100% non-compulsory part of the Christian life. It's a good idea—but nowhere does God command it of you. It's not about checking boxes or getting a streak.

This is a key difference between reading the Bible and running: reading the Bible isn't a "thing" you do; it's a conversation with the living God who loves you. The Creator God, who knit you together and saved you so you can live with him for ever, wants to speak to you—each and every day. Having a quiet time is about coming into his presence, basking in who he is, remembering how he feels about you, listening to what he has to say to you, and telling him what's on your mind.

That said, there will be days when you're feeling it and days when you're not. There'll be days when, spiritually speaking, your legs feel good and the sun shines and you smash your personal best—and days when you feel like you're plodding round the park in the rain. That's okay. The latter will feel less easy but will be no less good for you. You can trust that reading God's word and praying to him nourishes and sustains your soul, even if you don't get a "wow" feeling every day. And in God's kindness, there will be many days when he blows you away.

So lace up those shoes (or put on those slippers). Turn on the kettle. Open the Bible. And let's get started.





**WEEK 1**

**Starting Small**

# Introduction

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We start our Bible-reading journey in 1 Thessalonians. This is a letter written to the church in Thessalonica, and it's one of the earliest parts of the New Testament, written just 20 years or so after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Thessalonica was a city in a province of the Roman Empire called Macedonia (in what is Greece today). When the apostle Paul and his companions preached the gospel message there, lots of people (mostly non-Jews) responded by putting their faith in Jesus (Acts 17:1-10). But because of fierce opposition, Paul had to move on quickly, leaving behind a small church of brand new Christians.

When Paul writes this letter, his co-worker Timothy has recently been back to visit the Thessalonian church and has returned with good news (1 Thessalonians 3:6). So Paul is writing to tell them how happy he is to hear that they are going on well in their faith—and to encourage them to keep going.

Our reading plan this week starts small, with just a couple of verses to read each time. The aim is simply to open God's word every day and get something out of it—to end up smiling inside. But don't worry: the opening chapter of this letter is so enthusiastically upbeat that it won't be hard.





# Day 2

**Pray:** Ask God to fill your heart with faith, hope and love today.

## READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3

Paul is just so excited about these Thessalonian believers. When he remembers how the message of Jesus impacted their hearts, and how that played out in their lives, his joy and enthusiasm overflow!

Think of an example of how you've seen each of these things play out—either in your own life or in the lives of people in your church:

- Faith in Jesus --> working for the sake of others
- Love for Jesus --> labouring hard, even when it's tough
- Hope that Jesus will return --> endurance through difficult times

**Pray:** Thank God for each of these examples, as Paul does in this passage.

I so often jump straight into reading the Bible in my own strength. But we have no hope of truly understanding and being changed by God's word unless his spirit helps us. That's why I've included these prompts to pray each day.







## Day 3

**Pray:** *Thank God for how he's encouraged you through what you've read this week so far. Pray that he'd do that again today.*

Paul is continuing to tell the Thessalonian Christians why he hasn't stopped thanking God for them.

### READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5a

*(to the end of the first sentence)*

The Christians in Thessalonica have been chosen by God to be his people. The reason Paul knows that is because, when he preached the message of Jesus to them, the words didn't just pass them by. They had a powerful effect, as the Holy Spirit convinced the Thessalonians that Paul's message was true.

Think back to a time when the gospel hit you powerfully and changed your heart in some way. That right there is evidence that you are "loved by God" and "that he has chosen you"! *How does that change your perspective on what lies ahead of you today?*

**Pray:** *Thank God that he loves you and has chosen you, and ask him to keep working in you by his powerful Spirit, so that you continue to change.*

The "message of Jesus" is what we usually call the "gospel": the good news that Jesus died and rose again, so that we can have our sins forgiven and our relationship with God restored.





# Day 4

**Pray:** Ask God to reveal what he has for you in his word.

## READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:5b-7

Becoming a Christian hadn't made life easier for these believers; in fact, it had made life harder. We discover in chapter 2 that the "severe suffering" they endured was at the hands of friends and neighbours who were against Jesus (2:14-15).

Yet all that didn't stop the Thessalonians from *welcoming* the message, and it certainly couldn't stop the Holy Spirit from filling them with joy.

By suffering in this way, the Thessalonians weren't just being like Paul; they were being like Jesus himself.

*How have you known joy in the midst of suffering?*

Be encouraged: this too is a sign that you are loved and chosen by God (1:4).

**Pray:** Pray for Christians you know (or know of around the world) who are suffering. Ask God to fill them with joy as they remember that they are walking in Jesus' footsteps.

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These verses remind me of this description of Jesus' joyful perseverance through suffering: "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). I've always loved that picture of his resolve on our behalf.

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