

Workbook



By Mandy J Hoffman

(Based off the book Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books by Tony Reinke)

I love to read, but I never thought I would read a book *about* reading!

However, that is exactly what I did when I saw rave review after rave review about [Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books](#) by Tony Reinke. While I already believed I was intentional with my reading, Reinke inspired me to take a more thoughtful approach to reading by making a reading priority list.

The purpose of this is not to become legalistic in my reading, but to become more intentional. Too often I found myself reading based on the feelings of the moment rather than on what would create a well balanced diet for my mind to consume. While the book I might choose was not sinful, rather it was good, it was not always balanced. It is good to read theology, but you also need practical application books, and skill building books, as well as a story meant for mere relaxation and enjoyment. I was quick to read books on topics I was strong in and slow to read books to help me with a weak area. Creating a reading priorities plan has helped me maintain the strengths and boost the weakness in my life while branching out to explore new things, too. You can join me in becoming more intentional by creating your own plan!

How To Create A Reading Priorities Plan:

Step One: Read

[Read through Reinke's original list](#) and write down the 6 priorities he gives. While I am not here to dictate your every move, I highly recommend keeping his original structure. If you think his list feels a bit plain, don't worry, we'll add some glitter next!

Priority One: _____

Priority Two: _____

Priority Three: _____

Priority Four: _____

Priority Five: _____

Priority Six: _____

Step Two: Get Creative

Now is the time to get creative! For those who don't feel the need to change anything, just skip to step three. However, for those who feel like it needs a little pizzazz, let's dress it up a bit.

The point of [Reinke's list](#) is that it works its way from most important (#1) to least important (#6). The list is not just a random list, but rather builds on structure of what should first feed our minds (Scripture) to what is dessert for our brains (pleasure reading). With that in mind you need a theme that is progressive, going from greatest to least. I chose to give myself a house building theme since that is both familiar to me and a word picture of the fact that I'm building my thinking through reading.

Some possible themes are:

- Food Theme (Proteins, Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Dairy, Fats)
- Clothing Theme (Unmentionables, Pants, Shirt, Socks, Shoes, Accessories)
- Farming Theme (Plowing, Planting, Fertilizing, Watering, Weeding, Harvesting)
- Quilting Theme (Wash, Press, Cut, Stitch, Quilt, Bind)

What are some processes that I am familiar with or enjoy that will help me remember my reading priorities plan? Use this space to brainstorm theme ideas: _____

My house building list looks like this: (*I have adapted [Reinke's 6 main points](#), but hopefully you will see the correlation*)

1. Foundational Reading (Scripture)
2. Structural Reading (My understanding of God and identity in Christ)
3. Mechanical Reading (Spiritual understanding)
4. Interior Reading (Personal growth)
5. Exterior Reading (Skill sharpening & development)
6. Finishing Reading (Wholesome enjoyment)

Keep in mind that the whole purpose of adding a theme is to make it *easy* for you to remember. While you might think my theme is silly, strange, or that it doesn't make sense, it works for me and likewise, you need to pick a theme based on what works best for your memory.

Priority One Theme Name: _____

Priority Two Theme Name: _____

Priority Three Theme Name: _____

Priority Four Theme Name: _____

Priority Five Theme Name: _____

Priority Six Theme Name: _____

Step Three: Add Clarity

Now that we are done with the glue and glitter, it's time to do something to make the process of choosing books a bit easier: create subcategories. My reason for adding subcategories is to help me place books quickly into my plan rather than having to think through the entire list for each book. For example, priority one is reading the Bible and I have included the subcategories of devotional books (such as the book *New Morning Mercies*), and books of prayer (such as [Valley of Vision](#)) because they are part of my daily time with God that goes hand-in-hand with my Bible reading. I do not mean to imply that the Bible is not sufficient - quite the opposite!

Rather, I have placed devotional reading, prayer books, and Bible study material in this first priority because if for whatever reasons we never make it on to priority two and so forth, we will have read the most important, God's Word, and a few other resources that help us grow in our understanding of the Bible. Below I have added subcategories to my plan and step three is for you to use the questions (in italics) under each subcategory to help you personalize your own subcategories.

