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COVID-19 Spurs 61 Days Through the Bible

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- The COVID-19 pandemic has brought dramatic change, from health to sickness, from employed to unemployed, from face to face to virtual. For Cedarville University students, the pandemic brought an immediate switch from on campus to online. But in this unique, disruptive time, three students saw an opportunity to make this time transformative.

Zac Griffith and Andrew Hile, who just graduated from Cedarville's combined accelerated Bachelor of Arts in biblical studies and Master of Divinity program, and Joshua Lankford, a 2020 Bachelor of Arts in biblical studies graduate who will return to Cedarville for his M.Div., spearheaded a 61-day journey through the Bible, which started April 2 and will finish on June 1.

"The current pandemic provided an opportune time for a holistic reading of Scripture since many of us have more time on our hands," Hile said. "I figured that if you read the Bible for just over an hour each day, you could complete it in close to 60 days. At first, I thought it would be a personal endeavor, but the thought of opening it up for others to participate was exciting.

"People might know certain stories or verses, but might not know how they fit into the biblical authors' composition of the Scriptures. God has given us 66 books, and each is vitally important and relevant on its own terms for every believer."

Hile reached out to his good friends Griffith and Lankford, who will both be groomsmen in his wedding at the end of the year, to see if they wanted to participate. "I asked them if they thought I was crazy for wanting to get through the Bible in this amount of time," he said. "These are guys I trusted would participate well and be committed."

The team of three put together graphics to advertise the 61-day read-through-the-Bible program on their social media. They now have 200 on their email list, with between 75 to 80 individuals on the three-times-a-week Zoom calls, where they review the reading for the week, offer teaching on how to understand the various genres of the biblical authors and respond to questions that participants have posted in an online Google document.

"I looked at Bible plans that cover 90 days and 60 days, but some of them covered from chapter five of one book to chapter three of the next," Griffith said. "We wanted a reading plan that maximized reading entire books in one sitting. While close study of individual verses and passages is vital, it is also important to understand the big picture of each book and what the author was trying to communicate. So, we developed a reading plan with that goal in mind."

Was there significance to 61 days versus a round figure like 90 or 60? "Because of the way we maximized whole readings of the various books, 61 days seemed to work better than 60," Griffith added.

The Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday Zoom calls are mainly populated with current Cedarville undergrads from a wide variety of majors: business, nursing, engineering, worship, communication, Bible, education. But parents have also joined in, as well as students from other universities and members of a Kansas City church where former Student Government Association chaplain Campbell Bortel attends.

“We’ve had a nursing major thank us for this because she wanted to take more Bible classes but didn’t have the time,” Lankford shared. “She told us, ‘The resources you’re presenting are making up for that lost time.’ We’re just stewarding what we’ve learned and passing it along.”

As for Hile, Lankford and Griffith, this pandemic-inspired deep dive in the Scriptures is turning a time that many see as an interruption into a moment for meaningful instruction.

“We probably wouldn’t have done this if not for the stay-at-home order,” Hile explained. “The Bible faculty has equipped us as students with awesome tools and resources, and we were excited to share these with others. I want to teach God’s word till I die.”

Griffith noted that the three friends have created a shared Google document of each other’s notes from the study. “That’s up to 70 pages of content,” he said. “I’m excited to have that and be able to look back on those notes.”

For Lankford, accomplishing a meaningful goal during the pandemic is the biggest takeaway. “I’ll be able to look back on the coronavirus time and instead of lounging and being bored, I did something of eternal value that was worth my time,” he said. “We get so excited logging onto Zoom and seeing 80 faces; some are people we know and love, and others we don’t know well, but they’re all excited to read God’s word daily, living in the text of Scripture and meditating on it day and night.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,380 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including its [Master of Divinity](#) program, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

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