

## Read-a-thon Guideline

COS 121, Summer 2019

### 1. Purpose

To strongly motivate students to read the very Bible itself;  
To help them practice and develop—thereby make their own—fresh and insightful ways of reading the Bible as opposed to the cliché ways of reading;  
To have them read select portions of the diverse sections/genres of the Bible (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament + New Testament) in a careful and intensive way.

### 2. Tips on how to read

This project anticipates the evidence of the student's reading the biblical texts with respect to the following modes/goals/aspects:

*critical & insightful* **observations & questions**, NOT doctrinal **answers**;  
*effort* rather than brilliance;  
*creative originality* than collected information;  
*honest* probing than prejudiced, influenced, or defensive conclusions;  
*quality* than quantity;

One practical tip is that you might want to brainwash yourself as if this is your very FIRST TIME EVER to read those biblical texts. (i.e., Please do not read any commentaries on that portion until after your completed this assignment.)

**Observations** may include word-play, structure, metaphor, key theme, intertextuality, etc.  
**Questions** can be rhetorical, poetic, historical, sociological, theological, and the like . . .  
Please remember that the contents of observations and questions may overlap (except the latter would end with the question-marks—most obvious but needs to be reminded, I think).

[Optional (Color-coding + Brainstorming): you may want to make photocopy of those texts and use color pens/highlighters to keep records and write marginal notes from your creative, critical, and *systematic* reading.]

### 3. Examples

Although these examples are by no means exhaustive, you are invited to compare them, as exemplary suggestions, with your notes as you read along.

For example, reading Genesis 1

Answer: God created the world; therefore there must have been no dinosaurs!

Observation: The first three days and the next three days seem to share similarity;

The word “to say/speak” occurs \_\_ times and this seems significant!

God took a rest on Gen 2:2; Does God need a break?

What was the author of this passage thinking about by that idea?

Question: What is meant by the phrase “subdue . . . have dominion over”?

Does it mean that we human beings can conquer/rule over the world?

How could this be read/understood today in terms of global ecology?

More Talks about Readathon:

What about it?

In a nutshell, the purpose of this “read-a-thon” is to motivate/cause you to READ THE BIBLE!!! How shall you read the Bible for this kind of project? Try to balance between “insightful” reading and “holistic/continuous” reading.

By “**insightful**” I mean that you want to read and come up with observations or questions that are fresh, new, thought-provoking. Please DO NOT consult any other resources, not even the footnotes of NIV Study Bible or NASB Life Application Bible, etc. *It has to be authentically yours, and yours only!* Please remember that good exegesis and interpretations come from good questions. What good questions? Those are the “insightful” questions or observations I am looking for. But do NOT raise “factual” questions, please. Here is an example:

“FACTUAL” question on Judges 13 would be like, “What is the meaning of Manoah?” In a way, this could be a good question, but in most cases, this is rather a lazy question; the reply (from you or me) would simply be—check the commentaries;

“INSIGHTFUL” observation on Judges 13 would be like this, “It is interesting that the angel of the LORD appears first to a woman, Manoah’s wife, not to Manoah. And then only after several times of discussion and prayer, the angel finally appears to the man”;

“INSIGHTFUL” question on Judges 13 would be like this, “Why does the angel of the LORD appear to the woman first and foremost in this story? Is there any significance in this phenomenon? Were there other similar traditions like this, e.g., angel appearing to Hagar, God appearing to Hannah, etc.?”

Now, by “**holistic/continuous**” reading, I mean that I want you to read those portions of the Old Testament in a continuous flow. Ideally, you do not want to read—e.g., the book of Genesis or the Gospel of Mark chapter 2 in one week and then chapter 3 in another week, and so on. Rather, try to read the entire book within 1-3 days. The key is for you to follow the FLOW of the plot, see the context, and appreciate the big picture. Imagine watching a movie, one movie, over a period of 2 weeks—e.g., watching a 10-minute-long clip a day. This can be profound for some purposes. But for our purpose of “read-a-thon,” you will have hard time catching the interconnection/sequence/flow of the movement, plot, irony, suspense, surprise, inspiration, etc.

Here is an example:

suppose you are reading 2 Samuel. You can read one episode of David and another; yet, if you read the whole at once, in one careful flow, you may be able to catch the various and/or continuous depictions on the person David in a more profound way, as if watching a panoramic view. You will be able to see how chapter 14 is related to chapter 15 and then to chapter 16, and so on. The key is for you to see the whole picture, while appreciating the various details and their relatedness, progress, or shifts within the whole.