

Why Do Bible Reading Programs Fail?

By David Maxson

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food. - **Isaiah 55:2**

Why do Bible reading programs fail? There are many causes, but one reason is we have not developed our desire for the Word. "How sweet are your words to my taste," wrote the psalmist, "sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (**Psalm 119:103**) If God's Words were as sweet as honey, we wouldn't have a problem.

Why are we not hungry? We may have too much junk-food in our diet. Our minds are full of worldly music, movies, reality shows, talk shows, game shows, Internet gossip, etc., and none of these things support or promote godliness.

These worldly distractions don't satisfy the longings of our hearts. Like Coco Puff cereal they are sugary and sweet but full of air. They are spiritual junk food for the soul. Our souls crave Jesus, and once we have "tasted

that the Lord is good" we'll come back to Him again and again like a baby desiring milk.

This is an acquired taste, though, that doesn't come overnight. Worldly things are easily digested. They give immediate gratification. The spiritual feast Jesus offers doesn't work that way, it takes time to appreciate. It may be that we must simply force ourselves to deny ourselves the spiritual junk food and choose instead to eat from God's Word every day. We may not like it at first, but if our hearts are right the hunger for the Word will come.

Bible reading should not be a mere duty, another thing to check off on our daily "to do" list. It should be seen as a time to feast. It is our food. It is the water we drink, the air we breathe. It is our life.

"Many shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (**Matthew 4:4**).



Classes This Week

Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the building	College Devo Devo and Singing at the Miller's led by Mark Broyles	Monday 7 PM Men's class at Walker Davis'	Tuesday 8 PM Truth Seekers in Room 2310 Student Center	Wednesday 12 Noon Ladies "Proverbs" Class at the Rouse's	Thursday 8 PM Prayer Study at Stefan Richardson's
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Sick

Sam Cox (Friend of Anna Stallings)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Joan Parker (Aurie Adams Grandmother)
Emma Hettinger (William Herd's Mother)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphne Whatley's son)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Betty Bradford	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	Hannah Wilson (Friend of Mason Chandler)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Don Meadows (Ashley Miller's step-father)	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	Madi Wise (Friend of the Robert's)
Marty Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Frances Fultz (Davis Fultz's grandmother)	Toni and William Herd	Ann Scaff (Hannah Morris' grandmother)

March Birthdays

- 2 - Maddie Norman
- 2 - Angela Fowler
- 2 - Chase Harrison
- 3 - Shaun Oliver
- 5 - Amanda Barnes
- 7 - Josh Pender
- 8 - Carmen Herd
- 10 - Parker Godwin
- 10 - Pepper Humphrey
- 11 - Becky Harris
- 12 - Brad Hartsell
- 14 - Tyler Claxton
- 16 - Drew Martin
- 17 - Susan Sullivanne
- 18 - MaKenzie Anderson
- 20 - Jimmy Roberts
- 21 - Carter Hunt
- 24 - Jordan Toombs
- 26 - Jared Burton
- 28 - Shelby Freeman
- 29 - Rachel Simpson
- 30 - Amanda Stephens
- 30 - York Smith

News and Notes

- ☑ - Please remember Glenn Weeks, Caralise Hunt's father, in your prayers.
- ☑ - Bob Simpson is recovering at home.
- ☑ - We extend our sympathies to those who have lost loved ones last week:
 - Olivia Hillard lost her grandmother, Thelma Hillard
 - Josh Hudson lost his grandmother, Diane Hudson
 - Darla Hahn lost her grandfather, Oran Knox.
- ☑ - Erica Seymore's aunt, Kathy Johnson, went home from the hospital!
- ☑ - Let us remember our expectant mother, Nicole Pender, in our prayers.
- ☑ - Our meeting on the home with Mark Broyles will continue today. He will address the college devotional tonight!

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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Affair-Proofing Your Marriage

By Mark Broyles



Thoughts to Ponder

It takes two to speak the truth -- one to speak and another to hear.

Elders
Walker Davis (334) 703-0050
Larry Rouse (334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

The prevalence of infidelity in marriage is staggering. If it was only a problem in the lives of those apart from God it would still be discouraging, but the truth is that the amount of marriages among our brethren that have been rocked by this sin is just as staggering.

Much the same as a medical doctor would use a pathology report to determine the root cause of a physical sickness; God's word gives the pathology of adultery. There is a four step destructive process involved in most adulterous relationships.

1. The Position of Vulnerability

Things such as stress, boredom, insecurity, rejection, unfulfilled expectations, and over confidence (**1 Cor 10:12**) all make us more vulnerable to temptation. Dave Carder wrote in Torn Asunder, "When we are vulnerable, we are emotionally run down, our defenses are down, our perspective on things is clouded, we are not able to make judgment based on truth, and everything is seen through an emotional filter. Pain is intensified. Therefore, the pursuit of relief from pain is also intensified. When you are vulnerable, a situation that might otherwise be safe may now be unsafe."

