

## The Diary of a Half-Hearted Christian

By Thomas Beam

I was reading through the January 2011 issue of Bible Helps' newsletter and I ran across an essay written by David Leigh. This article was called The Diary of a Half-Hearted Christian and it appeared in the February 1952 issue of Bible Helps. (That is one month before I was born by the way.) When I read through it I was amazed at how people had not changed that much over the years.

I have rewritten the diary and made it applicable to those of us in prison but you will see that we as humans can always come up with an excuse not to read God's Word.

### Diary of a Half-Hearted Christian Inmate Version

**Sunday Eve:** Wasn't that a splendid service this afternoon? Chaplain Skaggs spoke so forcefully about reading the Bible and asked us to promise to read some every day during the week. I've resolved to do it, and I am very anxious to begin tomorrow. Tonight I am tired as I went to dinner after service and then to dayroom this evening. I was going to read then but I had to take a shower. Then some homeboys stopped by my table and wanted to get in a quick game of cards. I'll start tomorrow!

**Monday Eve:** I didn't get to my reading yet. I just had three chapters to go in this other book I am reading. I wanted to finish it. The book is about theology after all. I will start to read the Word tomorrow.

**Tuesday Eve:** I'd forgotten about the Veteran's Support Group meeting tonight. Darn it. I wanted to watch NCIS. It's a new episode tonight. At least I was able to catch NCIS Los Angeles. Didn't get to reading the Bible tonight. Tomorrow night I will read the Bible for sure. There's nothing else going on that I can think of.

**Wednesday Eve:** Meeting on the yard tonight with the other Christian brothers. We were suppose to read Scripture together but ended up watching the baseball practice. It was a lot of fun. I was not able to get to the Word tonight. I am pretty tired. I'll do it tomorrow for sure.

**Thursday Eve:** Well, I surely hate to confess this tonight but I picked up a book on the book cart today. It was a story about some secret society in the Church written by a well known author. I only meant to glance through it but I got interested and couldn't stop. My cellie finally interrupted me at about 12:30 to ask me when I was going to turn off the light. I really had meant to read in the Bible. I have it right here but I don't think it is right to try to read the Bible when one is too tired to enjoy it.

**Friday Eve:** Made it to canteen today. It took all day standing out in the sun waiting for my name to be called. The heat drains so much out of me. I am so tired and just want to relax and watch a little TV and go to bed early. Tomorrow for sure.

**Saturday Eve:** At last I am getting to my Bible reading. I would have been ashamed to go to church tomorrow if I hadn't read any. Oh no! I can't miss this movie. I probably won't be able to see it again. Oh well, I'm really sorry I didn't get any Bible reading done, but I'll probably stay in my cell and take a nap instead of go to church tomorrow anyway. I'll watch my favorite TV preacher tomorrow morning. That'll cover me. I'll start my Bible reading tomorrow.

One time I was talking with another Christian brother and he asked me how the books of Daniel and Revelation related to each other. I told him that I did not know. He was appalled. He said, "Have you never read the whole Bible?" It was then that I realized that I needed to read God's Word from cover to cover.

The problem is I never took the time to do it. What an intimidating thought. Such a huge job. Several times I attempted the enormous feat by reading from one of those one year Bible reading plans but failed after only a couple of months. I just never made time for it. It was not a priority. After all I was reading the Bible almost every day anyway. I would read the Scripture related to the Daily Bread or some other devotional. I read the required Bible Scripture necessary for me to be able to complete the 100 plus Bible studies I completed over the years. In my two years enrolled as a student at the School of Ministry I read what was necessary to complete my assignments. I probably did read most of the Bible but I did not read it completely from front to back.

Then one day I was reviewing this Bible reading plan by James L. Melton from Bible Baptist Church. It was a 120 day reading plan. I was amazed that anyone could read the Bible from cover to cover in 120 days. I did not think I could do it. I had so much other stuff to read, so many good books out there telling me why to believe, what to believe, who to believe, how to believe, when to believe, and even where to believe.

The Holy Spirit was not silent in all this. He had been convicting me for years prior to me reviewing this Bible reading plan. And as I read the plan, He was strongly convicting me through the words of Mr. Melton:

"Life offers many opportunities for testing and strengthening your character. Consistent Bible reading is such a test. It is a test of your love for God, your love for truth, your love for holiness, your patience, and your self discipline. Most Christians fail this test.... Daily Bible reading is a challenge from which most will flee."

This was me. I would zealously start a reading plan then soon become weary and quit. But then Mr. Melton goes on to say,

"...in less than an hour a day, you can read the Bible through THREE times a year....**Why not sacrifice the time and put God first?**"

That was the sentence that broke me. "Why not sacrifice the time to put God first?" The Holy Spirit was talking to me. The awesome power I felt from Him was irresistibly overwhelming and the only response available to me was to ask for God's strength to meet this challenge and start growing in His Word. That was May 1, 2010. It is now almost September 1, 2011, one year and four months later; I have read God's Word cover to cover four times and I am starting on my fifth. Praise God.

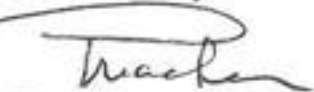
Now I am in the habit of reading every day and if I miss a day I feel as if I missed something; However, my joy is complete after a day's reading; there is a sense of accomplishment and by reading larger blocks of Scripture at a time there is more continuity. It also helps in both my devotional reading and my studies because I can see how the full counsel of God all fits together.

My friends, do not be like that half hearted Christian. Make a time to read daily. This is a sacrifice that God requires of us all. If you would like a copy of this 120 day reading plan just drop me a line at:

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Sincerely In Christ Jesus,



Preacher