

My “Bible in a Year” Experience

By Michelle Coyne

Have you ever decided you were going to read the Bible from beginning to end? You thought if you could just read all of it through, you would finally understand why some people call the Bible God’s love letter to us. I have tried on my own before without much success. I found much of scripture confusing, difficult to understand, difficult to follow, and sometimes just plain boring. And it was challenging to figure out what scripture meant for me, personally, in my life.

I am incredibly grateful for the Catholic Church and its’ centuries of biblical interpretation for us; however, I had a great desire to know it myself. I wanted to be able to pick up the Bible and have it become “living and active” to me (see Hebrews 4:12) in that moment.

The *Bible in a Year* podcast helped me enormously with that. In 2021, a new Catholic podcast came out featuring Fr. Mike Schmitz of Duluth, Minnesota, reading a portion of the Bible (in chronological order of events), praying a heartfelt prayer, and giving a brief explanation of what he read in 20-25 minutes every day. A new episode was released every single day for 365 days. *Bible in a Year* quickly became the # 1 podcast several weeks in a row on Apple’s Top Ten in the US and Britain, and millions of people around the world tuned in – including me.

It was an incredible experience which enriched my faith life in so many ways. My spiritual eyes, ears and heart were opened in new and marvellous ways!



- I understand much better the story that runs through the entire Bible from beginning to end.
- The Mass, especially the readings, have taken on a much richer meaning. I know the context of the scriptures better; I can see the links between the readings more often, and I am better able to receive the priest's homily. The Liturgy of the Word nourishes me almost as much as the Liturgy of the Eucharist does at Mass!
- I have a better sense of Jewish culture, the origins of some of the Catholic Church's teachings and how rooted in the Word of God all our faith's traditions are.
- I have a new appreciation for the Word of God being proclaimed and I am better able to listen to it. There is just something about hearing the Word of God spoken to you that reaches the heart in a unique way.
- I have a new love for Scripture and a great desire to continue to go deeper and continue studying it – and sharing it.
- Best of all, God's unfathomable, merciful, faithful love for us became even more real for me.

It wasn't always easy to keep listening. There were times over the year when life got so busy that it was hard to find time to listen to the podcast. Sometimes I had to catch up on days (or weeks) I had missed. Some of the readings were also difficult to listen to or follow. Many days, there wasn't the Wow factor or Aha moment that I longed for. Like in everyday life, some days I just had to commit to the routine and listen.

One of the things that made the *Bible in a Year* experience so rewarding for me was being part of a discussion group. As a group, we met together once a week through Zoom to discuss the previous week's readings. Even if some of us had not listened to all the episodes that week, it was always enriching to hear what others got out of the readings and to discuss how scripture was affecting our individual lives. We made a point of praying for each others' intentions each week as well which was a great source of comfort. For me, this group gave a sense of accountability and encouragement to keep going. It provided a place to deepen friendships and socialize with other women –

something we all longed for during the uncertainties and restrictions of the pandemic. It was a great blessing to all of us.

You can start listening to the Bible in a Year podcast too! It's completely free and can be found anywhere you listen to podcasts (Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Audible, Stitcher).

I am so grateful for Fr. Mike Schmitz, for the *Bible in a Year* podcast, for the richness of the Catholic Church and for the ladies in my *Bible in a Year* group! I have been blessed beyond measure and I hope others will come to know and appreciate the Bible for what it truly is – God's Word!

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