



by Lenora Buffi

Bible-reading habit

We are creatures of habit, aren't we? And those pesky bad ones are extremely hard to break. Just ask anyone who has tried to lose a few pounds, or stop biting their nails, or count to ten instead of letting anger erupt in a curse word. The truth is that supplanting bad habits with good ones is nearly impossible.

I've certainly had my fair share of bad habits and one of the worst was neglecting God's word. Therefore, when our church started a daily Bible reading program covering the entire Bible in two years, it was that extra boost I needed and I decided to give it a try. However, as a layperson I didn't expect to get much out of the unfamiliar passages which, to be honest, were numerous.

Now, I should back up for a moment. As a child, I recognized that learning Bible verses was good for me, and as a young adult, I knew Bible reading was a positive habit to cultivate (there's that word again). Once I had a family to raise—whereupon I frequently failed the “counting to ten” technique when dealing with three squabbling children—the need for God's Word in our lives became painfully obvious. But did I read the Bible regularly? Nope. Knowing something is good for you and doing it are two different things.

Original sin has a firm hold on our psyche. It says, “I don't want to obey,” and it never stops tormenting us. Isaiah 53:6 says, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” No matter how frustrating my days, I stayed stuck in my bad habit rut, leaving the Bible to languish on

the shelf despite what I knew to be true. Yes, I attended church and was involved in many aspects of church life, but committing to daily Bible reading was always too much of a chore. After all, I told myself, I was doing enough as a Christian and I knew the most important sections anyway.

Fast-forward several decades. There have been heartaches and losses, times of terrible illness and despair, and by God's grace, occasions of real joy too. In January 2016 when I began the daily Bible

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reading schedule, I didn't give much thought to the outcome. I chose to obey, but it was mostly so I could put a check-mark beside the item: “Read the Bible in Two Years.” I plugged along chapter by chapter like a dutiful plough horse, picking up speed during the familiar sections and slogging through the tough ones (such as Numbers—trudge, trudge). At the end of those two years—finishing a week early—I gave myself a pat on the back, ready to move on to enjoying that bit of extra free time each day. But then ... something strange and astounding took place.

I missed it.

In fact, I yearned for its pure teaching, for the sternness of the Law and the sweetness of the Gospel. And so, I grabbed my One-Year Bible (that

I had purchased many years ago), and on January 1, 2018, I started again. That's when it finally sank in. It had taken two years, but God had formed a good habit in me—despite my foolishness! Instead of being a chore, reading the Bible was now a joy. When my eyes focused on the familiar “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” it was like drinking a tall, cool glass of refreshing water on a hot summer day, soothing and restoring those dry, hardened, stubborn recesses of my heart and mind.

In Isaiah 55:11, God says, “So is My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” In humility, I must claim ownership of that disobedient Old Adam, that sinful nature that kept me from reading the Bible as I ought. Yet at the same time, I can joyfully proclaim God's mercy in calling me through His Word. When the storms of life gather, as I know they will, I can turn to the scriptures, with complete trust in His good and gracious will.

Praise God for the comfort, strength, joy and reassurance His Word gives! I urge everyone to set aside time for daily Bible reading. God will accomplish that which He desires, which is to create and sustain faith and to fit us for service, ready to witness to His love and the salvation won for us in Christ Jesus.

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