

FRANK M. HASEL



LONGING FOR
GOD

A PRAYER AND BIBLE JOURNAL

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INTRODUCTION



Taking God at His word is fascinating because the Bible is full of surprises. It describes God in unexpected and unique ways. The encounter with God in the Bible has the power to transform your life. It challenges you in many ways to deepen your thinking and to change your living for the better. It is worthwhile to engage in a study of the Bible. It pays to diligently search the Holy Scriptures. In the living Word of God you find more than interesting information about God. You may encounter God Himself. But in order to discover what the Bible really says, you have to read it for yourself. This book is intended to stimulate such personal Bible study.

THE FIRST PART

The first part offers practical suggestions on how to read the Bible in a profitable way. If you follow the suggested daily reading plan you will read through the whole Bible in the course of one year. Each day you will have the opportunity to read passages from the Old Testament and from the New Testament or the Psalms. If you want to read at a slower pace, you may choose to read only part of the recommended Bible passages. It doesn't matter how much you read every day. To read just a little in the Bible is better than to read nothing at all! In order that thoughts that come to your mind while reading the Bible do not get forgotten, there is space for you to jot them down every day. Looking back, it is often fascinating to see which insights you gained while reading the Bible and which passages of Scripture became valuable to you throughout the year.

The primary goal for reading the Bible is to encounter the living God, not just to expand your knowledge about Him. He is the One who gave us His Word. He reveals Himself in it. In the Holy Scriptures, God has revealed His will and His plan of salvation. In the pages of the Bible, you will meet Jesus Christ, God's Son, who shows you what God is really like. The reading of the Holy Scriptures thus opens new horizons because it leads you to meet the living God, which is truly enriching and life changing.

In every encounter with God and in every reading of the Bible, prayer should play an important role. Hence, there is space every day for you to jot down the personal thoughts of your prayers.

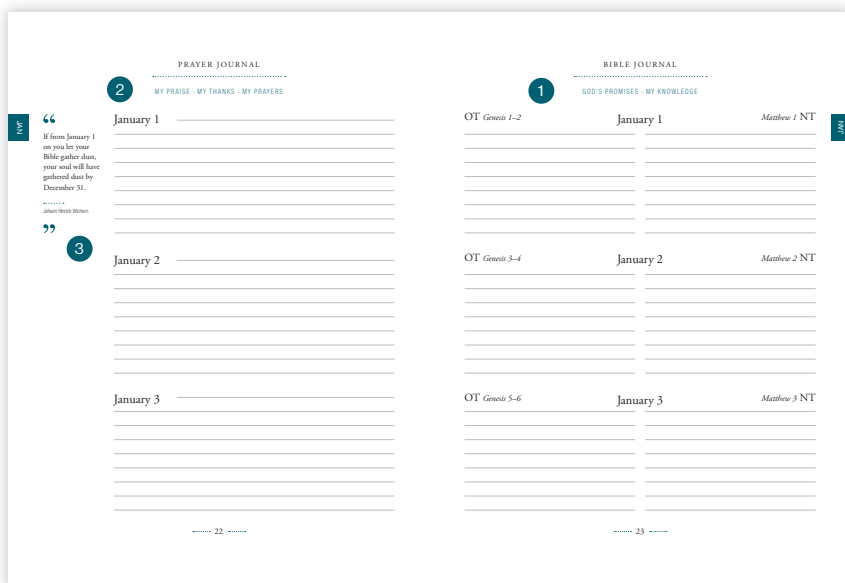
Prayer that pleases God is much more than asking Him to fulfill your wishes. Prayer that pleases God takes you into the immediate presence of God Himself and is an important part of having a vibrant relationship with Him. The purpose of this book is to encourage you in your personal journey with God by stimulating new spiritual life through a meaningful reading of the Bible and by offering you the opportunity to try new ways to enrich your prayer life.

1 The Bible plan will lead you through the whole Bible in one year. Every day you will have the opportunity to read sections from the Old Testament and from the New Testament or the Psalms.

2 Prayer belongs with every encounter with God and the reading of His Word. Therefore, you will find room to write down the thoughts of your prayers each day.

3 Here you will find inspirational thoughts on the Bible and prayer.

4 At the end of each month you will find practical suggestions for prayer to use through the year.



❧ AT THE END OF EACH MONTH ❧

At the end of each month you will find further practical tips to help you pray and reflect upon your spiritual life. You will find suggestions on how to pray in such a way that it is pleasing to the heart of God. It will help you to be more focused in your prayers for others. You will learn to reflect upon the nature of God in new ways and experience God differently by way of conscious praise and thanksgiving. You will find encouragement in dealing with difficult and challenging aspects of prayer, such as *What happens when my prayers are not granted? What does it mean to pray and fast? Or How do I get rid of grudges and bitterness?*

❧ AT THE END OF THE BOOK ❧

At the end of the book there are suggestions for special prayer emphasis for each day of the week. They can help to provide meaningful structure to your daily prayers. In that way you can, in addition to praise and thanksgiving, take focused prayer requests to God.

