



# YEAR OF THE BIBLE

## Sermon Guide

### What is Year of the Bible?

Year of the Bible is the year in a person's life when the Bible becomes foundational to every other part of life. It is a collective movement of Christian denominations, organizations, and individuals passionate to know God through consistent Bible reading.

This movement is a global call to Christians around the world to let the Word speak. The campaign launches January 2020, but it will live on to equip the world to make Scripture central. Over a hundred nations have adopted Year of the Bible. Ministries like the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and the Catholic Council of Bishops are making declarations.

The time is now to declare confidently that we will be more passionate about God's Word. We will meditate on its goodness. We will experience its transformation. We will seek its pages for wisdom, and we will reach that nations with its message.

### How should you use this sermon guide?

Our hope is to see more churches engage with Scripture more in 2020 than ever before. This might mean finding new ways to incorporate Scripture reading into your Sunday service or making a commitment to have more Scripture directly as part of each sermon.

If you believe in this vision, we've prepared a sermon outline you can use to share this vision with your church. This is meant to be a resource for you to use as you find it helpful in getting your congregation excited about engaging Scripture in 2020. **You can find videos, slides, and more online at [yearofthebible.com/church](http://yearofthebible.com/church).**

We pray you'll take this guide, use the pieces you like, and make it your own! We've also provided several helpful resources at the end of this guide to help you equip your people to go deeper in the Word this year.

## Opening Illustration

In 1949, a young preacher was struggling with his faith. He believed he had been called by God, but he wasn't seeing success from his efforts. At the same time, one of his close friends began to try and dissuade him from his faith. This man had also preached across the country but had decided that the Bible was flawed and that modern academia had the real answers to life's problems.

This young preacher was troubled by these things, which caused him to call into question everything he believed. In the midst of his wrestling, he travelled to a Christian retreat center where he had been invited to speak. While there, he dove into the Scriptures. Over and over again, he saw the same phrase—"Thus sayeth the Lord."

Then one night, he walked into the forest at this retreat center and set his Bible on an old tree stump. He cried out to God and said, "O God! There are many things in this book I do not understand. There are many problems with it for which I have no solution. There are many seeming contradictions. There are some areas in it that do not seem to correlate with modern science. I can't answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions that are being raised."

But he fell to his knees as he said, "Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by faith! I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be Your inspired Word!"

Looking back on it all these years later, that young preacher's grandson says that everything hinged on that single moment in life of his grandfather, Dr. Billy Graham.

(Source: <https://billygraham.org/story/the-tree-stump-prayer-where-billy-graham-overcame-doubt/>)

## Key Statistics

Choosing whether to trust the Bible was a life-defining moment for Billy Graham. This is a decision that many people in our generation continue to make today, but we don't often talk about it.

- Ed Stetzer: "Study after study in the last quarter-century has revealed that American Christians increasingly don't read their Bibles, don't engage their Bibles, and don't know their Bibles. It's obvious: We are living in a post-biblically literate culture."  
(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/october/biblical-illiteracy-by-numbers.html>)
- More than one-third of adults (35%) reports never using the Bible in 2019, a 10 percentage point increase since 2011 (25%)  
(<https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2019/>)

## Central Passage: 2 Kings 22:1–23:3

*We challenge you to read this entire passage out loud to your congregation. Feel free to stop at various sections to make observations, but avoid the tendency to paraphrase. Let the message of this story speak—even acknowledge the difficulty of listening to long passages out loud.*

### A few observation examples:

- The context of this book highlights the people’s desire for a human leader. The people of Israel demanded a king from God because they didn’t want to listen to God’s words alone.
- The first couple verses of this passage tell us who Josiah is. They tell us about his family and the defining mark of his life.
  - Josiah didn’t come from a good family. His father was Amon, who served as king for a few years before being assassinated by his own servants. His grandfather Manasseh was even worse, reigning for over fifty years and doing more evil than any of the kings before him.
  - Although Josiah comes from a terrible family, the passage says that Josiah “followed completely the ways of his father David.” God can use the broken to bring Him glory. Josiah is called David’s son (not Amon’s) because he chose to walk obediently with God.
- Verse 11
  - “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law...” what did he NOT do?
    - “...he fell asleep.”
    - “...he checked his Instagram.”
    - “...he asked, ‘When is this guy going to be done reading so I can go to lunch?’”
  - Instead, “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law... he tore his robes.”
    - His response was humility and grief (verse 13).
    - He understood who spoke these words, and that changed the way he listened.
- Verse 19
  - “...you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard **what I have spoken.**” Many people say that they wish God would speak to them or that they could hear his voice. If you want to hear God’s voice, open your Bible and read out loud.
  - “...I also have heard you.” Because Josiah responded with a humble, listening posture, God also listened to him. God gets behind those who get behind His Word.
- 2 Kings 23:1
  - Josiah could have stopped after his personal repentance. God had already promised to have mercy on him! But Josiah desired to bring this message to the people so they could also rededicate themselves to the words of God. This led to a national renewal movement around the Word of God.
  - What did the King NOT do in front of the people?
    - He didn’t give an inspirational speech about how to be a good person.
    - He didn’t say something really profound in three simple points.
    - Instead, Josiah read the Word of God out loud.
    - Often, pastors and leaders feel the need to say something inspiring or to find the latest resource to equip their people. God wrote a book, and it’s all the resource you need.