2. Emotional, Non-Physical Involvement

This is the gray area where the "game playing" occurs. "Don't worry, we are just doing work together." Because people tend to say that nothing is going on when there is no physical contact, they feel safe because they think they are still walking within the boundaries—when they are really crossing the line. This innocent "playing around" increases the threat level of the temptation. The boundaries are crossed when-ever a couple shares emotional intimacy (sharing intimate information about your marriage, family, etc), experiences

sexual tension (flirtation has begun), or practices secrecy.

3. Physical Involvement

At this point it is extremely difficult to get out. It is like a full blown addiction because of the physical pleasure and bonding that occurs.

4. Rationalizing Behavior

We find reasons to stay (this person understands me or fulfills me better than my spouse, surely God would want me to be happy, etc.)

So, if that is the pathology, how do we avoid falling into this temptation? A couple of cases in point may help us to see how God would have us stay pure in this area. **Prov. 7:6-23** is a picture of a young man being caught in this sin and in **II Sam. 11** we see King David also succumbing. Both cases fit perfectly into the pathology report described above. They both were where they should not have been. David should have been with his armies and the young man in Proverbs should not have been on the street at night testing the waters. They lacked knowledge and good judgment. They were curious—they were vulnerable. They were lured by the physical appearance of the women involved. They got involved in conversations and situations that should not have been—they were emotionally involved. They gave in to their physical lusts—they were guilty of adultery. David not only rationalized but also covered up his sin with more sinful actions.

There is a four-step protective process that God provides in His word, to help us avoid this awful pitfall. **Prov 7:24-27** as well as chapters 5 and 6 provide some very serious warnings and offer some strong words of instruction to this end.

Guard Your Heart

"Do not let your heart turn to her ways" (**Prov**)
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7:25a). As we mentioned above, this sin does not start with the physical action but with the mind-set that leads to that action. Jesus warned, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (**Mt 5:27**). We need to commit as did Job, saying, "I have made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a young woman?" (**Job 31:1**). Know your own vulnerabilities.

- 1) Are you especially curious about people?
 - 2) Are you extremely empathetic?
 - 3) Do you invite other people to share their problems with you?
 - 4) What might lead you to get emotionally involved with someone else unwittingly or with good intentions?
- We must admit that there is a danger of infatuation. There are those we find pleasing or attractive, funny, stimulating, easy to talk to, those we seem to bond quickly with. You like them—they like you—you hit it off. That is the time to deal with this problem. Temptation is present and sin is on the doorstep!

Watch Your Step

"Do not stray into her paths" (**Prov 7:25b**). Watching your step begins with being careful and wise about where and when you are alone with-out your spouse. The world is full of times and places that won't help you keep your marriage vows: hotels during business trips, a deserted office after hours etc. So, watch where your feet go! Do whatever you need to keep them on the right path. Make adjustments in your personal life. It may mean changing several things in your daily routines and practices. Experts agree that the two most dangerous arenas for temptation are the workplace and the Internet. We can protect ourselves in both these areas. Jerry Jenkins, in his book *Hedges: Loving Your Marriage Enough To Protect It* (which I highly recommend to every man who wishes to have a strong, godly marriage) said, "One of the major causes of marital break-ups in the Christian community is the lack of protective hedges that spouses should plant around their marriages, their heads, their hearts, their eyes, and their hands." Don't be afraid to put up "emotional walls" around yourself and your marriage.

You cannot have intimate relationships with opposite sex coworkers and friends and still have a great relationship with your spouse. Preachers and elders need to be especially cautious when meeting with women for Bible studies, counseling, etc. Many times these situations involve people who are already vulnerable and looking for comfort. Make sure someone-else is there when you meet. There is very little, if anything, that can be gained by meeting alone — but much can be lost. The experts are also correct regarding the Internet. It has been my experience in meeting with couples who have experienced adultery in their marriage that the Internet and pornography has become a major factor. At one point last year, five out of seven couples I was meeting with were dealing with this problem. I would strongly recommend that you do whatever you can to eliminate this possibility. Starting with installing a good filtering system such as Bsafe.com,

making sure the computer is in an easily viewable area of the house not a secluded room such as a bedroom, etc. Two key scriptures to keep in mind are: **Eph 4:27** — "Do not give Satan an opportunity" and **Rom 13:14** — "Make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lusts." Should we all run scared? Yes! Fear is essential. Mark Twain said, "There are several good protections against temptation—but the surest is cowardice."