This journal offers you the opportunity daily to record your insights while reading God's Word and to jot down your prayers. Thus this book will be a daily companion in your spiritual journey with God. Especially in a time of digital fast pace and shortcuts, to actually write down your thoughts on paper carries a power and beauty of its own that is unsurpassed. To record your experiences with God on paper, to write down insights you have gained, to prevent them from being soon forgotten, a book like this is matchless. You will discover that for yourself, if you will give it a try.

❧ TOO QUICKLY DO WE FORGET GOD’S BLESSINGS ❧

Too quickly do we forget God’s blessings and the positive experiences we have had with Him, and then we are often surprised to find ourselves unable to tell others about Him. God knew about our human problem of forgetfulness. It is not without reason that we are admonished in the Bible not to forget His kind acts: “Praise the LORD, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is” (Psalm 103:2, GNT).

One way to counteract our spiritual forgetfulness is to keep a prayer and Bible journal. What distinguishes this prayer and Bible journal from others is the conscious emphasis on God and His Word as the basis of our relationship with Him. Only secondarily is it about our own personal prayer requests. The emphasis on the Word of God will help you to be focused on God even in your personal prayer. Only within the framework of our personal friendship with God will the different daily and weekly prayer suggestions, provided in this book, gain their true meaning and momentum.

The recommendations you find in these pages are meant to stimulate your thinking. They are suggestions rather than requirements. They are intended to invigorate your walk with God and to provide spiritual stimuli that will inspire you to try out ideas for yourself. Here you will not find a secret recipe that will solve all your problems. This book is not about any rituals that are to be performed mechanically. Rather, your own Bible study and your prayer life shall be invigorated and receive new inspiration. You are welcome to try out new things for yourself.

Since the death of my wife in 2009, I have tested all the suggestions of this journal. My spiritual life has been enriched in numerous ways. In hard and difficult times it helped me not to forget God’s loving care. When discouraging thoughts burdened my heart, I learned to consciously give thanks. This helped me to be grateful and cheerful again. I learned to express my admiration of the many facets of God’s character and His attributes in new and meaningful ways. My appreciation of God’s fascinating grace grew deeper. New spiritual impulses invigorated my relationships with my children, my family, my church, my neighbors, and the people surrounding the area in which I live and work.

This journal will help you not to forget the manifold blessings of God. It will help you to understand Him even better and to love Him more deeply. Possibly the most surprising side effect, however, is the positive change your life undergoes through the encounter with God’s Word. To be connected through prayer with the living God of the Bible affects your life as nothing else ever can. Eventually, it contributes to becoming more like Jesus. That is my wish for your life.

PRODUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY



Nothing strengthens the mind more than Bible study. No other book has such power to uplift our thoughts and to change us for the good. The Bible shows us how we really are. It brings us close to God and reveals to us what is important to Him. It can be understood by simple people—even by children—yet it offers the best-educated people opportunities to learn new things. Reading the Bible literally opens up new dimensions and imparts unique values. To maximize these possibilities, observe the following suggestions.

OPENNESS AND READINESS TO LEARN

As much as possible, lay aside all prejudices and preconceived ideas when you read the Bible. Those who read the Bible to confirm their own ideas cannot expect to be changed by it and to learn new things. Form your opinions according to the Word of God. Do not shape your reading of the Bible according to your preconceived opinions. God knows your inward attitude. Integrity is pleasing to Him (1 Chronicles 29:17). Proverbs 2:7 says, “He provides help and protection for those who are righteous and honest” (GNT). Jesus said, “Whoever is willing to do what God wants will know whether what I teach comes from God or whether I speak on my own authority” (John 7:17, GNT).

LOVING OBEDIENCE

The message of the Bible remains locked when we hold on to skepticism. It is not systematic doubt and criticism but an attitude of love and obedience that lets you understand God’s Word at a deeper level and that opens the treasures of the Bible to you (see 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10). Love trusts the other person and has the courage to put new knowledge to work in your own life. That is how the door is opened for yet further insight and growth. God can give you this willingness (Philippians 2:13).

