



MARKDALE BAPTIST CHURCH

To God be the glory

INTRODUCING: *Cover to Cover*

Dear MBC Church Family,

A number of years ago Rebekah and I were visiting Boston. As we journeyed around the city on a walking tour our guide asked this question, “Why were there so many newspapers in historic Boston?” I answered correctly with the reply, “Because Boston was predominantly Puritan and they were highly literate so they could read the Bible.” Puritans and evangelicals, indeed all God’s people through the ages, have always valued the Bible (it was why Sunday Schools were originally started, to help children learn to read and write by studying the Bible, which it was hoped would lead them to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ). It shouldn’t be any other way for Jesus Himself said (Matthew 4:4):

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

We live in an age that is biblically illiterate. Sadly this spirit even creeps into the Church. Yet as Jesus testified, the food this world offers cannot satisfy people who are primarily spiritual beings. We need the food that comes from God’s Word to be made wise unto salvation (2 Ti 3:15). In fact, Isaiah 66:2b says, “This is the one to whom I will look [show favour or grace]...he who trembles at my word.” Being a people of the Book is critical to living out a vibrant Christian faith and being a healthy church.

Over 2020–21 we are going to be going on an all-encompassing and directing adventure as a church family. We are going to chronologically journey through the Bible—*Cover to Cover*— over two years, one year in the Old Testament (OT) and the next in the New (NT). Along the way we’ll see the grand story of salvation history unfold, see Jesus on every page, encounter interesting characters and dynamic stories, focus on relevant subjects, dwell on profound verses, learn of key doctrines, find practical helps, and be inspired to mission, just to name a few! That might sound like quite a journey, but the Holy Spirit will help us, a continual weekly focus will keep it at the forefront of our minds, and together we’ll spur one another on. Very soon we will catch the thrill of the chase, and reading the Bible regularly (see below) will become second nature. It is hoped that those who may consider themselves ‘Bible beginners’ and those who are seasoned Bible students will together be refreshed by this initiative and be blessed by God as a result. It is hoped that *Cover to Cover* will be a defining moment in our story as a church.

What will this look like?

1. **Daily Reading Plan.** Everyone will be encouraged to join in a daily chronological Bible reading plan that will take us through the Old Testament in 2020 (about 2.5 chapters a day) and the New Testament in 2021 (about .7 chapters a day). Doing this chronologically will help us keep track of the overarching story of the Bible (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation). This plan has been attached to this letter and is available on the church website.
2. **Life Groups.** Our Life Groups are going to study a key passage from within or near that day’s reading. This will give everyone an opportunity to engage with the story of the Bible in a smaller setting and ask questions. LG’s will also serve as a bridge between sermons to help keep us engaged.
3. **Sermons.** These will be our regular mile markers in the series. Pastor Chris will normally look at a passage from the reading plan that falls on the Lord’s Day. Guest preachers will be encouraged to base their sermons on

a passage in the reading plan found somewhere near to the date they will be preaching (but will be free to preach as the Lord leads). We'll occasionally deviate from the plan for seasons such as Christmas and Easter.

4. **Blog Posts.** Pastor Chris will occasionally centre his blog around questions that arise from the readings.
5. **Informal Discussions.** As *Cover to Cover* becomes part of the air we breathe, our conversations will naturally turn to the things of the Lord we've been reading about in our weekly conversations.

I have read the whole Bible numerous times. It is always a highly rewarding exercise. A few years ago our Chapel in England did this over a one year period. I was greatly encouraged that about 90% of the congregation joined in. It was one of the richest seasons of ministry I'd experienced, and other churches that have done something similar testify to the same.

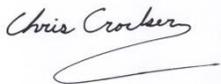
But what about...

1. *Not focusing on Jesus for a whole year while in the Old Testament?* On the road to Emmaus, Jesus said of the OT, "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Lk 24:27). This is what led Martin Luther to say, "The Bible is the cradle in which Christ is laid." When we are in the OT we'll continually look to the NT. When in the NT we'll continually make reference to the OT. The whole Bible points to Christ and His Gospel.
2. *I'm already reading a Bible plan.* Great! We'd still encourage you to join with everyone and come back to your other plan later. Regardless of what you do though, the most important thing is to be in the Word.
3. *I'm afraid it will interfere with my devotionals.* It need not. You could try doing your readings in the morning and devotional in the evening (or visa versa). You could also make your readings the basis of your devotional time.
4. *I've never kept at something consistently for that long.* It's always easier to do something like this together. Let's encourage one another!
5. *I'm too busy.* We live in a busy world. However, if your life is too busy for the Bible there is a problem. Our lives are so much better prepared for the busyness of everyday life when we ground our day in the Bible. The readings can take as little as 20 minutes a day, and less when we come to the New Testament. Try splitting your reading between morning and evening. Do it as a family. Read on your lunch break. Listen to an audio version while driving in the car or the tractor. Where there is a will, there will always be a way.
6. *I'm not good at reading.* Fair point. Perhaps this could encourage your reading. Alternatively, there are always audio Bibles. Nothing need prevent you from getting into the Bible.

**New to MBC? Join us where we're at! Want to join in but never started? No problem, join us wherever we are, you can always catch up later. The important thing is to get into the Word.*

I look forward to seeing you on the other side of our journey from *Cover to Cover*, changed, equipped, blessed! May God be glorified as we fix our eyes upon His Word.

The Lord's Sweetest Blessings,



Chris W. Crocker
Pastoral-Elder
Markdale Baptist Church