Consider the Cost

"Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death" (**Prov 7:26-27**). Few decisions you make can ruin more aspects of your life more quickly than an adulterous affair. In every conceivable way, it ends up feeling like death: spiritual death, moral death, marital death, sometimes even physical death (consider the number of people who die every year from sexually transmitted diseases). While it is true that not all sins make you pay quickly, adultery presents the bill almost immediately. A similar warning is found in **Prov. 6:27-29**: "Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned ... without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished." The message is loud and clear: adultery is playing with fire! You will always get burned!

The apostle Paul declared that "a man reaps what he sows" (**Gal 6:7**). The real tragedy of infidelity is that many marriages end in divorce. But even when it does not terminate the marriage it wreaks havoc in the relationship. In the blink of an eye, the trust and security that was the foundation for a healthy marriage is destroyed. Sadly, it takes years of dedicated work to rebuild lost trust and security ripped away by an affair.

Do we think for a moment that if David had really evaluated all the con-sequences of his sin that he would still have chosen to walk that path. But few who give in to adultery think about its real cost. An extramarital affair costs not just a car or a mink coat or new golf clubs—it costs your life! (**Prov 5:3-5**). It is critical that we see the end from the beginning if we are to stand strong. And, what it costs our families and us is not the end. Adultery in the life of a Christian costs God too. As Nathan said to David, "You have given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme" (**2 Sam 12:14**).

Keep the Home Fires Burning

"Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. ... May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth" (**Prov 5:15, 18**). Your spouse is a gift from God and to not appreciate the gift is to not appreciate the giver. If we would spend all our marital effort in loving, admiring, appreciating, and serving our spouse we would do much to eliminate the desire to ever be fulfilled elsewhere. If I see my wife as the most beautiful woman in the world and God's gift as the fulfillment of my life, then she should be the object of my affection and my attention. Why should I look upon another woman?

No onetime event or promise will affair-proof your marriage. Complete fidelity takes constant, conscientious effort. But the work is well worth the joy of having a husband or wife who is your faithful, lifelong best friend. Consider the wise words of author Peggy Vaughn: "Preventing affairs is not like having a onetime inoculation—or even getting occasional booster shots. It's more like taking a pill every day for the rest of your life."



How Long is the Line?

By Brent Hunter

Before I begin a Bible study of religious matters with a group of people I like to hand out some 3 X 5 inch cards with a single straight line in the center of the card. I then ask them all to give an estimate, or guess, as the exact length of the line. Invariably I receive a variety of answers — "one inch," "an inch and a half," "two inches," "one and three-quarter inches," etc. After a few observations and comments about their guesses, I pull out a small pocket ruler and let all watch as I measure the line and get the exact truth as to its length. This serves as a good foundation for a profitable study. The discussion usually begins something like this:

"Now, everyone here was sincere in his belief as to the length of the line: and one opinion is just about as good as any other, is it not? There is no way to determine, merely by looking, who is right, or who is wrong, or if ALL are wrong! (Obviously, they can not all be right if there are differences in their estimates.) As the old saying goes, 'your guess is as good as mine.' On this basis, it really does not matter whom you believe. One person's opinion is as good as another's.

"However, when we take out the ruler — the established measure or authority to determine the length of the line — we can know exactly how long the line is. That settles the question for all. And every "estimate" or "guess" or "opinion" which was not exactly in harmony with the ruler's measurement was WRONG. This is not being close-minded, or doubting the sincerity or honesty of any person's guess. It is merely applying the established rule to find out what the TRUTH of the matter is!

"Now, in matters of religion, the Bible is our rule or standard of authority. Paul wrote Timothy, 'Every

My sincere guess or opinion may be wrong — and if so, I will be judged accordingly. So, in religion, it DOES matter what you believe! We must all answer Bible questions by finding Bible answers, and then be willing to accept those answers as final.

scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.' (II Tim. 3:16, 17) The Bible, then, is all we need. It speaks with authority.

"Authority is needed and recognized in every area of life. Without it, a baseball game would become a riot, an army

a mob, and a nation would cease to exist. Religion is more than 'wishful thinking' or 'imagination.' Baseball has its rule book, an army has its orders, and our nation has its constitution. Religion has the Bible.

"Since this is so, 'my opinion' or 'your opinion' mean absolutely nothing. What God says through his word is what counts. In fact, we are commanded, 'Whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus.'" (**Col. 3:17**) We must have authority for all we believe and practice, Jesus warned us that 'the words that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last days' (**John 12:48**). My sincere guess or opinion may be wrong — and if so, I will be judged accordingly. So, in religion, it DOES matter what you believe! We must all answer Bible questions by finding Bible answers, and then be willing to accept those answers as final. And just as with our "guess" about the length of the line, if we still hold to our original "opinion" regardless of what the authority says, then we have ceased to be honest. The idea is not, 'I'm right and everybody else is wrong,' but rather, 'The Bible is right, and everyone out of harmony with its teachings is WRONG.' If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.' (**1 Pet. 3:11**) - Vanguard - Sept 1979