PERSEVERANCE

America was not discovered in one day. Similarly, discovering valuable insights may demand perseverance. In Proverbs 2:3–5 you glimpse a sense of this perseverance:

and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.

It is worthwhile to search for the treasures in the Bible with persistence. Even if at a first reading you don't understand everything, and some things seem strange or difficult, stay with it and continue reading! Put to practice the things you do understand. And take into consideration that each insight takes time to mature. If you skipped your Bible reading for a day (or two or three . . .), start reading again. It is always possible to start reading the Bible. And it is never too late to start reading your Bible!

RESERVE A SPECIFIC TIME AND A QUIET LOCATION

If you are in love, you enjoy spending time alone with the loved one. Choose a place in which you can read and reflect on God's Word without interruptions. In our hectic life this can succeed only if you deliberately keep a specific window of time open. Often the first hours of the day are best for those minutes of quietness and contemplation. Those precious moments, before your work starts, can become a blessing for the rest of the day because the first thoughts often accompany you for many hours. Perhaps some other quiet time during the day will work better for you when you can spend some minutes with God and His Word without interruption. Be creative. And if in the evening, before going to bed, you let the day end with a few thoughts from the Bible, then you might share the experience of the psalmist who finds "delight" in God's Word, "and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2, NASB).

❧ PRAYER ❧

No one can grant better insights into the Bible than the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures (see 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21). The Holy Spirit not only will help you understand spiritual things from God’s perspective but also will stir in you the desire to be obedient to the Word of God. With your prayer you express your desire for God’s guidance and your readiness to be obedient. Remember that the Holy Spirit will always guide you in accordance and in harmony with the Word of God. He will not negate clear statements of the Bible but will lead you to willing obedience in agreement with the Word of God. And, by the way, when you are on your knees, you will truly gain a new perspective on many problems of life.

❧ READING WITH OPEN EYES ❧































Only when you actually read the Bible will you get to know the Bible and understand it. Personally becoming acquainted with the Bible is better than hearing something *about* the Bible. While you read the Bible, you become immersed in its train of thought, and you begin to think and reason along those lines. Read even the well-known passages in the Bible with open eyes. Ask yourself questions like the following: *What do I notice? What exactly is the text saying? Which concepts appear repeatedly? Who is mentioned? How does something happen? What does it lead to? When will it happen? What am I learning about God? What am I learning about myself? How is God described? Why is this important to God? Which characteristics of God are mentioned? How have people experienced God/Jesus?* Then write the thoughts down in your prayer and Bible journal.

~ MARKING YOUR BIBLE ~

Only a book that has been underlined and marked is a book that has truly been read. When you underline statements in the Bible, it is easier to find them again. The following colors and symbols can be of help:

Red = Positive things, God's promises
 Yellow = Holy Spirit, Inspiration
 Green = Second coming of Jesus
 Blue = Faith, baptism, church

Purple = Sanctuary
 Brown = Prophecies
 Black = Sin
 Etc.

	Coming of Jesus		Joy
	Resurrection		Satan
	References to Jesus		Warning
	Promises		Discipleship, following Jesus
	God's guidance/leading		Mission
	God's Word		Judgment
	Growth in faith, sanctification		Encouraging words
	Creation		State of the dead
	God's law, obedience		Holy Spirit
	Sabbath		Loving your neighbor
	Salvation		Education
	Conversion, repentance		Sin
	Prayer		Baptism
	Praise and thanks		Tithe and offerings
	Church		Divinity of Jesus

❧ APPLICATION ❧

If you implement and follow what you have read and understood, you will gain a deeper understanding of biblical truth. Insight grows through obedience. The following questions can be helpful to ponder: *What does that mean for my life? What consequences do I draw for my life? What should I change? How can I apply what I have read and learned in my own life? How can I share with others what I have learned? What is of importance to me?* Write your insights down in your prayer and Bible journal. Only the person who reads the Bible can profit from God's Word. Reserve some special time—day by day—and give it a try. It is worth the effort.

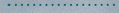
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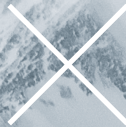


LONGING FOR GOD



PRAYER JOURNAL
&
BIBLE JOURNAL

JANUARY



PRAYER JOURNAL

MY PRAISE - MY THANKS - MY PRAYERS

JAN

“

If from January 1
on you let your
Bible gather dust,
your soul will have
gathered dust by
December 31.

.....

Johann Hinrich Wichern

”

January 1

January 2

January 3

OT *Genesis 1; 2*

January 1

Matthew 1 NT

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OT *Genesis 3; 4*

January 2

Matthew 2 NT

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OT *Genesis 5; 6*

January 3

Matthew 3 NT

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