1. Foundational Reading (Scripture)

1. Daily Bible Reading

1. *What books of the Bible do I want to read each month?*
2. *What Bible reading plan am I going to use this year?*

2. Devotional Book

1. *What yearly devotional book do I plan to use?*
2. *Will I use shorter, 30 day based (or other) devotional books?*

3. Book of Prayers

1. *What guided prayer books do I want to use?*

4. Small Group Bible Study Material
 1. *Am I part of a small group or Bible study? If so, what material will we be reading?*
2. **Structural Reading (My understanding & identity in Christ)**
 1. Gospel Centered Living Books
 1. *What books will teach me about who I am in Christ?*
 2. *What books will teach me about applying the gospel to everyday life?*
 2. Theology Books
 1. *What books will teach me about who God is?*
 2. *What books will teach me about applying theology to life?*
3. **Mechanical Reading (Spiritual understanding)**
 1. Topics of Biblical Counseling
 1. *I am pursuing Biblical Counseling, but are you a Sunday School teacher, Bible Study leader, Small Group leader, member of a church? What books will help me grow in any of my roles within the body of Christ?*
 2. General Spiritual Growth Issues
 1. *What books will help me understand the spiritual growth that all believers should be pursuing?*
 2. *What books will teach me about what God's Word says about the general issues of the day?*
 3. Christian Biographies
 1. *What books will tell me the stories of those who have followed Christ ahead of me?*
 2. *What books will tell me about the men and women who are currently living for Christ?*
4. **Interior Reading (Personal growth)**
 1. Personal Spiritual Growth Books
 1. *What areas in my own walk with Christ do I want to grow in?*
 2. Marriage/Parenting/Family Books
 1. *What books will teach me what God's Word says about my roles in family life?*
5. **Exterior Reading (Skill sharpening & development)**
 1. Home/Organizational Books
 1. *What books will help continue to grow in the care of my home and material items God has given me?*

2. *What skill around the home would I like to sharpen? Cooking? Cleaning? Budgeting? Gardening?*
2. Time Management Books
 1. *What books will help me continue to grow in redeeming time and using it for God's glory?*
3. Books on Skills/Hobbies
 1. *What books will teach me about specific skills and hobbies?*
 2. *What new skill would I like to learn about?*
4. Personal Roles Books (i.e. Writing, Blogging, Profession)
 1. *What books will help me with my personal roles/positions in life?*
 2. *What books will help me be a better employee, employer, professional_____, etc?*
6. **Finishing Reading (Wholesome enjoyment)**
 1. Historical Books
 1. *What history am I curious to know more about?*
 2. Secular Biographies
 1. *Whose life do I find myself wanting to know more about?*
 3. Biblically Sound Fiction
 1. *What stories would I enjoy reading that present God in a good way?*

Using the questions (in italics) above, fill in your own reading priorities plan and subcategories:

(I've allowed for up to 4 subcategories, but you don't have to use that many, or you can create more!)

My Reading Priorities Plan

- Priority One: _____
 - Subcategory 1: _____
 - Subcategory 2: _____
 - Subcategory 3: _____
 - Subcategory 4: _____
- Priority Two: _____
 - Subcategory 1: _____
 - Subcategory 2: _____
 - Subcategory 3: _____
 - Subcategory 4: _____
- Priority Three: _____

- Subcategory 1: _____
- Subcategory 2: _____
- Subcategory 3: _____
- Subcategory 4: _____
- Priority Four: _____
 - Subcategory 1: _____
 - Subcategory 2: _____
 - Subcategory 3: _____
 - Subcategory 4: _____
- Priority Five: _____
 - Subcategory 1: _____
 - Subcategory 2: _____
 - Subcategory 3: _____
 - Subcategory 4: _____
- Priority Six: _____
 - Subcategory 1: _____
 - Subcategory 2: _____
 - Subcategory 3: _____
 - Subcategory 4: _____

Step Four: Set Goals

Once you have created subcategories, you need to set goals. It can be easy to become either overwhelmed and give-up before you have even begun, or become zealous and add too many books to your plan, therefore making it impossible to accomplish. There are only six priorities so the minimum to fill your plan is only six books. For those of you who are not fond or reading or don't have time to read much, keep in mind that is only one book every two months!

(Although, technically speaking, it's one book every 8.6 weeks since you'll be reading the Bible every day.)