## Application / Challenge

### **The Bible was lost in the temple.**

In the story of Josiah, the Word of God was lost for more than fifty years. But do you remember where it was lost? It was lost in the midst of the temple. That would be like losing the Bible in the church today! Yet this idea isn't that crazy. Some of us are so familiar with the Word of God that we don't hear it anymore. Or we can often become overrun by our own thoughts, ideas, and words, and it's easy to go to church without actually encountering God's Word.

### **Josiah took personal responsibility.**

We have a thousand voices telling us about the source of our problems. We blame whoever and whatever in order to push the blame onto others. But God says, "No, it's you." Before God brings revival to the White House or the House of Representatives or your neighbor's house, He needs to bring it to the house of God.

Josiah took personal responsibility for the brokenness of the people. In the same way, we come to the Word because we need the Word.

### **Have you heard God's voice?**

LifeWay Research found that, while most Americans still think fondly of the Bible, only 11 percent of people have ever actually read through the entire Bible. \* For many of us, it's hard enough to get into the Word. There are a few simple actions we can take.

(\* <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/04/25/lifeway-research-americans-are-fond-of-the-bible-dont-actually-read-it/>)

### **Year of the Bible.**

There is a global movement of churches and ministries from 100 different nations who are coming together to declare 2020 the Year of the Bible. Simply defined, the Year of the Bible is the year in your life when the Bible becomes foundational to every other part your of life. Some of you have already had your Year of the Bible. But for others, the prayer is that this year would truly become your Year of the Bible.

This movement has compiled and partnered together for several helpful resources to help you engage the Bible more fully in 2020 and beyond. Here are a few examples of ways you can dive deeper into the Bible:

#### **1. Pray the Word**

Do you allow the Word of God to drive your prayer life? Partners with Year of the Bible have put together several helpful prayer guides to help you pray through the Bible in 2020. If you're looking to go deeper in your Bible engagement in 2020, we want to encourage you to pray through the Bible.

## 2. Read the Word in context

According to these statistics that I read a moment ago, most of you have never read through the entire Bible before. And there are several reasons for that, but one is that you haven't understood the Bible in context. There are several groups that make video and podcast materials to help you understand the bigger story of Scripture. These include The Bible Project, Spoken Gospel, and The Bible Recap Podcast. These resources help you understand the context of what you're reading in light of the bigger story.

## 3. Read the Word in community

For more than a thousand years, the primary way people encountered Scripture was out loud, in the context of community. It's only in recent years that reading the Bible in Western culture has become an individualized experience. What would it look like for you to not only read the Bible this year, but to commit to reading it in community with other people?

There is a ministry program called "Just Show Up" that encourages individuals to gather together around a meal to share in the public reading (or listening) of Scripture.

There are also twelve simple plans that have been released on YouVersion this year by this coalition of ministries called Together in Scripture. These twelve plans are easy to get through (at seven, fourteen, and twenty-one day intervals) and feature a variety of these resources within them.

## 4. Listen to the Word

Maybe you've tried reading the Bible and struggled. There are also many good resources to help you listen to Scripture. Among them are the Bible App, which has audio Bible options, as well as a ministry called Streetlights that has put the entire New Testament text to hip-hop beats.

No matter what avenue you choose to use to engage with the Word of God, DO choose to let the Word speak and listen with an attentive heart. DON'T let guilt keep you from coming to the Word of God. Ask God to ignite a fire for His Word in your heart. Imagine how good it will feel to look back on this moment a year from now and remember it as the moment you decided to engage with God's Word.

### Isaiah 66:2

All these things my hand has made,  
and so all these things came to be,  
declares the Lord.

But this is the one to whom I will look:  
he who is humble and contrite in spirit  
and trembles at my word.

*All of the resources mentioned in this sermon outline can be found online at [yearofthebible.com](http://yearofthebible.com).*