Here are some numbers for your quick reference and consideration:

- 6 books = 1 book per every 2 months
- 12 books = 1 book per month
- 13 books = 4 weeks per book
- 18 books = approximately 2.8 weeks per book
- 24 books = 2 books per month

- 26 books = 2 weeks per book
- 30 books = approximately 1.7 weeks per book
- 36 books = approximately 1.4 weeks per book
- 52 books = 1 week per book
- 71 books = approximately 5 days per book
- 100 books = approximately 3.5 days per book

Stop and think through your life and set a goal that is well within your ability to achieve. You can always add books later on if you finish before year's end! If you are an average reader, I would highly recommend twelve books so you are reading one a month. This goal is doable for most, yet still allows for a wide range of reading. Also, no one, including myself, says you have to read the same amount of books per priority. However, keep in mind that the whole point of this plan is to be intentional and balanced in your reading.

My goal is to read _____ total books.

- _____# for Priority 1
- _____# for Priority 2
- _____# for Priority 3
- _____# for Priority 4
- _____# for Priority 5
- _____# for Priority 6

Step Five: Select Books

Finally! We are to the step that I find to be the most fun: choosing books!!!

You may already have a "To-Read" list of your own. If so, peruse that to find titles to fill in under each priority and/or subcategory depending on the number of books you have chosen as your goal. The focus should be more on *having a balanced number under each priority* rather than under each subcategory. It is the priorities that cause this to be a balanced plan, the subcategories are simply to help us find the right books to read per priority.

Let me also draw your attention to the fact that many books could fall under one or two, or in some cases more, priorities. Do not let this bog you down. Try to match a book to the category that comes to mind first for that title and then if necessary, shuffle it around to fill in your numerical goals.

My Reading Priorities Plan

- Priority One: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____
- Priority Two: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____
- Priority Three: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____
- Priority Four: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____
- Priority Five: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____
- Priority Six: _____
 - Book 1: _____
 - Book 2: _____
 - Book 3: _____
 - Book 4: _____

If you need help finding books to add to your plan, check out these sources:

- My [Goodreads.com bookshelves](#)
- The [book reviews on my blog](#)
- The [book reviews by Tim Challies](#)
- The [book reviews of my friend Gretchen Louise](#)

Here are my top 3 recommendations for each priority:

1. **Priority One:** Scripture (and devotional)
 1. Any Bible Reading Plan, but one that is achievable for this stage of your life
 2. [New Morning Mercies](#) by Paul Tripp
 3. [Valley Of Vision](#) by Arthur Bennet
 4. [A Gospel Primer for Christians](#) by Milton Vincent
2. **Priority Two:** My understanding of God & identity in Christ)
 1. [Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything](#) by Tullian Tchividjian
 2. [Gospel Treason](#) by Brad Bigney
 3. [Living The Cross Centered Life](#) by C.J. Mahaney
3. **Priority Three:** Spiritual understanding
 1. [Note To Self](#) by Joe Thorn
 2. [When Life Is Hard](#) by James MacDonald
 3. [The Insanity of God](#) by Nik Ripkin
4. **Priority Four:** Personal spiritual growth
 1. [Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety](#) by Elyse Fitzpatrick
 2. [Resisting Gossip](#) by Matthew C. Mitchell
 3. [Sacred Marriage](#) by Gary Thomas
5. **Priority Five:** Skill sharpening & development
 1. [Crazy Busy](#) by Kevin DeYoung
 2. [Your Real Food Journey](#) by Trina Holden
 3. [#ReformingSocialMedia](#) by Mandy J Hoffman (yours truly!)
6. **Priority Six:** Wholesome enjoyment
 1. [The Mark of the Lion series](#) by Francine Rivers
 2. [A Lineage of Grace series](#) by Francine Rivers
 3. [Miller's Creek Collection](#) by Cathy Bryant

Step Six: Apply It!

The last step is to apply the plan! No matter how wonderful a plan is, it is useless until it produces action. Begin by applying priority one; Bible reading is the most important priority in this plan and in general. Once you have priority one implemented into your daily routine, begin to read books from priorities two through six. Maybe you like to go in order, maybe you like to jump around a bit. The order in which you read them is not as important as actually reading them all...or at the least a selection from each priority. Let me say again, the whole point of this post is not to make you look or feel more organized, it is to help you become a more balanced reader in order to glorify God through growing more mature in many areas, not just using books as an escape or for mindless entertainment.

Now that I have a reading priorities plan I don't feel overwhelmed when I go to my bookshelf and decide which title to read next. I have a plan and most importantly, a purpose for my reading. It isn't just to accomplish a lot of reading, or a contest to see how many books I can read each year, but to build sound thinking and sound habits into my life that ultimately glorify God.